

# VantagePoint

PERSPECTIVES ON CLEAN COOKING

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**Clean Cooking  
and Women's  
Empowerment**

Photo: Rodney Rascona

# FROM THE EDITOR





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## Dear readers,

I am thrilled to introduce you to the inaugural issue of *Vantage Point*, a new magazine by the Clean Cooking Alliance. We embark on this journey to explore the multifaceted world of clean cooking, shedding light on its pivotal role in achieving a sustainable future for all.

In this first edition, we delve into a topic of utmost significance: clean cooking and women's empowerment. At the heart of this exploration lies a fundamental truth: gender equality cannot be achieved without universal access to clean cooking. Women are the cornerstone of families and communities, bearing responsibility for their nourishment and well-being. Yet, far too often, women's invaluable contributions remain overshadowed, and the daily task of cooking is overlooked.

This issue exposes the profound connections between clean cooking and gender equality and highlights the opportunities for elevating women's voices.

We have engaged with experts, advocates, and changemakers who work tirelessly toward a world where no woman is burdened by the health and environmental hazards of traditional cooking methods or deprived of the opportunities offered by cleaner alternatives.

As you immerse yourself in the pages of *Vantage Point*, may you gain a deeper understanding of the integral role that clean cooking plays in women's empowerment and how women are driving change in this growing industry. Let these stories ignite conversations, inspire action, and prompt collaboration across sectors and geographies.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our contributors, the Clean Cooking Alliance team, especially Anushree Deb, Ridhi Aggarwal, and Dan Dredger, and you—our readers—for embarking on this journey with us. Your commitment to a cleaner, more equitable world is a beacon of hope that guides our efforts.

Happy reading!

Sincerely,  
**Jillene Connors Belopolsky**  
Chief of Staff and External Affairs,  
Clean Cooking Alliance

Engineering Her Own Path:

A CONVERSATION WITH

**REJOICE  
NTIRIWAA**



# Rejoice Ntiriwaa is an engineer, researcher, and lecturer

at Cape Coast Technical University in Ghana, focusing on bioenergy, renewable energy systems design, and alternative cooking fuels. She received the Clean Cooking Alliance's 2022 Women Leaders Award in Policy, Advocacy, and Research.

**Q: What inspired you to work in clean cooking technologies and climate change?**

**A:** I always loved the thrill of finding solutions to problems within my scope. Growing up, I watched my great-grandmother and grandmother use firewood on earth stoves to make meals in Effiduase Koforidua, in the eastern region of Ghana. Every morning, they would prepare the clay stove for the day's activities by dressing it with mud, which took about 45 minutes. Occasionally, my grandma would ask me to help with the dressing, a task I detested with all my being. It was, therefore, a concern in the back of my mind since childhood.

My great-grandmother underwent eye surgery when I was 3 years old to treat a cataract brought on by smoke emissions. What would have happened to her if she had not been able to pay for the procedure at the time?

My Ph.D. allowed me to synergize my newfound technical knowledge and skills, my childhood dislike for dressing earth stoves with mud, and my great-grandmother's surgery into more realistic and industry-relevant research.

**"The fact that a woman may gradually face death while working to feed her customers and to support herself and her family did not sit well with me."**

–REJOICE NTIRIWAA

I also realized that, in addition to financial constraints, cultural factors, and educational attainment, a lack of awareness about improved cooking options played a significant role in discouraging women from using modern cooking solutions. This discovery gave rise to my advocacy, which has completely changed my life and, I hope, is also changing the lives of many other women.

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**Q: How does clean cooking empower women?**

**A:** Improved access to modern cooking energy services has significant social and cultural implications. Women who use clean and reliable energy sources for cooking are better able to participate in economic activities and engage in education and skills-building opportunities.

Moreover, energy access enables women to actively participate in decision-making processes at the household and community levels, leading to a more inclusive and equitable society. Addressing energy poverty can pave the way for women's more empowered and equal future.

Furthermore, their empowerment and knowledge have a cross-generational impact because almost every child's first point of contact is likely to be their mother or another female figure; it is natural for children to grow into a product of their environment. As a result, when they grow up, their kitchen may reflect "Mama's kitchen."

**Q: What influenced your career choices in clean cooking?**

**A:** My forward-thinking parents and support systems understood the importance of education and the prerequisites for early childhood development. I have always loved to fiddle with gadgets. So, the logical nature of these games and my parents' empowerment contributed to my natural affinity and inclination toward engineering. I found out in recent years about a study that outlines the role these games play in the cognitive domain of girls in engineering as opposed to girls who were exposed only to dolls.

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**"Cooking issues are predominantly women's issues."**

**—REJOICE NTIRIWAA**

**Q: How can more women be encouraged and empowered to transition to clean cooking solutions?**

**A:** Diverse cultures and traditional meals call for varied cooking methods. If we want to accelerate access, we should avoid employing a one-solution-fits-all approach. Governments and funders could also support initiatives and businesses engaged in high-efficiency technologies.

Investing in individuals with technical expertise and knowledge about cooking energy and its related benefits, via advocacy and awareness creation at the grassroots level, would be an excellent way to boost women's confidence and continuous involvement in the sector. They can act as ambassadors, primarily focusing on science communication and awareness raising.

**Q: What advice would you give to girls and women considering careers in clean cooking?**

**A:** Staying in this field requires a lot of mental fortitude, grit, and self-awareness, meaning that mentorship must continue throughout one's career. When you are new in the field, you should find a mentor who speaks to your aspirations, and when you are more experienced, you should help others navigate their career paths.

At the same time, because we are the largest group affected by the harmful effects of dirty energy, let us continue doing our share to facilitate a smooth energy transition. No matter what stage of the clean cooking value chain you are at—policy, design, manufacturing, sales, usage, finance, advocacy, philanthropy, or research—be aware that your contribution is important. At every

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**“It behooves me to brighten the corner where I found myself. I may not be able to replace their stoves for them, but I can show them better options and educate them on the adverse effects of their fuel and stove choices.”**

**—REJOICE NTIRIWAA**

There can be

# NO GENDER EQUALITY

without **CLEAN COOKING**

Gender inequality is increasing in the face of compounding global crises, but increasing access to clean cooking is key to empowerment, and women are driving the solutions.







# Gender equality is 300 years away

**and gender disparities are worsening in the face of compounding global crises such as climate change, conflict, and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, one disparity often goes unnoticed and unaddressed, increasing the burden and vulnerability of women around the world: the way they cook.**

Cooking is an inescapable and fundamental part of life. It carries immense cultural and social significance and brings families together. But billions of people do not have the luxury of cooking their food safely.

Instead, they rely on polluting open fires or inefficient, climate-harming stoves to prepare their daily meals. Providing clean energy to households is critical to achieving global climate and sustainable development goals. Yet, we are unacceptably off track. Globally, 2.3 billion people lack access to clean cooking solutions, costing the world more than \$2.4 trillion in damage to the climate and local economies and contributing to more than 3 million premature deaths each year.

**Lack of access to clean cooking is the most under-invested health and environmental problem in the world.**

One gigaton (1 billion tons) of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions is released annually from cooking over open fires and inefficient stoves, accounting for 2% of global emissions.

**Clean cooking is an immediate and cost-effective means of reducing harmful carbon emissions.**

More than half of human-generated black carbon emissions come from burning solid fuels for cooking and heating in homes, making household energy the most significant controllable source of black carbon.

It is impossible to overstate the urgency for action, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where access to clean cooking is low and the absolute number of people relying on polluting fuels and stoves continues to rise.



## THE COST TO WOMEN AND GIRLS

Women and girls bear a disproportionate share of this cost in the form of poor health and safety, lost productivity, and diminished well-being. Not only does cooking endanger their health from inhaling toxic smoke, but they also may be removed from school because of domestic work such as collecting firewood, walking ever-greater distances due to forest degradation.

© Climate Impact Partners



They face increased vulnerability to physical attack when leaving their communities to search for fuel, especially in settings where conflict and displacement exist.

**Women bear a disproportionate share of this cost in the form of poor health and safety, as well as lost productivity and diminished well-being.**

This burden on women costs the world \$0.8 trillion each year. Despite this enormous impact, cooking is often overlooked as one of the drivers of gender inequality.

**Lack of progress on clean cooking is costing the world more than \$2.4 trillion each year**

DRIVEN BY ADVERSE IMPACTS ON:



**HEALTH**  
\$1.4 TRILLION



**CLIMATE**  
\$0.2 TRILLION



**WOMEN & GIRLS**  
\$0.8 TRILLION

"The State of Access to Modern Energy Cooking Services." (2020). World Bank.

## GENDERED IMPACTS OF LACK OF ACCESS TO CLEAN COOKING



### Traps Women in Time Poverty

In developing economies, women and girls can spend up to 10 hours each week collecting firewood and up to 4 hours each day cooking on traditional stoves, trapping women into a cycle of time poverty and leaving them with limited resources to improve their circumstances.



### Reduces Women's Productivity

The global cost of women's lost productivity because of lack of access to clean cooking is estimated at \$0.8 trillion annually. This conservative figure accounts for women's time spent on fuel collection, food preparation, cooking, and stove cleaning.



### Restricts Women's Resources & Agency

Sociocultural norms and gender roles can impede women's decision-making power. For instance, limited access to finance and credit can restrict women's abilities to afford clean cooking solutions like liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) or electric stoves, which have higher upfront costs.



### Increases Unpaid Care Burden

Women and girls undertake more than 75% of unpaid care work in the world. In low-income countries, women in rural areas can spend up to 14 hours a day doing unpaid care work, including collecting fuel and cooking. This burden undermines their health and well-being and limits their economic prosperity by driving gender gaps in employment and wages.

**“My daughter knows that the firewood collected last week is still at home because this stove saves fuel. She is not worried while reading because she will not have to go and collect firewood, so she is doing her studies in peace while concentrating.”**

—MERCY, MOTHER IN KENYA



© Romana Manpreet



### **Increases Indoor Air Pollution & Poor Health**

60% of all premature deaths from household air pollution globally are among women and children. Prolonged exposure to smoke from cooking can result in the development of various types of cancers and respiratory illnesses.



### **Adverse Impacts on Women's Mental Health**

In sub-Saharan Africa, women relying on charcoal and wood for cooking have a 50% higher risk of developing depression than those cooking with gas. The negative impacts of traditional cooking on women's mental health stem from lost productivity, fewer job opportunities, and reduced food security.



### **Increases Gender-Based Violence**

Food insecurity and the absence of reliable cooking fuels can force women and girls to travel long distances to collect firewood, increasing their risk of being assaulted, raped, or even killed. This risk is exceptionally high for women and girls in displacement settings: 81% of refugees and internally displaced people rely on firewood and charcoal to cook, limiting their quality of life and exacerbating environmental degradation around settlements.

**“My new stove is clean, burns with no smoke, and cooks all our meals quickly. I can now spend more time with my children, and my family is happier and much healthier.”**

**—NATALIE, COOKSTOVE USER IN HAITI**

## BEYOND A NARRATIVE OF VICTIMHOOD: WOMEN ARE CENTRAL TO THE SOLUTION

Accelerating access to clean cooking is critical for empowering women and advancing gender equality. Women are essential to the widespread adoption and use of clean cooking solutions. Through their networks and community relationships, women play a critical role in increasing awareness and generating demand for clean cooking solutions, and their agency as household decision-makers and consumers should not be underestimated.

Women have shown themselves to be active agents of change.

Their resilience and resourcefulness have often been overlooked, but those are the very qualities that can drive the success of clean cooking initiatives. When women are provided with the tools and resources they need, they become advocates, educators, and leaders in their communities. Their stories of overcoming challenges and embracing new technologies inspire others to do the same. By highlighting these stories, we shift the narrative from one of victimhood to one of strength and empowerment.

The clean cooking value chain also offers pathways for women's economic empowerment, providing opportunities for women entrepreneurs and employees to contribute to a thriving global industry for clean cooking.

Women's unique insights and understanding of local needs can help tailor clean cooking solutions to specific contexts, making these solutions more accessible and appealing to users.

**The clean cooking sector presents opportunities for women to contribute to a growing market. Their involvement as employees and entrepreneurs helps businesses thrive.**

As women take on the roles of manufacturers, distributors, and service providers in the clean cooking sector, they challenge traditional gender norms and pave the way for a more inclusive and diverse industry.

Moreover, the economic empowerment of women in this sector has a multiplier effect on communities, as women tend to reinvest their income in ways that benefit not only their families but also the broader social fabric. In this way, clean cooking becomes a catalyst for sustainable development, where women are both the driving force and the beneficiaries of positive change.

**[Read more about the amazing women leading the clean cooking sector in the Clean Cooking Alliance's Women Energizing Change Series.](#)**

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Creating a

# GENDER- SMART

## CLEAN COOKING SECTOR

Clean cooking can positively impact climate, health, and socioeconomic conditions, but without an intentional focus on gender dynamics, this potential is only partially realized.



# The clean cooking sector has potential

to make a positive impact on climate, environment, health, and socioeconomic structures.

But without a deliberate focus on gender dynamics, this potential remains only partially realized.

Involving women in decision-making, innovation, and entrepreneurship opportunities related to clean cooking not only enhances the sector's effectiveness but also dismantles barriers to gender equality.

By enabling women to take ownership of their energy choices, the industry becomes a catalyst for their economic autonomy, skill development, and empowerment, resulting in a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

**“Clean cooking should be recognized as a serious business where women can contribute to changing not only their lives but also the economies of their nations.”**

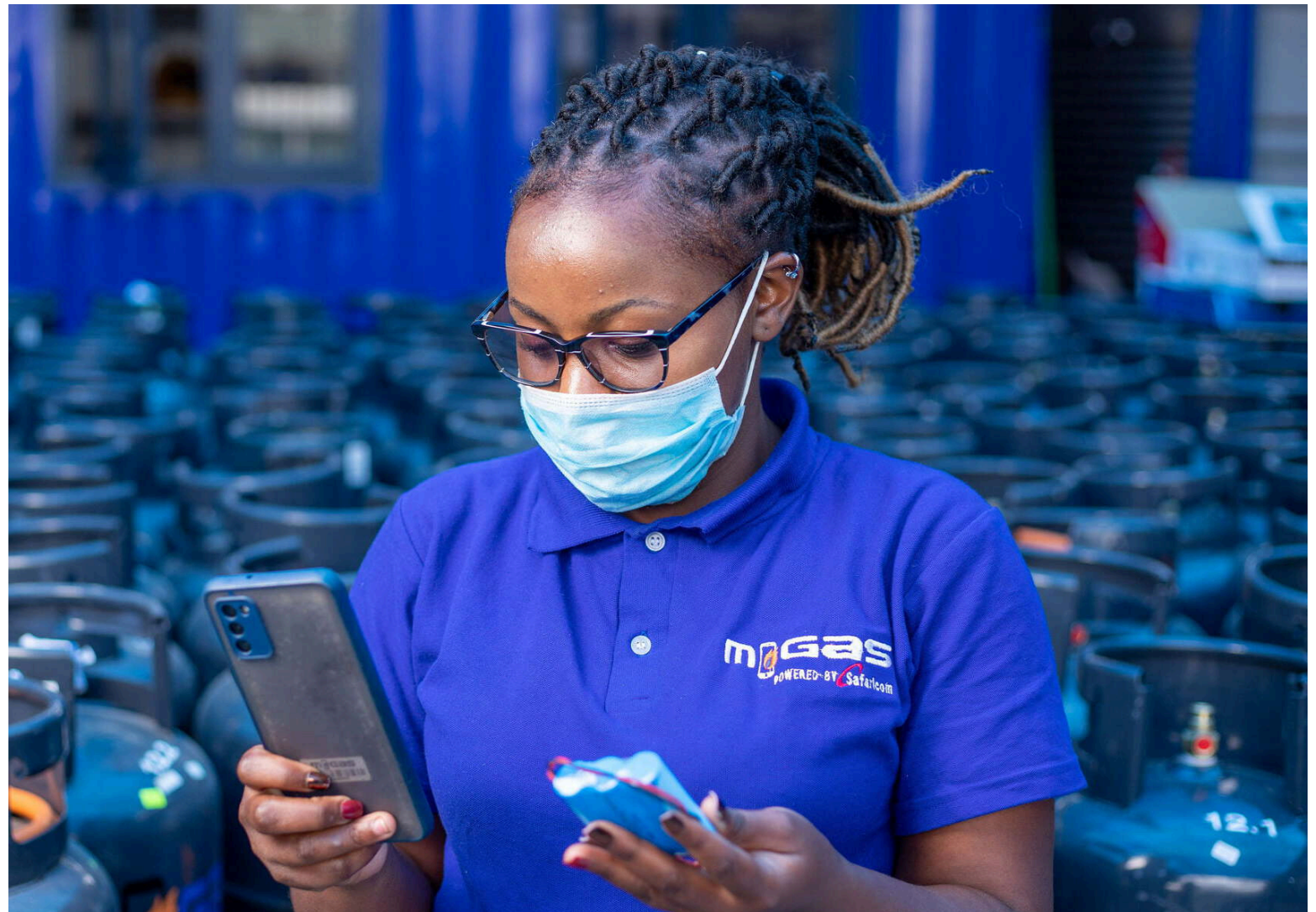
—DOROTHY OTINEO, CEO, NYALORE IMPACT LIMITED, KENYA





When women enter the marketplace, whether as entrepreneurs, employees, or consumers, they have immense potential to spur economic growth.

In Kenya, a study found that women cookstove entrepreneurs sold three times as many stoves as their male peers when given the same level of training and support. Building a gender-smart clean cooking sector is critical to accelerating progress toward universal access, but it requires dedicated support to women entrepreneurs and employees, gender mainstreaming tools for clean cooking enterprises, and a dramatic increase in gender-lens investment.



© Daniel Mutema / Clean Cooking Alliance

## BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AND EMPLOYEES

Despite making up 39% of the global labor force, women account for only 16% of the formal energy sector, and these numbers are even lower in management positions. The barriers women face in the energy sector are similar to those elsewhere in the economy. There is, however, an urgency to attract and retain a diverse workforce in the energy sector to ensure innovation and the inclusive perspectives needed to support a just and equitable energy transition.

It has been widely demonstrated that companies with a larger share of women in senior roles have significantly higher returns and that companies with greater employee diversity out-innovate and outperform others. Further, having women in

leadership positions enables companies to gain insights into the preferences of female customers, which can generate better business success.

This is especially true in the clean cooking sector. It is the founding rationale behind the Women in Clean Cooking Mentorship Program (WICC). Launched by the Clean Cooking Alliance (CCA) in 2021, together with the Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition (GWNET) and Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL), the WICC program equips women entrepreneurs, managers, and employees in the clean cooking industry with a comprehensive toolkit to grow and thrive as leaders while fostering a dynamic and supportive community of like-minded professionals.

The WICC program pairs early-career women employees and entrepreneurs

with expert 1:1 mentorship to develop specific professional and leadership goals. The first two WICC cohorts cumulatively supported 90 women from 26 countries. Mentees have the opportunity to meet with clean cooking experts who provide them with invaluable insights, experience, support, and knowledge.

**“This has been one of the most insightful and helpful programs, with a strong sense of community. We’re all after the same goal—helping women in the clean cooking space and renewable energy.”**

**–LOUISE WILLIAMSON, PROJECT AND IMPLEMENTATION MANAGER, ENER-G-AFRICA, SOUTH AFRICA**

By engaging in bilateral interaction with mentors over nine months, mentees refine their strategic thinking and generate innovative ideas to excel in

their field. The program's regional focus on early to mid-career professionals in Africa and Asia ensures a localized and impactful experience for participants. This mentorship, along with knowledge-transfer webinars and networking sessions, is helping to foster the next generation of clean cooking leaders.

Women's involvement and leadership in the clean cooking sector can transform products, sales, and company operations while improving the lives of employees, their families, and communities. Programs like WICC create a virtuous cycle of women supporting women as leaders and changemakers.

The third WICC cohort launched in early September 2023, expanding to support 90 mentees.

## MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN CLEAN COOKING ENTERPRISES

To develop and deploy the next generation of clean cooking entrepreneurs and employees, the sector must cultivate gender-smart enterprises that value women's talent and mainstream gender into business operations.

This involves a comprehensive shift in organizational mindset, by integrating gender considerations into every facet of the enterprise, from leadership positions to product development and marketing strategies. Recognizing that gender mainstreaming enhances both social equity and business efficacy, clean cooking enterprises can harness the diverse perspectives of women to drive innovation and cater to a broader clientele.

Gender mainstreaming within clean cooking enterprises goes beyond numerical representation; it encompasses inclusive work environments that address the specific needs and aspirations of female employees. Flexible work arrangements, mentoring programs, and skill development initiatives tailored to women can provide a supportive foundation for their professional growth. By demonstrating a commitment to gender mainstreaming, clean cooking enterprises can attract a broader customer base, build stronger partnerships, and gain a competitive advantage in the market.

**To further this effort, CCA provides Gender-Smart Advisory Support (GSAS) to clean cooking companies in its Venture Catalyst program to build their capacity to mainstream gender into business operations.**

**Palmis Enèji**, a social enterprise in solar lighting and clean cooking solutions in Haiti, faced the challenge of increasing its female workforce, retaining its skilled female employees, and elevating the careers of its female workers to assume leadership positions. The organization's marketing strategy and last-mile distribution campaigns had not been successful, resulting in lower engagement with the organization's key customer base and limited success in sales profits.

These challenges hindered Palmis Enèji's growth and limited its impact in providing sufficient clean cooking access to households in Haiti, thus perpetuating the cyclical trap of gender inequality. Through CCA's GSAS program, Palmis Enèji identified demand and supply side constraints to increasing gender diversity in the organization, along with actionable steps to bridge these shortcomings.

**Circle Gas**, a Kenyan LPG company, also engaged CCA's GSAS program. Beginning with a "gender diagnostic" assessment to understand the company's starting point for building an inclusive and diverse workforce, Circle Gas received tailored technical assistance to enhance gender mainstreaming efforts across its internal and external operations.

**"There has always been a desire to have better gender balance within the company, but we lacked understanding on how to make it happen. With the gender policy and broader support from CCA, now we have concrete steps we can take to reach our goal."**

**-LAURA GLISH, DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROGRAMS, CIRCLE GAS**

As clean cooking companies grow and enter new markets, gender mainstreaming is crucial to ensuring success and impact. Regardless of where they are on the gender leadership journey, companies can consider beginning with these five steps:



### 1 | Acknowledge gender as an issue

Agreeing that gender equality is a shared company goal requires senior leadership buy-in and inter-departmental collaboration to ensure consistent messages and policies.



### 2 | Undertake a gender diagnostic

Engage critical departments, including sales, human resources, legal, and marketing, to compile data and review current policies and progress on gender.



### 3 | Benchmark your performance

Use tools such as the [Women's Empowerment Principles Gender Gap Analysis Tool](#) to benchmark against partners, competitors, and industry leaders to understand the gaps in your current practices and find opportunities to improve.



### 4 | Expand your commitments

Learning from the diagnostic assessment, companies should choose specific areas to invest in and make public commitments to progress. Focus on areas where the company can have the most impact without ignoring issues that are challenging or less marketable.



### 5 | Monitor and report

Tracking and communicating performance on the representation and progress of women across the company's value chain is essential to ensuring accountability and continuous improvement. It also helps to secure gender-lens investment and partnerships and to attract and retain top talent.

**“Customers are women, so customer-facing decision-makers should be more than 50% women.”**

—SEBASTIAN RODRIGUEZ, CO-FOUNDER & CTO, CIRCLE GAS

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A close-up photograph of a person's hands adjusting a blue gas stove. A large, shiny metal pot is placed on the stove. The stove is on a table covered with a white patterned cloth. The background is slightly blurred, showing a person wearing a patterned shirt.

# MOBILIZING

## Gender-lens Investment for Clean Cooking

Gender-focused investments  
can help bridge the \$10 billion  
per year gap in clean cooking finance.

# Today, investment in the clean cooking sector hovers around \$200 million a year.

**It's a fraction of the estimated \$10 billion per year required to achieve universal access.**

The current investment scenario in clean cooking reflects both progress and challenges in transitioning millions of people away from polluting fuels. Investment reaching clean cooking companies grew at a compound annual rate of 20% from 2014 to 2020. Yet, if this growth rate continues, it will be 2036 before investment levels in clean cooking companies surpass the \$1 billion mark.

Clean cooking urgently needs more capital, and that capital needs to come from a much wider pool of investors with varying appetites for risk and return. One up-and-coming source is gender-lens investing, which considers gender-based factors across the investment process. Gender-lens investing can create the enabling environment for just and inclusive clean cooking transitions by increasing women's role in developing and implementing equitable clean cooking interventions. Yet, only 9 percent of all energy sector development finance has gender equality as an objective.



© PayGo Energy

Women are pivotal players in global sustainable economies, and investing in women and girls yields multiple social, economic, and environmental benefits. Systematic, gender-smart approaches benefit society as a whole. Evidence from other sectors, including forestry, agriculture, and water, demonstrates that projects with a gender-sensitive approach are more likely to succeed.

Given its range of co-benefits and position at the nexus of gender, climate, and health, clean cooking is an ideal sector for gender-lens investment. The challenge for investors is often knowing where to start.



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Worldwide, gender-lens investors have already committed up to \$20 billion, and transformative initiatives such as 2X Global are mobilizing more from a wide range of capital providers.

Yet gender-lens investors have been somewhat blind to women's unpaid work, including clean cooking, and have not yet developed a robust investment focus on the care economy.

However, a growing number of resources are helping investors integrate gender into the investment process and identify opportunities within the clean cooking sector specifically.

**The increased focus on gender-lens investment is an opportunity to unlock capital for clean cooking, which sits at the nexus of gender, climate, and health.**

While gender-lens investment has been slow to grow, a promising upward trend could be a game-changer for the clean cooking sector. Major funds, including the Global Innovation Fund, Denmark's Investment Fund for Developing Countries, and BIX Capital, are applying a gender lens in the investment process and investing in clean cooking.

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## The emPOWERment Bond: Valuing Women's Time

Results-based financing (RBF) could be a valuable tool in bridging the funding gap for clean cooking. To date, RBF has mainly focused on climate and health outcomes while neglecting gender impacts. To address this issue and find better ways of measuring and valuing the time women lose due to household energy use, CCA is collaborating with Duke University and C-Quest Capital to create a framework for a new RBF instrument called the emPOWERment bond.

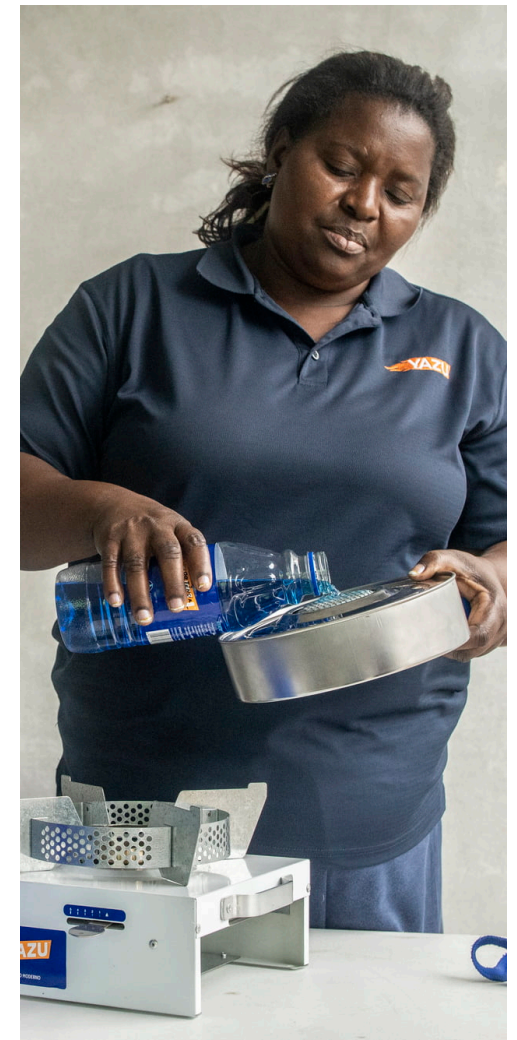
The emPOWERment bond will produce guidance on quantifying, verifying, and monetizing the gendered time-use and productivity benefits of improved biomass cookstove initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa while contributing to an inclusive energy transition.

The emPOWERment bond operates on a concept similar to that of carbon credits generated by clean cooking programs, but there are some notable differences. While carbon credit sales subsidize clean cooking programs based only on their climate impact, the emPOWERment bond recognizes the significant benefits that clean cooking can provide in terms of livelihood, health, and gender equality.

The emPOWERment bond framework considers the impact of adopting and using clean cooking technologies on women's time management and productivity. By using these technologies, women can reduce their exposure to household air pollution, save time on cooking, and reduce the number of trips to collect firewood. This time can then be redirected toward pursuing educational opportunities, engaging in economic activities, or simply resting.

**“Understanding the time savings and empowerment benefits of improved cooking interventions is often discussed based on anecdotes or using ad hoc measures of impact, but it deserves the same level of rigorous attention as methods deployed to understand health and climate implications.”**

**–MARC JEULAND, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC POLICY AND GLOBAL HEALTH, DUKE UNIVERSITY**



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Leveraging this framework, funders interested in advancing gender equality and energy access could commit resources, contingent upon achieving impact results, to investors who, in turn, could provide finance to programs promoting improved biomass stoves.

This funding would decrease the cost of implementation and enhance the affordability of clean cooking solutions to rural consumers. With greater affordability and scale, more households would adopt these solutions, saving women more time.

© Kip Patrick / Clean Cooking Alliance



**“I used to be busy all the time. Cooking with traditional cookstoves was time-consuming. Now I have time to grow vegetables, which we eat and sell in the market. Not only am I breathing better, but I’m also supporting my family. Clean cooking has changed my life.”**

**–SITA BAI, COOKSTOVE USER IN INDIA**



© Peter Irungu

Moreover, these newly empowered women, especially those able to capitalize time savings into income gains and greater agency, could increase demand for higher-tier solutions. With increased buying power, women and their families can move up the energy ladder. The emPOWERment bond offers a pivotal, market-based solution to scale clean cooking access without leaving behind the rural poor.


## **FURTHER RESOURCES**

Find out more from CCA and its partners about the opportunities for RBF to expand access to clean cooking solutions:

[CCA's Investor Resources](#)

[2X Toolkits](#)

[Clean Cooking RBFs: Key Design Principles](#)

A man in an orange lab coat and safety gear is working on a large black metal pot in a workshop. He is using a power drill to work on the lid of the pot. The pot has the text "jikokoa pro" on it. In the background, other people are visible, some wearing masks. The scene is set in a workshop or factory environment.

# PRIORITIZING CLEAN COOKING AND GENDER IN ENERGY POLICY

Ambitious, comprehensive, and inclusive energy policies are needed to address energy poverty, environmental degradation, and gender inequality.

# As the world grapples with the intertwined challenges

**of energy poverty, environmental degradation, and gender inequality, the need for a comprehensive and inclusive energy policy framework has become paramount.**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encapsulates a universal call for action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. At its core are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which form a blueprint for a better and more sustainable future. SDG 7, which aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all, including access to clean cooking, stands out as a pivotal objective.

The addition of clean cooking as a specific SDG target, on par with electrification, has been instrumental in progress to date and a direct result of the research and advocacy of leading organizations like CCA, ENERGIA, and the World Health Organization.

However, the significance of clean cooking, a critical subset of energy access, is often overshadowed by discussions about electricity and renewable generation. Without urgent political prioritization and mobilization of finance, 1.9 billion people will still be without access to clean cooking in 2030, with nearly six out of 10 of those living in sub-Saharan Africa.



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The gender gap within this energy access gap is even more alarming. Women are disproportionately affected by energy poverty and climate change, and because the energy sector is male-dominated, energy policies, programs, and projects tend to be gender-blind.

While there is a long way to go, clean cooking is rising up on political agendas. As of March 2023, 98 low- and middle-income countries have included household energy or clean cooking measures in their nationally determined contributions to the Paris Agreement.

The UN's High-level Dialogue on Energy in September 2021 led to the mobilization of [Energy Compacts](#) as a policy tool to drive progress on SDG 7. Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, and Rwanda set ambitious clean cooking targets, and a Clean Cooking Compact was endorsed by more than 70 international stakeholders. These initiatives represent a promising new wave of national leadership, from [India's LPG program](#) that has expanded access to more than 50 million low-income households through targeted subsidies, to [Tanzania](#), which is developing a 10-year strategy of reaching 80% clean cooking energy usage by 2032 (up from 7% in 2021). But implementing these transformational plans will require dedicated resources, financing, and capacity building to [enable governments](#) to lead sustainable clean cooking transitions.

## The Gender-Energy Nexus

Access to affordable, sustainable, safe, and clean energy is a precondition for achieving SDG 5 on gender equality and for empowering all women and girls. Yet, while gender inequalities in energy access are substantial, they remain largely unmeasured. In fact, SDG 7 is one of six SDGs without gender-specific indicators. Often, women's needs are ignored, causing them to fall further behind and reducing the chance of achieving these goals.

**Providing clean energy to households is critical to achieving global climate and sustainable development goals.**

However, we can change this situation by recognizing and prioritizing women's needs and preferences in energy policies, programs, and projects. This consideration should cover every step, from planning and design to execution. While emerging initiatives by national governments, international organizations, and the private sector are seeking to close these gender gaps, more efforts are urgently needed.

[At least 10 countries](#) have included gender in their national energy policies, and Kenya was the first government to adopt a [National Gender and Energy Policy](#) in 2019. In addition, the Economic Community of West African States has developed a [Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access](#) to provide policymakers with evidence on implementing gender-sensitive energy interventions.



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In 2021, ENERGIA, UNIDO, and GWNET initiated a [Gender and Energy Compact](#) to stimulate action toward gender equality and women's empowerment to accelerate a just, inclusive, and sustainable energy transition. The compact currently counts over 80 signatories, including governments, non-governmental organizations, research institutions, and the private sector. In 2022, the World Bank began including gender tracking in its [Regulatory Indicators for Sustainable Energy](#), which collects data from 111 countries, and the International Energy Agency opened a [gender and energy portal](#) to track gender gaps in employment and wages, senior management, entrepreneurship, and innovation in the energy sector. But continued efforts are required to strengthen the collection of gender-responsive energy data and to address the lack of data and consistency of data collection.

## Kenya's Gender and Energy Policy: A Case Study

Kenya has emerged as a pioneering force in recognizing the intricate link between gender and energy.

**“We believe that the implementation of this policy will promote gender-sensitive energy institutions and enhance inclusivity and participation of women, men, and all marginalized groups.”**

**–PHOEBE MAKUNGU, GENDER OFFICER,  
MINISTRY OF ENERGY, KENYA**

As part of its commitment to achieving the SDGs and national development plans, Kenya's Ministry of Energy launched its [Gender and Energy Policy](#) in 2019. The policy, the first of its kind, provides a comprehensive framework for mainstreaming gender considerations across the energy sector.

Despite the efforts and success in increasing overall access to energy, Kenya's progress had been hindered by the affordability, reliability, and capacity of energy services and clean cooking solutions, and by cultural norms that influence and shape the participation of women, youth, and marginalized groups in the energy supply chain.

Moreover, much more needs to be done with regard to clean cooking technologies, whose adoption has not matched the same positive outcome as with electricity access in recent years. The Gender and Energy Policy intends to address these development gaps and demonstrate the Ministry's commitment to providing all individuals with equal opportunities for using energy services, without any gender-based discrimination.

**Even in the short time since Kenya implemented this approach, several key lessons have emerged that can help create a blueprint for others. These include:**



Doing a focused gender analysis and audits to identify existing policy gaps and priorities and strengthen data and evidence to demonstrate the value of gender mainstreaming.



Ensuring active participation of women and men throughout the value chain.



Building multi-stakeholder alliances and leveraging existing gender-focused programs.



Finding gender champions within the government who will support implementation, as gender mainstreaming is a long-term commitment; process and policies on paper are not enough.

The world is way off track to achieve the SDGs by 2030. The annual funding gap has risen from \$2.5 trillion before the COVID-19 pandemic to an estimated \$4.2 trillion today. SDG 7 stands out as one of the most lagging goals, primarily because of sluggish advancements in ensuring access to clean cooking solutions.

It's imperative that governments usher in a new phase marked by expedited advancements toward the SDGs. The time is right for transformative actions that pave the way to a future where no one is left behind and the ambitions of the SDGs are not just aspirations, but a lived reality.

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# PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

CCA collaborates with dedicated advocates and organizations to promote women's empowerment and support women leaders in the clean cooking industry. These partners include ENERGIA, 2X Global, and Vital Voices.





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# The ENERGIA International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy

**is a network of like-minded organizations and professionals active in Africa and Asia. Its vision is for women to have an equal opportunity to lead, participate in, and benefit from universal energy access and a climate-just and inclusive energy transition as essential rights to development.**

Working toward achieving and contributing to this vision, ENERGIA implements a multi-pronged approach that combines several elements:

- Building women's economic empowerment in the energy sector by creating enabling policies and a market environment at global and national levels, through lobbying, advocacy, awareness raising, and bringing stakeholders together;
  - Gender mainstreaming; and
  - Partnership building, knowledge creation, and information sharing.
- Producing the "[Gender-Responsive Electric Cooking in Nepal](#)" report, which offers insights into how gender issues and norms influence the uptake of electric cooking; and
  - Publishing a [research report](#) and [practical toolkit](#) to better understand the challenges and business cases related to financing women's micro, small, and medium enterprises at the last mile of the renewable energy sector.

ENERGIA and its partners have supported government agencies and local authorities in Kenya, Tanzania, Senegal, and Nepal to create gender-responsive energy policies and plans.

**To learn more about ENERGIA's work and initiatives, please visit [www.energia.org](http://www.energia.org).**



# 2X Global is a worldwide membership and field-building organization

**for investors, capital providers, and intermediaries working in public and private markets across both developed and emerging economies.**

2X Global engages the full spectrum of investors, capital providers, mobilizers, and influencers, and works together to advance intersectional investment agendas, level up gender-smart investments, and scale up the field of gender finance. Under the 2X Challenge, the 2X Global community has deployed \$27.7 billion in gender lens investments since 2018.

Here is a selection of some of the tools and resources that 2X Global has built to help others get started and go further on their gender-smart investing journeys:

- The [2X Global Knowledge Hub](#), a comprehensive library of gender-lens investing resources that can be filtered by region, theme, sector, or asset class; and
- [Reports](#) across a variety of themes, such as climate finance and the care economy, as well as a compendium of [case studies](#) that outline how gender finance works in practice;

- Climate and gender finance reports, including the [Gender and Climate Finance Toolkit](#), which helps investors, fund managers, and other stakeholders identify and prioritize gender-smart climate finance investment risks and opportunities; and the “[Inclusive Gender and Climate Finance](#)” report, which presents the rationale for centering frontline, underrepresented, and underserved communities in investment.

**To learn more about the work and initiatives of 2X Global, please visit [www.2xglobal.org](http://www.2xglobal.org).**



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# For more than 25 years, the Vital Voices Global Partnership

**has been investing in women leaders solving the world's greatest challenges.**

As “venture catalysts,” Vital Voices identifies those with a bold vision for change and partners with them to make that vision a reality, scaling and accelerating their impact through long-term investments to expand the skills, connections, capacity, and visibility of women leaders. Vital Voices provided early support for leaders who went on to become Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, U.S. Youth Poet Laureates, prime ministers, and social entrepreneurs.

Since its founding in 1997, Vital Voices has directly supported more than 20,000 women changemakers across 185 countries and built the most powerful global network of women leaders who are daring to reimagine a more equitable world for all.

Vital Voices hosts the [VV GROW Fellowship](#), a global accelerator for women owners of small- and medium-sized businesses. The program elevates women entrepreneurs as drivers of economic growth and social change by supporting them to grow their businesses and social impact. Vital Voices works with these leaders to address key obstacles to growth and enhance their leadership and management skills.

Recent VV GROW Fellows from the clean cooking sector include:



**Mwayi Kampesi**

CEO and Founder, Planet Green Africa



**Betty Ikalany**

CEO, Appropriate Energy Saving Technologies

**To learn more about the work and initiatives of Vital Voices, please visit [www.vitalvoices.org](http://www.vitalvoices.org).**

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