

We know what to do; we've got to do it right (*Joe Biden 2021*)



*Leaders Summit, Courtesy: Washington Post*

During the April 2021 Leaders Summit on Climate Change, various heads of states declared their commitments to combat climate change. The summit comes as a one-step ahead of the UN-Climate Change Conference (COP26), scheduled for November 2021. To the developing states from Africa, the summit was a platform for setting new climate change declarations and establishing alliances to help achieve them. African presidents from Kenya, Gabon, Nigeria, South Africa, and the Democratic Republic of Congo represented the continent. Even though Africa is not yet a major greenhouse gas (GHG) emitter, the summit presented a unique forum for the leaders to advance collaboration geared towards mitigating the impacts of GHG emanating from heavily industrialized economies like the USA, UK, China, etc.

From Kenya, president Kenyatta spoke about East Africa's commitment to reduce GHG emissions by 30% by 2030. His appeal to the international community to invest in geothermal power is a great milestone towards achieving a 100% clean energy transition in East Africa. In 2020 during the Global Off-Grid Solar Forum and Expo held in Nairobi, Kenya announced her commitment to investing Ksh 15 billion to expand clean energy access in off-grid communities. It is evident; the government is investing a lot to bring about clean, sustainable energy access; however, to win the war on climate change,

there is a need to front different approaches beyond clean energy. Like other African countries, Kenya continues to encounter adverse climate impacts due to global warming.

## **Beyond Clean Energy;**

Natural ecosystems play a crucial role in fighting climate change. Forest, Park, Rivers, etc., are very vital in developing local climate change adaptation strategies. The high dense population across African cities has heightened the demand for social amenities, causing threats to natural ecosystems. Protecting and maintaining natural resources such as Public Green Spaces is part of the local climate change adaptation strategies that can help build climate resilience.

[Daima Coalition](#), a civic actor, based in East Africa, continues to champion public green spaces' protection through advocacy and stakeholder engagement. The coalition has collaboratively worked with the ministry of environment and other civil society organizations (CSO) to protect green spaces. For instance, the march for fig tree event earned a presidential decree to save the century-old fig tree. Besides its historical value, the hundred-year-old fig tree plays a critical role in offsetting carbon sequestration in the atmosphere. Accordingly, the coalition has helped bring out the community's opinions that define how they desire parks to look. The revitalization of the freedom corner as a commemoration to the late environmentalist and Nobel prize winner Wangari Maathai paved an opportunity to showcase some of the ideas gathered from the public. The event has left a significant footprint that has shifted negative perceptions about open spaces.



*Revitalization of Freedom Corner: Courtesy Daima*

***Driven by Purpose:*** Across most cities in Africa, the vast majority comprises the youth whose potential remains untapped. Capacity building young people with relevant skills to champion climate change is one of the critical investments for the Daima Coalition. Driven by Purpose, the young green spaces champion advocates environmental protection, bringing a much-needed paradigm shift to the community. Part of the youth achievement includes partnering with the Mombasa county government to revitalize a treasury park, which awakens the county government to prioritize other parks. Besides, the youth have also campaigned against the government's continuous felling of trees for infrastructural development. The intent is to incorporate environmental needs with physical planning.

To save African cities, stakeholders beyond youth groups need to be mainstreamed in the climate change agenda. The engagements of the Daima Coalition with non-climate actors like the Architectural Association of Kenya (AAK), Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), Kenya Alliance of Residential Associations are some of the mechanisms that strengthen the war on climate change.





*Revitalization of Treasury Park Mombasa Kenya. Photo Courtesy*

**'The major problem in the world today is a result of the difference between *how nature works* and the way humans think.'**

Kenyan ambition to reduce GHG emissions by 30% by 2030 presents an opportunity to leverage multiple approaches to succeed in the plan. For instance, prioritizing initiatives such as nonmotorized transport and circular economy are ways to help meet the target. The approaches above are part of the nature-based solutions that, if effectively applied, can bring about a sustainable climate change solution. Nature-based solutions (NbS) entail solving a climate challenge by using nature-driven solutions to guarantee sustainability. The approach is cost-effective hence well suited for emerging economies like Kenya.

Daima Coalition, through [Save Lamu](#), has used this approach to build resilience along the Lamu Seafront by upsloping vegetation to minimize flood risk. Nature-based solutions are dynamic and can be implemented as stand-alone or integrated with other solutions. Besides, Nbs offers an opportunity to determine climate solutions that align

with specific natural and cultural contexts that include traditional, local, and scientific knowledge. The approach is an integral part of the overall design of policies, and actions, to address a specific local climate challenge. It's time for the African continent to embrace Nbs approaches as a climate adaptation strategy.



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