

9. Lack of public awareness creates barriers to long term thinking about energy.

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Public awareness is a significant component of solving climate change. In developing regions such as South Asia, Middle East, and Africa, literacy rate, compared to developed countries, is low and therefore public awareness is lacking the understanding of climate change effects and importance of transitioning to renewable energy.

Therefore public awareness is essential to:

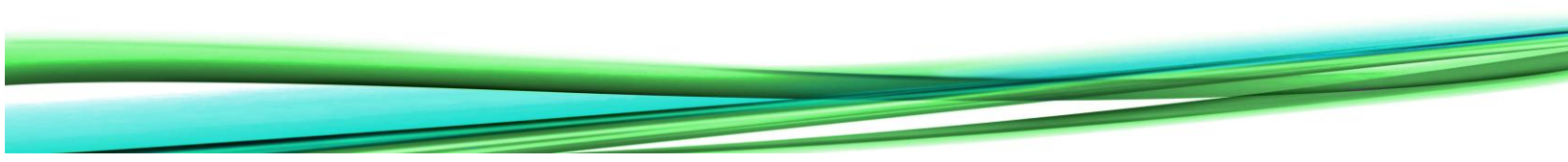
- 1- Mitigate effects of climate change by pushing for stricter regulations
- 2- Lead the transition to renewable energy sources

Several speakers and many delegates highlighted the importance of public awareness throughout the duration of the conference.

Speakers, such as Dr. Rajendra Pachauri have placed great emphasis on the lack of public awareness, considering it as one of the main barriers for transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy. According to Dr. Pachauri, public awareness is the barrier to resolving most of the problems in climate change. Particularly in developing nations, there is a high rate of illiteracy and therefore it is increasingly difficult to bring public awareness.

However, Dr. Pachauri realizes there is also a lack of public awareness in both developed and developing nations. There is a need for developed nations, he says, to realize their impact of increased carbon emissions on the world.

Delegates share the speakers' concern. They realize education is a major element in the transition process. As Innocent, one of the African delegates said, "Education is quite needed to create public awareness. People don't care as long as they have electricity. They



need to be educated on the concept of sustainability in order to influence their consumption pattern.”

In the short-term, delegates believe that it is imperative for the elderly to grasp the importance of transitioning to renewable energy, while understanding the effects of long-term dependency on fossil fuels. In order to achieve that goal, delegates propose that NGO’s hold educational sessions that aim to educate the elderly. In addition, delegates from the Middle East proposed offering monetary incentives for grownups to attend sessions.

Similarly, Dr. Pachauri believes there is a scope in the current context to directly use renewable energy and realize its benefit in a very short time. The solution for developing nations, according to the speaker, is education and increasing literacy rate. In the developed nations, however, Dr. Pachauri stressed that there is a need to transform ideas to actions.

Second, delegates focused on the long-term goal of increasing awareness. African delegates in particular proposed a sustainable educational campaign to educate the public. “Behavioral change is quite a long process,” says one African delegate. “In order to create awareness, you have to start with the younger people and then at the same time you create the change within the older people”

