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Leveraging Local Advocacy Content to Accelerate Clean Cooking In Ghana - A Policy Paper

Clean Cooking SIG

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Introduction

Access to clean cooking solutions remains uneven across the globe, with approximately 2.3 billion people lacking access as of 2023 (International Energy Agency [IEA], 2023). A significant proportion of this population resides in sub-Saharan Africa, where reliance on biomass fuels such as firewood and charcoal persists due to economic, cultural, and infrastructural constraints.

In Ghana, dependence on polluting cooking fuels remains substantial. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2021), 54.3% of households rely on wood and charcoal as their primary cooking fuels, with reliance particularly high in rural areas. While liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) adoption has increased to 36.9%, access disparities persist. The continued use of traditional cooking methods contributes significantly to household air pollution, which the World Health Organization (WHO) links to thousands of premature deaths annually in Ghana (WHO, 2016).

Despite high awareness of clean cooking technologies, adoption and sustained use remain limited. This gap reflects structural barriers such as affordability and supply constraints, as well as behavioural factors including cooking preferences and limited practical knowledge. This paper examines Ghana's policy landscape, evaluates implementation challenges, and proposes a structured advocacy solution to enhance uptake.

Policy and Institutional Framework in Ghana

The Government of Ghana, through the Ministry of Energy and Green Transition, has introduced several policies and programs aimed at transitioning households to clean cooking solutions. Central to this effort is Ghana's Nationally Determined Contributions, which set targets of distributing 3 million improved cookstoves and increasing LPG adoption to 50% by 2030 (Energy Commission, 2024). These targets are embedded within broader national energy and climate frameworks, demonstrating policy coherence.

Ghana has established a strong policy foundation to support clean cooking transitions. The government has set ambitious targets, including achieving 50% LPG adoption by 2030 and scaling up improved cookstove dissemination (Energy Commission, 2024). These targets are embedded within broader national energy and climate frameworks, demonstrating policy coherence.

Key initiatives include the LPG Promotion Programme and the Cylinder Recirculation Model, both designed to improve access, safety, and distribution efficiency and the National Clean Cooking Policy, which is expected to consolidate interventions across the sector. Additionally, Ghana has explored carbon financing mechanisms and partnerships with international organisations to support market development and awareness campaigns.

However, evidence suggests that implementation outcomes have not matched policy ambition. LPG penetration reached approximately 25.3% by 2020 despite longstanding targets (Energy Commission, 2021). Similarly, adoption of improved biomass cookstoves has remained below expected levels, with earlier studies indicating uptake below 25% among biomass-dependent households (MECS, 2021).

Ghana's approach demonstrates strong policy intent but reveals mixed implementation outcomes. The LPG Promotion Programme has contributed to increased LPG awareness and uptake, with survey data indicating that 66.67% of respondents report LPG as their primary cooking fuel. However, the continued reliance on charcoal and firewood reflects persistent fuel stacking driven by affordability constraints, supply inconsistencies, and cooking preferences.

These trends suggest that while policy intent is strong, systemic barriers continue to limit large-scale transformation as findings from the survey showed that only about 30% of improved cookstove owners use them daily, with challenges such as durability issues and incompatibility with local dishes reducing long-term reliance.

Role and Impact of Local Advocacy Content

Behaviour change communication plays a critical role in clean cooking adoption. The Obaatan Boafo campaign, implemented in collaboration with the Clean Cooking Alliance, provides a strong example.

The campaign utilised culturally relevant messaging, local languages, and community-based engagement strategies. It mobilised 350 women leaders, delivered over 1,500 radio broadcasts, and reported the sale of 362 stoves at market events during the Ghana campaign, with 3% of 12,000 attendees purchasing a stove at the events. The report attributed the campaign's relative success to culturally grounded messaging, trusted messengers and direct consumer engagement and reached approximately 5 million people (Clean Cooking Alliance, 2021).

Importantly, the campaign translated awareness into action. Market demonstrations and interpersonal engagement resulted in measurable increases in cookstove adoption and sales (Clean Cooking Alliance, 2021). The success of the campaign was largely attributed to the use of trusted messengers, practical demonstrations, and alignment with local cooking practices.

However, broader advocacy efforts in Ghana remain inconsistent. Messaging is often limited in linguistic diversity and lacks practical guidance on usage, maintenance, and safety. As a result, awareness does not consistently translate into sustained behaviour change.

Comparative Analysis of Policy Implementation in Ghana

Compared to leading practices in similar contexts, Ghana's clean cooking sector demonstrates strong policy alignment but weaker execution. The integration of clean cooking into national development and climate strategies is a notable strength. However, implementation gaps persist in behaviour change strategy, market system development, and service delivery.

A key limitation is the focus on initial adoption rather than sustained use. Without continued engagement and support, households revert to traditional fuels. Additionally, limited coordination across stakeholders reduces efficiency and impact.

Gender inclusion has been recognised within policy frameworks, but practical empowerment of women within the clean cooking value chain remains limited. Findings from the survey highlighted how women are central to both usage and decision-making, with 76.67% identified as primary cooks and 73.33% responsible for purchase decisions. Given that women are primary users and decision-makers in household cooking, stronger gender-responsive approaches are essential.

Policy Recommendation

To address these gaps, this paper proposes the development of a National Clean Cooking Advocacy Toolkit. The toolkit should serve as a standardised, evidence-based resource guiding advocacy design and implementation across Ghana. It should include:

- **Multilingual messaging frameworks** in major Ghanaian languages, including Twi, Ga, Ewe, and Dagbani
- **Practical user guidance**, including step-by-step instructions on stove use, safety, and maintenance
- **Culturally relevant demonstrations**, showcasing local dishes such as banku, kenkey, and fufu
- **Integrated communication channels**, combining mass media with community engagement platforms
- **Use of trusted local messengers**, including women leaders, community influencers, and entrepreneurs
- **Monitoring and evaluation tools**, tracking awareness, adoption, usage, and satisfaction

Conclusion

Ghana has made meaningful progress in establishing a policy framework for clean cooking. However, the continued reliance on traditional fuels highlights the need for more effective implementation strategies.

This paper demonstrates that localised advocacy is a critical driver of behaviour change. Evidence from Ghana shows that culturally relevant, community-based communication can significantly improve adoption when properly designed.

The proposed National Clean Cooking Advocacy Toolkit offers a practical and scalable solution to current challenges. By strengthening communication, improving coordination, and centring user needs, Ghana can accelerate its transition to clean cooking, improve public health outcomes, and contribute to broader climate and development goals.

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