

ISETS COMMENTARY

Winter is coming: more efforts are needed to protect the energy poor

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More than 3 billion people world wide live in extreme energy poverty. They need cheap fuel, not ever more expensive green energy.

The recent increase of energy prices leads to general concerns that millions of households may not afford to use sufficient energy in the forthcoming winter, and become energy poor. In the U.K., electricity prices have already become the most expensive one in Europe. Natural gas prices in Europe and Asia are more than five times since last year. Attempts to build up stocks in these areas will further boost prices in winter.

While people are enthusiastic about actions against climate change, insufficient efforts were taken to find ef-

fective cover for the energy poor. Africa, for example, may suffer more when rich countries pledged to stop investment on fossil-fuel projects (Ramachandran, 2021). The February Texas energy crisis is an example that even people in the developed states can be affected in extreme weather conditions.

To limit global warming under the 1.5°C target, the world has to move away from fossil fuels (Welsby et al., 2021). Billions of dollars have already been directed to the energy transition process, but the imminent energy needs across the world should not be ignored, and we have to realize that renewables are yet to be a reliable substitute to fossil fuel energy.

Strengthened responses to protect the energy poor should also be included in the action plans against climate change (Dobbins et al., 2019). More efforts are needed by the policymakers to allow for a smooth and inclusive transition. Financial supports, contingency plans and even short-term compromises may be needed for the long-run sustainability.

Reference:

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