

Executive summary

Powering progress, not poverty

Moving beyond gas, to real energy
solutions for people living in poverty



📷 A child arranges firewood on the roof of his family tent, next to a solar panel, in a Rohingya camp in Bangladesh.

Photo: Ralph Hodgson/Tearfund

In the last few years, a significant number of international public investments have been channelled towards expanding large-scale gas infrastructures in low-and middle-income countries. Many governments and fossil fuel companies are portraying gas as a transition solution that could address the climate crisis, while at the same time addressing energy poverty, meeting rising energy demands and diversifying the national economy by exporting gas abroad. However, such an approach disregards the weight of evidence showing that not only will gas not help solve the climate crisis, it will also create additional problems – for the environment, and for countries and local communities hosting the gas infrastructure. And in particular, people living in poverty have been the most vulnerable to these impacts.

This report looks into some of the claims about using gas as a transition fuel, discusses how these claims are untrue – particularly for people living in poverty – and explains why renewable energy is a better development and climate solution:

The environmental perspective

Is it true that 'gas is a climate friendly alternative to coal and oil as it emits fewer greenhouse gases'?

What is true in this statement?	Why is this statement untrue for people living in poverty on the frontlines of the climate crisis?	Why is renewable energy a better alternative for people living in poverty?
Gas emits fewer greenhouse gases and air pollutants than coal and oil.	People living in poverty cannot enjoy a safe and secure future that keeps warming as close as possible to the agreed safer limit of 1.5°C, without phasing out <i>all</i> fossil fuels. This includes gas, which is still a big emitter of greenhouse gases due to emissions from gas extraction and transportation processes, and fugitive methane emissions.	Renewables are a cleaner, genuinely low-carbon energy source. Therefore, scaling up renewable energy to replace <i>all</i> fossil fuels is crucial for creating a safe and secure future for people living in poverty.

The social perspective

Is it true that 'gas is necessary for development and industrialisation, especially giving more people living in poverty access to reliable and cheap energy'?

What is true in this statement?	Why is this statement untrue for people living in poverty on the frontlines of the climate crisis?	Why is renewable energy a better alternative for people living in poverty?
For many low- and middle-income countries that have abundant gas reserves, developing their gas reserves seems to be the quickest way to provide energy to the population without energy access.	Developing gas will not increase energy access for people living in poverty or provide for energy demands linked to industrialisation domestically – as most of the gas produced is exported. In addition to this, developing gas has threatened other development goals by driving biodiversity loss, air pollution, land grabbing and forced displacement, threats to livelihoods and food and water security, corruption and conflicts.	Scaling up renewable energy is the cheapest way to increase energy access for people living in poverty, with a more reliable and stable energy price compared to gas. Furthermore, decentralised renewable energy systems are more suitable for closing the energy needs gap in rural areas, while bringing wider benefits to local communities such as more jobs, better women's economic empowerment, and higher inclusivity.

The economic perspective

Is it true that 'capitalising on the increasing price of gas could boost the economy of low and middle income countries by exporting gas to overseas markets, generating more capital for development'?

What is true in this statement?	Why is this statement untrue for people living in poverty on the frontlines of the climate crisis?	Why is renewable energy a better alternative for people living in poverty?
There has been an enormous market interest in gas trading because of the potential for large profits.	People living in poverty have generally not enjoyed the economic benefits of gas infrastructure. This is because most of the profits are captured by foreign multinational companies, while low- and middle-income countries unfairly take on more financial risks. Instead, the expensive cost of developing gas could deepen national debts and intensify poverty.	Renewable energy can create more, better-quality and dignified jobs and livelihoods for local communities, especially when they are developed as decentralised systems. A just transition to renewable energy can create the opportunity to create a new energy system that avoids many of the historical pitfalls of fossil fuels.

The table above has illustrated why the gas-for-development and gas-for-communities narratives are not valid. It has shown that renewable energy is a better solution than gas for people living in poverty. For the benefit of all people living in poverty, countries need to phase out *all* fossil fuels, including gas, and transition in a fair and just way to renewable energy.

‘Gas is not the future for Africa – but Africa needs to receive technological and financial support in order to transition to renewable energy.’

Promise Salawu

Renew our World Nigeria Project Officer

This transition will not be possible without the right financial and technological support. Therefore, we make the following recommendations:



Money out of fossil fuels: Ending domestic and international public finance for polluting gas and investing instead in renewable energy solutions, on a scale at least matching and preferably surpassing former fossil fuel investment



Money into a just transition: Ensuring that investments in renewable energy solutions deliver the co-benefits of renewables and uphold justice principles, by supporting an equitable, just energy transition and prioritising decentralised projects to increase energy access

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