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News release

African citizens urge governments to take immediate climate action - no matter the economic costs!

"Climate change is high on the global policy agenda, and Afrobarometer is committed to amplifying the voices and experiences of African citizens to inform these debates," Afrobarometer CEO Joseph Asunka said at the Harvard University Center for International Development (CID) Friday speakers series.

Asunka's talk, under the theme "Climate change in Africa: Exploring citizens' experiences and perspectives," is part of a series of talks leading up to the CID's May 2023 Global Empowerment Meeting (GEM23), "Growing in a green world."

Afrobarometer is a pan-African survey research organisation that provides reliable data on African experiences, evaluations, and aspirations regarding democracy, governance, and quality of life. Data collected by Afrobarometer are essential in giving African publics a voice in policy making.

In his address, Asunka highlighted the startling fact that only about half of Africans are aware of climate change. "This varies significantly, from a high of three-quarters of people in Botswana to less than a quarter in Tunisia," he told participants at the virtual event last Friday. Afrobarometer data collected in 20 countries in 2021-2022 indicate that among Africans who are aware of climate change, "there is a broad consensus that it is making life difficult." On average, close to eight in 10 respondents (77%) said climate change is making life worse, including overwhelming majority in most of the countries surveyed.

Formal education likely plays a role in climate-change awareness: Almost three-quarters of those with post-secondary education are aware of climate change, compared to only 36% of those with no formal education. Awareness is also lower among rural populations and women. However, the data also present a puzzling insight: The highest rate of climate awareness is recorded in Malawi, a country with one of the lowest rates of formal education; in climate-change awareness, it is on a par with Botswana, a country with the highest concentration of people with formal education. Therefore, it appears that climate awareness is not solely dependent on formal education; it may also be a function of experience. Asunka invited participants and the academic community to explore this and other puzzles that AB data often generate.

AB results suggest widespread demand for governments to take immediate action, even if doing so is expensive or adversely impacts jobs or the economy. On average across 20 surveyed countries, more than half of citizens (51%) gave their governments failing marks on their climate-change mitigation performance; however, governments of Benin, Togo, Niger, and Sierra Leone received positive reviews from their citizens.

Finally, among those who are aware of climate change, there is some agreement that the fight against climate change is a shared responsibility among governments, ordinary citizens,

the private sector, and international actors. Concluding his talk, Asunka summed up citizens' clear message to governments: "take immediate climate action - no matter the economic costs!"

About Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer (AB) is a trusted source of high-quality data and analysis on what Africans are thinking. With an unmatched track record of 350,000+ interviews in 39 countries, representing the views of 80% of the African population, AB is leading the charge to bridge the continent's data gap. AB data inform many global indices, such as the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer, and the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators. The data are also used for country risk analyses and by credit rating and forecasting agencies such as the Economist Intelligence Unit. All AB data sets are publicly available on the website and may be analysed free of charge using AB's online data analysis tool.

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