

Gold Standard's response to *Politiken* "Climate Deceived" series, January 2020

14 JANUARY 2020, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND – In January 2020, *Politiken*, a news source in Denmark, published a series of articles under the banner "Climate Deceived" that includes several articles that reference a Gold Standard-certified project. In response, Gold Standard provides the following context and clarifications.

The journalists visited an improved cookstove project in Kenya developed by CO2balance ([GS824](#)) that ended its Gold Standard certification in mid-2017. They spoke to a number of families that had received the new cookstove during the project activity and report that many of the interviewees claim to have used the new cookstove alongside traditional cooking methods (called "stove stacking"), used the stove and then discontinued use ("drop off" rates), or in some cases claim to have never used the stove because they preferred the speed and cooking results of their traditional three stone fires.

These types of feedback from users are typical of improved cookstove projects. Indeed, *Politiken's* coverage and the experts they cite highlight the complexity around improved cookstove projects generally -- the variation in adoption as well as the levels of uncertainty involved in quantifying the associated emission reductions -- which globally approved methodologies take into account. Examples of this accommodation of uncertainty include Gold Standard's [guidelines for usage surveys](#) in which emission reductions linked to carbon credits must be discounted based on the level of rigour that was available for a project developer's monitoring capacity, given resources and local context.

As the Kenya project in question commenced in 2009, it is certain that better technologies suited for local context and preferences have since emerged that today would demonstrate more widespread uptake. Many Gold Standard certified projects are introducing these improved solutions as they are able to, helped in large part by revenue from sales of carbon credits.

The journalists' findings from retroactively asking project participants about their past stove usage are not consistent with the projects official monitoring results, which were conducted by the project proponent and then checked and verified by an experienced validation and verification body (VVB), including through a site visit. Gold Standard and its official certification provider SustainCERT note this discrepancy in addition to the commentary shared by cookstove experts and are reviewing the matter. If it is deemed that this project is at a material risk for non-conformity to Gold Standard rules, an official investigation will be opened and progress published on the website.

In addition to clarifying specifics about the project GS824 or improved cookstoves as a climate solution, Gold Standard take this opportunity to react to the some of the series' general commentary about carbon offsetting.

Politiken suggests that carbon credits speed up global warming, citing a risk that buyers may maintain or increase their emissions because they think they can compensate with credits. There is no evidence for this. In fact, [Ecosystem Marketplace research](#) finds that companies who purchase carbon offsets are actually **more likely** to have strong reductions targets than those who do not.

Politiken also uses a sensational headline drawing on a common trope implying that privileged Westerners simply want to buy their way out of guilt: [translation through Google] "In Kenya, the poor must turn down the flame so Danish companies can call themselves green." Trillions of dollars are required to solve the climate crisis--a financial burden that Gold Standard believes should fall disproportionately on the developed world that gave rise to the problem. Using an existing carbon footprint as a measure to define what one's obligation and then making the financial contribution to reduce emissions elsewhere is an interim measure to accelerate the transition to net-zero emissions. Doing so by supporting projects that have additional development benefits is a step toward greater climate justice.

Gold Standard appreciates accountability in climate change solutions and systematically takes on input from project beneficiaries, project developers and auditors, academic experts, media reports, and local NGOs on an ongoing basis. We use this to reflect learnings from the field, changing market conditions and new technologies and processes in Gold Standard rules, requirements, methodologies and guidance. We are also working with a set of civil society stakeholders that includes WWF, CDP, CarbonMarketWatch to [define the voluntary carbon market for maximum impact post-2020](#). We welcome further inquiries on all of the above and commit to continuous improvement in all dimensions of our work.