



AFTER CARBON

AFRICAN FACILITY FOR
TRANSITIONS RESEARCH

VISION DOCUMENT



TABLE OF CONTENT

THE PROBLEM 1

THE SOLUTION 2

OUR SHORT-TERM VISION 2

WHAT ARE OUR FIRST STEPS? 3

WHAT IS OUR LONG-TERM GOAL AND THE LEGACY WE WANT AFTER CARBON TO LEAVE? 4



THE PROBLEM

The transition to a post-carbon economy offers Africa a unique opportunity to redefine its position on the world stage – leapfrogging other nations, and leading on the development of critical climate solutions, tailored to the needs of each country.

But, right now, Africa is underprepared for such a transition. Policy makers in most African countries are consumed with boosting local economies to better support their citizens. With many dealing with economic downturn and increased debt following COVID-19, they often lack the time, the space, resource and available skills needed to develop approaches that will future proof their country in a post-carbon future.

There is also a clear disconnect between science and policy. With limited resource for data collection, analysis, and storage - and financial investment for research institutions lagging behind demand - the short and long-term research needed to influence national policies on the transition has been left behind.

Clearly, if we are to take advantage of Africa's unique position – including its absence of legacy infrastructure, and abundance of minerals, rainforest, and arable land – it is essential that we provide African institutions with best-in-class science on the solutions available to them.

But more than this, we must showcase how these solutions will impact their people. There is a unique business opportunity for Africa in greening its future. Opportunities in key sectors – such as renewables, energy efficiency, waste management, building and construction – offer significant opportunities for job creation which could be a power catalyst for spurring growth, economic stability, and environmental sustainability.

These solutions not only have the ability to influence Africa's development but its long-term position on the global stage.



THE SOLUTION

That's where AFTER Carbon comes in. AFTER Carbon is a Policy to Research Hub – a matchmaking service bringing together scientists, entrepreneurs, policy makers and civil society groups, within a transdisciplinary research programme, centred around solving the key policy problems limiting transitions to low-carbon development.

Our programme is the first of its kind to adopt a 'how to' continent-wide approach – with the potential to keep key stakeholders bound to the process. The collaboration of these minds will allow experience and lessons to be shared across the continent, preventing unnecessary duplication of effort in the transition.

This African-led approach will allow us to consider unique contextual challenges that the continent must focus on – proactively sourcing local problems and combining with experience from around the world to find the best solutions.



Solar farm in Zambia
Photo: UNU-INRA

OUR SHORT-TERM VISION

From our existing research 'Economic implications of stranded assets', we know that this policy to research disconnect is prevalent across three sectors

 Energy  Agriculture  Cities

For instance, when it comes to energy resources African policy makers are not fully aware of the changes in the global hydrocarbon arena regarding carbon risk. Yet, the implications of Africa's hydrocarbon assets being stranded due to a rapid energy transition are far too important to allow uninformed responses.

Similarly, Africa's fast-growing population is driving up food demand. However, as crop yields remain low, the sector needs to be revolutionised for the twin purposes of improving productivity and supporting low-carbon futures, while improving climate adaptation.

By reframing the narrative to situate 'net zero' and give it a development focus, AFTER Carbon will be able to reconfigure, recalibrate, and localise the pillars of a post-carbon future for the continent – starting with energy, agriculture, and cities.

AFTER Carbon offers real opportunities for knowledge extraction. This is not from a predominant mitigation response side, but instead to help make explicit opportunities and trade-offs in relevant adaptation associated with land systems, energy, and cities.



WHAT ARE OUR FIRST STEPS?

Having already identified the most pressing challenges across these priority sectors, we are now seeking to build bespoke working groups, formed of experts able to vigorously discuss the challenges and produce potential solutions based on best practice examples and scientific data.

These AFTER Carbon solutions will then be analysed, tested in real world scenarios, and adjusted where required to ensure our recommendations are fit for purpose. These will then be presented to decision makers in each sector, helping them to respond to both new and existing climate commitments – such as the Paris Agreement – and enforcing effective policy change for the continent.

But, as with any major transformation, we know that we need buy-in across the board. That's why, in the short-term at least, widespread education and messaging through a campaign approach will be an important outreach extension of the programme. Getting young people adjusted to new climate ambitions, showing companies how sustainable business can lead to profit, and shifting the mindset of government officials to help them see how African countries can become leaders on a global scale through our innovative and collaborative approach.

AFTER Carbon will start this process with the development of a short paper for citizens, summarising and providing practical guidance on investment opportunities and risks associate with the transition.

WHAT IS OUR LONG-TERM GOAL AND THE LEGACY WE WANT AFTER CARBON TO LEAVE?

We know that currently, African policy makers are often caught in a catch-22 situation where their resource is pointed at solving the problem immediately in front of them, not allowing them to properly scenario plan. It is AFTER Carbon's long-term goal that by becoming the 'go to' policy to research hub for the continent, we can ease the burden on individual governments and ensure the continent's policy environment is primed for a thriving, green economy – capable of producing world leading solutions for a post-carbon economy.

From being a catalyst for African countries to become leaders on the global stage; to supercharging economic development and the creation of green jobs; and driving profit through sustainable technology – this is just the beginning for AFTER Carbon. And our aspirations don't stop at the regional borders.

By connecting the dots and becoming a knowledge hub we are able to paint a whole picture, our ambition is to see AFTER Carbon build an encyclopaedia of expertise that can be drawn upon to solve challenges not just across the continent, but where applicable, worldwide. Creating global solutions for nations to draw upon on the road to Net Zero and a safe and manageable future for humanity.



CONTACT

International House
Annie Jiaage Road
University of Ghana,
Legon Campus
Accra, Ghana.

T: +233-302-500396
F: +233-302- 500792
email: inra@unu.edu



inra.unu.edu