

## What Should Tanzanians Do About the Energy Crisis?

### What is the Energy Crisis?

The energy crisis is the problem of not having enough energy to meet our needs. Energy can refer to resources such as firewood, or kerosene, or electricity- anything that we use to cook or work with. Here in Tanzania, we have been affected most recently by not having enough electricity to meet our needs, and this has resulted in rationing that is affecting our ability to work and continue growing our economy. However, this is not the only energy crisis that is important: less than 10% of Tanzanians are using electricity, while the majority is using charcoal, firewood or kerosene. Because so many of us use firewood it is becoming harder and harder to find and firewood collectors have to walk greater distances to secure wood for cooking. Scarce firewood is also making charcoal more and more expensive. Kerosene prices are rising due to the increasing price of petroleum throughout the world. Many Tanzanians are already living on a very low income. Therefore, less firewood and more expensive fuel makes life even harder for the majority. Is it not time to look for other forms of affordable energy that can be used by the majority of Tanzanians?

**The Charcoal-Maker says:** "Forget about finding other sources of energy, we have been using firewood and charcoal since our grandfathers and their grandfathers' days. This is what we know and this is the kind of energy that we can afford. All we have to do is make sure we have enough trees, so these loggers have to be controlled."

When I was young and learning how to make firewood from my uncle, there was plenty of wood around the village and we knew how to take care not to use too much. But these days, all kinds of people are cutting trees! Big families need more and more wood and charcoal to do their cooking so we are cutting a lot of trees, although sometimes we try to grow some more to replace them. The real problem is these timber people: they just cut trees for their businesses without caring about whether they plant some more or whether there will be enough for the villagers who need to use that fuel! Some even export these logs to other countries! I think that the solution is for us to make sure there is enough supply of wood: if we control the loggers and we all plant trees then everyone can be happy and we shall continue to use firewood and charcoal and even our grandchildren will use them.

**The Chair of the Women's Association Says:** "We have been discussing this problem in the Association and many of us feel that something should be done. While there was enough wood to collect and charcoal was affordable, it was not a problem to cook this way. Now that this is no longer the case, maybe the government can support us to come up with some other solutions."

We women are working hard to make sure that we have enough firewood, but these days it means walking for half a day just to be able to get enough for one meal. Also, because the children need uniforms and porridge, sometimes we don't

have enough money left over to buy charcoal- and the price has gone up so high! In our association, we are thinking of writing to our local government and maybe one of those NGOs to help us come up with a plan for what we could use instead of charcoal and wood. They always tell us our village is rich in natural resources. If we make it clear to them that this is an important problem for us, we can work together to look for solutions using the resources that we have. That way, maybe every village will be able to find a solution- my daughter in secondary told me that in some places they even use agricultural waste to make electricity! I wonder if we could do that here with some help.

**The Science Teacher says:** "Times have changed and I don't think it would be good for my students to grow up and live in a world where they still have to cook on firewood and charcoal! The other day a jatropha project visited the school, and they explained to us that there are cheap and affordable solutions. What we have to do is make these ideas work for us."

In other poor parts of the world, people have come up with solutions that make life easier for them- this is development! The energy project scientists who visited us recently talked about a plant called jatropha which produces seeds that can be crushed to make oil. Jatropha can grow in Tanzania easily and its oil can be used for many things, it can make oil for cooking and for lamps. Many of my students had good questions for the scientists, and I think that they are very interested in using their education to create solutions. I think one of my students will be the one to design a jatropha cooker and lamp and I will be proud because we will have found a solution for Tanzanians!

### What do you think about the energy crisis and Tanzania?

The problem with electricity has been in our attention lately, and a lot of effort and money has been put into solving that crisis- which is useful because electricity is very important to our national economy. At the same time, we should not forget the energy needs of the many Tanzanians who do not have access to electricity because many are also experiencing problems with finding enough fuel for their needs. What do you think of the idea of looking for other forms of energy? Do you agree with any of the opinions presented above? If you have something to say about the energy crisis, talk about it or let us know by contacting us. Good energy policy begins with you.

**Jukwaa discusses a public topic. Three fictional people's points of view on the issue are presented, and the reader is encouraged to consider all three of them to see if their own opinion is represented. If your opinion is not here, let us know what you think! Readers are encouraged to discuss the issue and respond to Policy Forum by email, by post or through the website. Readers are also encouraged to ask questions if they would like to find out more information about the issue. Finally, readers are encouraged to use Jukwaa to stimulate dialogue in their community and with their leaders.**

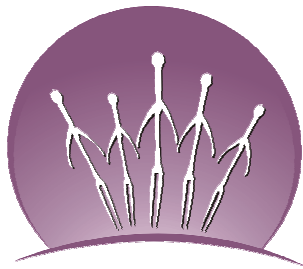
# What Should Tanzanians Do About the Energy Crisis?

| Why Alternative Energy is Good   | Why Alternative Energy is Bad   |
|--|---|
| + Some forms of energy can be cheaper and easier to use than traditional energy- such as vegetable oils.                         | - It is difficult to find alternative energy at the community level which is not primary energy.                              |
| + Alternative energy can be good for the environment and reduce pollution- jatropha oil burns cleaner than charcoal or firewood. | - Alternative energy can be even more unaffordable than traditional energy at the household level - for example, solar power. |
| + Some fuels, like vegetable oils, can be produced locally and thus provide citizens with a source of income.                    | - Some alternative energy requires technology that is also very hard to find in developing countries.                         |

## Definitions:

Jatropha- *Jatropha curcas* is a bush plant that grows in Asia and Africa. It produces large seeds that can be crushed to extract their oil. Some other parts of the plant also have a few medicinal properties.

Primary Energy- primary energy is energy that comes from burning a fuel directly. So cooking using firewood means that you are using primary energy, and using vegetable oil cookers would also be using primary energy.



# policy forum

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