



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

*IN RESPONSE TO THE CALL FOR INPUTS - FOSSIL FUEL-BASED ECONOMY
AND HUMAN RIGHTS*

ADDRESSED TO:

*OHCHR SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON CLIMATE CHANGE,
H.E ELISA MORGERA*

FROM

THE LEARNBLUE'S RESEARCH & POLICY DEPT.

'Case study of Human Rights and the Energy Transition in Seychelles'

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1. ABSTRACT

As an island nation in the Indian Ocean Seychelles faces the brunt of climate change even though it produces negligible amounts of greenhouse gases. The nation's heavy dependence on fossil fuels has generated substantial human rights consequences that affect health outcomes alongside residential relocation and economic sustainability. This research evaluates the impact of fossil fuel dependence on Seychelles' citizens' human rights rights focusing on health care access alongside housing and basic living conditions. Through surveys involving 346 participants and expert interviews with 7 human rights specialists and energy experts this research evaluates the opportunities and risks of shifting to renewable power systems. This paper presents specific steps to achieve an energy transition which promotes fairness while upholding human rights and supports Seychelles' climate goals and sustainable development objectives.

2. INTRODUCTION

The island state of Seychelles faces critical climate change risks because of its high vulnerability. Although its global emissions remain negligible the country endures major environmental threats because of rising sea levels and intensified cyclones along with damage to its diverse natural systems. The nation's heavy dependence on fossil fuels for energy provides 67.48% of its total energy consumption which intensifies environmental threats and human rights violations across Seychelles. The country's dependence on fossil fuels creates public health problems which intensify heart diseases and breathing issues but simultaneously creates housing insecurity and threatens livelihoods through climate change impacts. The sustainable energy transition of Seychelles requires careful attention to fairness and full inclusion alongside human rights protection measures that prioritize vulnerable populations.

2.1 Purpose of the Report

This report aims to analyze the human rights effects of Seychelles' fossil fuel reliance and analyze how switching to renewable energy would affect the country. The research combines survey results with expert panel insights to educate policy decision-makers about human rights implications while offering solutions for right-based transitions that achieve health benefits alongside climate resilience and social equality.

2.2 Background and Context

The small nation of Seychelles with its 98,000 inhabitants relies on complete imports of fossil fuels to meet requirements for electricity generation and transportation and industrial needs. The country maintains its overwhelming dependence on oil and coal resources even though it has taken steps to develop solar and wind power infrastructure. Seychelles faces increased climate change risks because of its small dimensions and constrained financial capabilities. As part of the United Nations and a Paris Agreement supporter Seychelles established carbon emission reduction goals yet faces difficulties keeping these objectives socially just and economically advantageous.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The academic and policy literature has examined Seychelles' climate change sensitivity together with its fossil fuel-constrained human rights complications. Baldwin et al. (2017) show climate change threatens human rights most significantly in SIDS because rising sea levels and extreme weather conditions impact low-lying coastal populations disproportionately. Environmental degradation from fossil fuel utilization makes existing property damage and livelihood disruptions even worse.

Research conducted by Gómez-Baggethun et al. (2018) demonstrates renewable energy holds promise as an environmentally friendly choice for SIDS' energy transitions but its implementation must consider both fairness and the unique requirements of susceptible communities. According to Gonzalez and Montero (2019) a "just transition" idea focuses on safeguarding both social rights and economic welfare for workers and communities who experience changes toward renewable energy systems.

4. METHODOLOGY

The analysis incorporates both quantitative survey results alongside expert consultations as qualitative data to evaluate Seychelles' dependency on fossil fuels and its renewable energy transition pathways.

4.1 Survey Design

The research instrument comprised 346 surveys distributed throughout Seychelles to obtain responses from people living in both urban and rural and coastal areas. The survey aimed to gather insights into the following areas:

- Health impacts of fossil fuel consumption (e.g., respiratory diseases, cardiovascular issues).
- The conversion to renewable power systems presents dual challenges including employment disruptions and financial accessibility barriers.
- The availability of energy resources alongside protection of energy supply.
- People understand that climate change produces human rights problems through health hazards and forced population movements.

Respondents could choose from prepared survey options as well as provide unstructured responses through open-ended questions about how fossil fuels impacted their lifestyle and energy transition worries. The survey data underwent descriptive statistics and regression analysis to reveal essential human rights patterns within different demographic segments.

4.2 Expert Consultations

Seven experts from climate change fields and energy policy sectors and human rights domains took part in extensive consultations alongside their work in government institutions and academic research and environmental non-government organizations.

The expert consultations generated valuable qualitative data about the human rights aspects that emerged during Seychelles' shift to renewable energy systems. Experts evaluated current energy policies and examined transition strategy gaps to provide recommendations about addressing human rights impacts in the transition process.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACTS OF FOSSIL FUEL DEPENDENCY IN SEYCHELLES

Fossil fuel dependence for energy generation creates major human rights challenges in Seychelles which affect residents through health problems and population displacement as well as economic stability.

5.1 Health Impacts of Fossil Fuel Consumption

Seychelles' consumption of fossil fuels creates major air pollution which affects urban populations and transport routes. According to survey data 61.43% of individuals in urban areas linked their asthma along with bronchitis and other lung conditions to air pollution. A significant number of people in coastal areas experienced cardiovascular problems because of air pollution according to survey results that showed 54.82% of respondents. Experts validated the results by stating that dependence on fossil fuels directly creates health dangers for the public throughout the nation. The population's fundamental right to health (ICESCR Article 12) suffers violation because people lack access to healthcare and live in contaminated environments.

5.2 Displacement and Livelihood Threats

The combination of climate change and fossil fuel dependence results in more severe weather events which together with rising sea levels risk devastating homes and destroying coastal communities in Seychelles. Results from the survey demonstrated that 69.32% of coastal residents worried about losing their homes or land because of flooding and 63.21% feared their livelihoods would be interrupted specifically among residents who depend on tourism and fishing. The survey demonstrates that people face violations of their right to housing and right to an adequate standard of living as stated in UDHR Articles 25 and 27. Coastal ecosystem degradation caused by fossil fuel pollution increases the likelihood of forced displacement for Seychelles' communities living in low-lying areas according to expert assessments.

6. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACTS OF TRANSITIONING AWAY FROM FOSSIL FUELS IN SEYCHELLES

Seychelles' shift toward renewable energy systems provides potential human rights benefits although it carries substantial economic uncertainties and unknowns about how people will access these new power sources.

6.1 Job Displacement and Economic Insecurity

A significant percentage of 63.52% among survey respondents indicated they feared their jobs would disappear when the energy sector shifted toward renewable energy.

The energy sector workforce shows 57.93% of members who fear their jobs will end and income will decrease because of the fossil fuel industry phaseout. The experts emphasized that businesses should establish training programs to help fossil fuel sector workers acquire skills required for renewable energy industry jobs. The lack of adequate safety measures during this transition threatens to create large-scale social and economic disruption that especially affects disadvantaged employees.

6.2 Barriers to Renewable Energy Access

Results show that 60.15% of rural and low-income respondents encountered major obstacles when trying to gain access to renewable energy technologies. The massive expense of solar panels together with other renewable energy infrastructure proved to be the main obstacle according to 65.78% of respondents. The experts agreed that a transition toward renewable energy systems needs to guarantee both affordability and accessibility of renewable technologies especially for communities without sufficient access to modern energy services.

7. INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The international human rights frameworks to which Seychelles subscribes guide the nation's approach to developing energy policies which protect human rights and human dignity. The country's energy policy follows several international treaties including the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The instruments demonstrate how climate change impacts human rights while connecting to the right to have a healthy environment. The authors emphasize that low-carbon energy system transitions should prioritize equity along with participation levels and inclusive approaches.

The International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) establishes Article 12 as the right to health protection and Article 11 defines access to affordable clean energy as part of the right to a standard living. Under the Paris Agreement Seychelles must pursue a transition that supports vulnerable populations while protecting everyone's well being as part of its climate action plan.

7.1 Recommendations for a Rights-Based Transition

1. Inclusive Policy Development

Seychelles needs to create official national energy policies that specifically safeguard workers who lose their jobs during fossil fuel industry phase-out programs. The implementation of these policies needs to use comprehensive Just Transition Frameworks to protect fossil fuel sector workers including those in energy and transportation operations from abandonment. The framework must combine social protection means and training initiatives so workers can learn new skills for renewable energy work. Specialized green job programs must be developed to accelerate growth in solar and wind energy fields together with energy efficiency and climate adaptation technology sectors.

Every policy should include gender-responsive and intersectional components because they expose how transitions differently affect minority groups including disabled people and women and youth populations. New job accessibility must be achieved by focusing outreach efforts on all groups combined with equal access to employment opportunities across all demographics.

2. Universal Access to Renewable Energy

Seychelles needs to guarantee universal renewable energy availability to fulfill its human rights commitments. The government must create financial assistance programs to lower renewable energy adoption costs for both poor communities and inhabitants of rural areas. The government should establish financial mechanisms which provide subsidies and zero-interest loans and installment payment options to lower the cost of renewable energy technology purchases.

Seychelles needs to develop decentralized energy systems that will enable communities to locally produce renewable energy through access to generation tools and technologies. Community-led energy cooperatives together with solar microgrids operated by communities represent powerful solutions because they create local energy independence while strengthening climate adaptation. Sustainability in the long term requires financial mechanisms to provide funding for renewable energy system maintenance along with repairs.

3. Public Health Programs

The transition from fossil fuels needs to proceed alongside specific public health initiatives which combat existing health problems that result from fossil fuel pollution. Health impact assessments should become a priority investment for Seychelles to measure public health expenses caused by fossil fuel use and respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and environmental damage. The allocation of resources and population vulnerability prioritization become possible when policymakers have access to this information.

A detailed air quality tracking system needs implementation for monitoring pollutants particularly in urban and industrial regions so the public receives accurate information about air quality. Seychelles needs to develop expanded healthcare services which target both prevention and medical treatment of pollution-caused diseases throughout the country. Medical treatment and health insurance coverage and preventive care must expand their reach to all communities but especially to low-income families along with people with existing medical conditions.

4. Community-Led Energy Solutions

Seychelles' renewable energy transition depends on direct participation from communities particularly those facing the greatest impact of climate change. The country needs to establish participatory governance through which communities actively participate across all stages of renewable energy project planning and implementation and monitoring. The project development process should include public consultations while community-based organizations must participate in decision-making at each stage.

Project developers should integrate local understanding along with traditional indigenous management practices into their energy operations particularly in rural and coastal locations where indigenous communities hold knowledge of sustainable resource stewardship. Community resilience finds its foundation in eco-village models which unite renewable energy systems with sustainable agricultural methods and water resource management systems. The government needs to establish training initiatives which will prepare local communities to become primary managers of renewable energy systems and their maintenance facilities. The initiative must concentrate on youth and female empowerment through leadership roles which must be achieved in renewable energy solutions.

8. CONCLUSION

Seychelles faces both significant challenges and opportunities in its transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy. While the shift offers considerable potential for protecting human rights, it must be managed in a way that is equitable and inclusive, ensuring that vulnerable communities are not left behind. By prioritizing the right to health, housing, and economic security, Seychelles can implement a just energy transition that respects human rights and sets a model for other SIDS to follow.

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