

YOUTH FOR CLEAN COOKING

ELEVATING THE VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL ACCESS



The Clean Cooking Alliance (CCA) recognizes the vital role of youth in achieving universal access to clean cooking, contributing to the cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable future that young people need to thrive. CCA is developing a youth engagement strategy, with the goal to achieve sustainable and equitable youth engagement contributing to the strengthening of the clean cooking sector.

Clean Cooking is a Youth Issue

The United Nations has declared access to a clean and healthy environment as a universal human right, yet lack of access to clean cooking solutions remains a major challenge, halting progress toward a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable future. Reliance on polluting, open fires or inefficient stoves has direct negative consequences on health, well-being, access to food, education,

employment, a healthy environment, and consequently, on the enjoyment of basic human rights. Without protection and fulfillment of these rights, human beings cannot enjoy their inherent dignity, which consequently threatens freedom, justice, and peace in the world. Entire families are affected, but some members, including women and children, suffer more due to their longer exposure and/or greater sensitivity to hazardous pollutants.

Ninety percent of the world's 1.8 billion youth live in developing countries where 2.4 billion people still rely on polluting fuels and stoves to cook their food. The negative impact of traditional cooking on young people is substantial, both in terms of the size of the youth population affected and the cross-cutting nature of the adverse impacts on youth. As elaborated below, growing up in an unhealthy and unsustainable environment where clean cooking solutions are inaccessible can considerably limit young people's opportunities for a healthy and fulfilling life.

For the purposes of developing this strategy, we adopt the UN's age definition of youth (between 15 and 24 years old). However, aware of the fluidity of various stages in life that cannot always be described with rigid age groups, we will not strictly rely on the age definition and will adopt a more flexible approach in practice.

Health

Access to clean cooking is critical for young people's overall health, as it impacts both disease prevention and food security. Household air pollution from the use of solid fuels for cooking remains a leading risk factor for diseases such as stroke, heart disease, and lung cancer, resulting in 3.2 million premature deaths annually.ⁱ This includes nearly half of all pneumonia related deaths in children less than 5 years old. When firewood and other fuel is scarce or insufficient to cook meals, families are forced to skip meals or eat undercooked food, which undermines food security and access to adequate nutrition. Young people and children require increased quantities of protein and energy to support the production of blood, bone cells, sex steroids, and growth hormones; inadequate diets during this period of development can have negative implications for cognitive health and vitality later in life.ⁱⁱ

Environment & Climate

Although young people and children are the least responsible for climate and environmental challenges, they will suffer the most severe consequences. The world must take more decisive action to halt climate change and environmental degradation, which are exacerbated by polluting cooking practices. More than half of global black carbon emissions - a significant contributor to climate change - come from domestic solid fuel use. The use of unsustainable biomass fuels for cooking also contributes to forest degradation, while black carbon emissions from cooking end up deposited in the Arctic, contributing to sea ice melt. Dependency on polluting cooking fuels and appliances means that young people and future generations will inherit a less livable Earth and experience

devastating effects of climate change and environmental degradation.

Displacement

Youth and children represent a significant proportion of those fleeing wars, violence, persecution, human rights violations, and natural disasters. Displacement has reached record levels, with 82.4 million young people forcibly displaced at the end of 2020.ⁱⁱⁱ Young people are increasingly in need of humanitarian assistance, often for protracted periods,^{iv} lasting for 17 years on average.^v Half of all refugees are under the age of 18, with those aged 18–24 constituting another 13 percent of the total.^{vi} Additionally, nearly 10 million internally displaced persons are between the ages of 15 and 24.^{vii} In displacement settings, lack of access to clean cooking is a major challenge, with 81 percent of displaced people relying on firewood and charcoal for cooking, limiting quality of life and exacerbating local environmental degradation around camps and settlements.





Education & Employment

With more than 70 million unemployed young people worldwide,^{viii} youth unemployment is three times higher than that of adults in almost all countries; young women are particularly affected.^{ix} Moreover, 156 million employed youth in low- and middle-income countries still live in poverty, despite having jobs.^x About 258 million children and youth are out of school,^{xi} while almost 30 percent of the poorest 12- to 14-year-olds have never attended school, with an average upper secondary enrolment rate of only 14 percent in low-income countries.^{xii} COVID-19 is further exacerbating these inequalities, interrupting education and training and putting youth in danger of protracted periods of unemployment and inactivity.^{xiii} Reliance on traditional cooking is another major challenge that hampers education, employment, and other productive opportunities, as children and young people are overloaded with helping their mothers, who often spend prolonged time on cooking and fuel collection.

Sustainable Development Goals

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is critical to youth development,

particularly the goals addressing priority areas like education, employment, health, gender, inequalities, poverty, hunger, environmental issues, and climate change.^{xiv} Clean cooking is essential for delivering at least 10 of the 17 SDGs where cooking, household air pollution, and women's empowerment play a key role, and impact youth development at the same time. However, if current trends continue, universal access to clean cooking will not be achieved by 2030. The level of funding and investment in the clean cooking sector has not matched the global magnitude of the challenge, hovering in the tens of millions of dollars and falling far below the \$ 4.5 billion in annual investment required for universal access.

Representation & Inclusion

As emphasized in the context of climate action, meaningful youth participation should be embedded in all dimensions, all cycles, and all levels of governance, and in multi-stakeholder settings.^{xv} However, despite the overwhelming challenges that young people experience, their needs and interests have not, historically, been sufficiently represented within existing adult-centric power structures, and they are not treated as equal stakeholders in decision-making processes. High minimum voting ages, the lack of systematic formal representation, and the insufficient number of participatory mechanisms hinder youth democratic participation.^{xvi} Youth are also often excluded from formal financial services due to legal restrictions, high transaction costs, and negative stereotypes about youth. Regulatory frameworks and inclusive policies that protect youth rights are needed to increase youth financial inclusion.

Despite these issues, youth are not passive victims of global climate and development challenges. Young people all over the world have begun leading on a scale never seen before, proving their unique role in shaping the future they will inherit. Through education, technology, entrepreneurship, and policy, youth are tapping into their skills to drive change. CCA is committed to helping young people take action to protect their future. We do this by raising youth voices on clean cooking and increasing youth participation to build a dynamic, inclusive, and financially sustainable industry.

Toward a CCA Youth Engagement Strategy

The role and influence of youth in climate, energy, and development efforts has grown in recent years. Recognizing the unique role of youth in shaping the future, CCA will facilitate meaningful youth engagement that will contribute to the strengthening of the clean cooking sector. We will work to empower youth as critical stakeholders in clean cooking and ensure youth-inclusive opportunities across the sector, all while building strong partnerships with youth. As an integral part of CCA's Global Networks & Partnerships program, CCA works with youth-led and youth-focused organizations, such as the Africa Europe Foundation, Girl Up, Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition (GWNET), One Young World, Student Energy, and Sustainable Energy for All (SEforAll), to empower youth as critical stakeholders in clean cooking and adjacent sectors. Complementing the work of our partners, we intend to concentrate our future efforts on awareness raising and professional training, youth leadership and innovation, youth-inclusive funding and policies, and research.

1. Awareness Raising and Professional Development

In addition to increasing awareness of harmful cooking practices and an understanding of the importance of clean cooking solutions, CCA will also support and develop opportunities for youth to enhance technical knowledge and entrepreneurial skills relevant across the clean cooking ecosystem and adjacent sectors. As a rapidly growing commercial industry whose development is directly linked to job creation, the clean cooking sector must create viable career pathways and incentives to attract young talent across all disciplines, including business, technology, and policy. This can have far-reaching benefits for the social and economic well-being of young people, who represented a disproportionate number of the unemployed even before the COVID-19 crisis magnified this trend. Together with partners, CCA will develop and support learning, training, mentoring, and networking opportunities to empower young people and equip them with the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary for meaningful engagement and employment.

2. Youth Leadership and Innovation

The emerging power of young changemakers to lead a just energy transition should be highlighted and supported. CCA will actively engage young leaders by hosting events, webinars, and inter-generational dialogues; co-creating opportunities to showcase youth clean cooking leadership and innovation across our networks and communication channels; and developing knowledge products that incorporate youth insights, highlight youth leadership, and engage youth audiences. This will increase the power of

youth leaders to be successful agents of change in the clean cooking sector.

3. Youth-inclusive Policies and Funding

Inclusive policies and funding are essential for youth to meaningfully participate in and benefit from the global clean energy transition. Youth-targeted policies, including those promoting decent and productive employment for youth, are needed to improve conditions and opportunities for young people. In addition, access to inclusive financial mechanisms can greatly amplify the outcomes of education, training, and mentorship opportunities. Through strategic partnerships and collaboration, CCA will advocate for youth-inclusive policies with governments and work to enhance financial support and market access for youth-led or youth-owned initiatives, campaigns, and/or enterprises, such as through supporting equitable funding mechanisms or youth-focused accelerators and incubators.

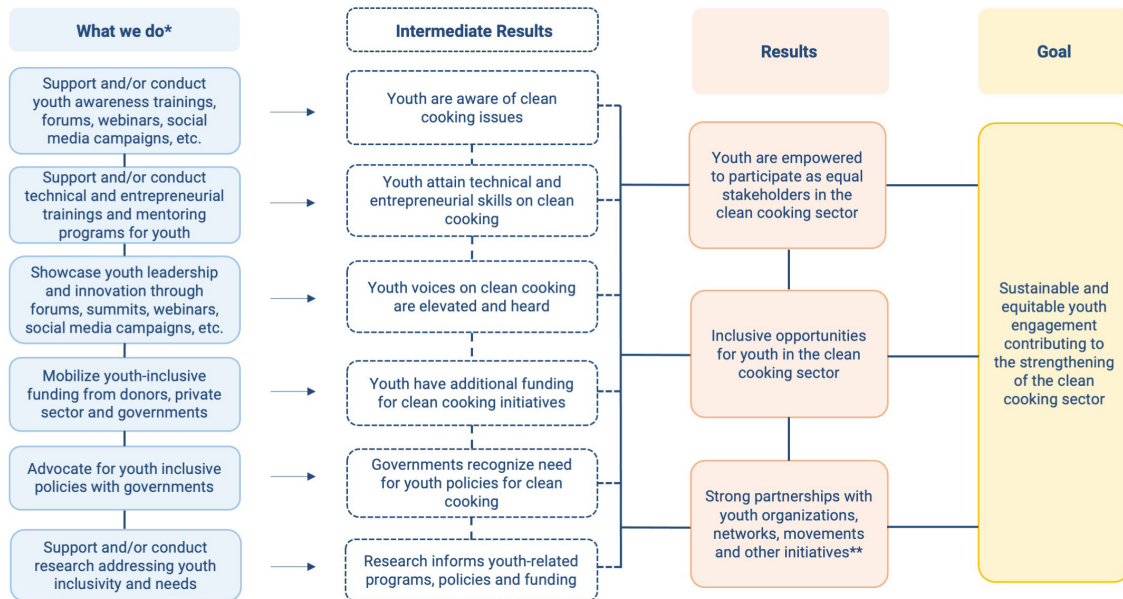
4. Research on Youth Inclusivity and Needs

There is a need for research into the changing priorities, challenges, and aspirations of young people, as related to their engagement in the clean cooking sector. Knowledge and evidence produced through research will allow for learning and the development of informed policies, programs, and activities. Therefore, CCA will work to support and/or conduct youth-focused research projects related to clean cooking and adjacent sectors to inform our activities and priorities.



Results Framework

The Results Framework provided below outlines expected activities and their intermediate results, followed by results directed at achieving sustainable and equitable youth engagement, which will contribute to the strengthening of the clean cooking sector.



* Activities to be finalized after youth engagement and discussions with partners in Q3 and Q4, 2022.

** Building and strengthening partnerships with youth will be at the heart of all our activities.

Our approach aims to be intersectional, representing a diversity of young people across race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and physical abilities. Special attention will be paid to developing and supporting initiatives targeting youth from marginalized and vulnerable groups, including young women and girls, young people from rural areas, indigenous communities, low-income families, young people with disabilities, etc. Recognizing that the poorest countries in the Global South, which have contributed least to the current climate crisis, are bearing the brunt of the consequences, our youth engagement approach aims to ensure representation and benefits for youth from the most vulnerable populations in the Global South.



Next Steps

CCA is initiating a youth consultation process, including a Youth in Clean Cooking Needs and Capacity Assessment Survey for [youth](#) and [youth organizations](#) and an interactive webinar. The results of these will inform CCA's Youth Engagement Strategy and identify specific activities that CCA can undertake to mainstream youth engagement in its work and partnerships. A survey targeting young people will gather insights into how youth understand the clean cooking issues and what support they need to scale their efforts to address clean cooking challenges. Another survey targeting youth organizations aims to assess the extent to which youth organizations are embedding the clean cooking issues within their work and what support they need. The webinar will provide an interactive opportunity to discuss the findings from pre-webinar surveys and identify what CCA and its partners can do to support young people and youth organizations.

As these initial steps are underway, CCA is making complementary efforts to deepen its youth engagement, including:

- CCA is sending a special Clean Cooking Delegation to this year's One Young World (OYW) Summit in Manchester, UK, from September 5-8, 2022. The OYW Summit brings together more than 2,000 of the brightest young leaders from every country and sector, working to accelerate social impact. Actively participating at the Summit, the Clean Cooking Delegation will raise awareness and engage youth leaders on the crucial issue of clean cooking.
- CCA is currently working with Student Energy to sponsor a delegation of young

global leaders, aged 18-30, to participate in intentional and inclusive programming before, during, and after the Clean Cooking Forum 2022 in Accra, Ghana, from October 11-13, 2022. Engaging a diverse range of young people across the clean cooking sector's flagship event, the Youth Delegation Program will empower and elevate the voices of young people in shaping the future of energy access and clean cooking.



Endnotes

- ⁱ WHO. 2021. Household air pollution and health, Fact Sheet.
- ⁱⁱ HLPE. 2021. Promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome.
- ⁱⁱⁱ UN. 2021. Forced displacement at record level, despite COVID shutdowns: UNHCR.
- ^{iv} UNHCR. Global Trends, Forced Displacement in 2020.
- ^v Robinson, J. Greubel, L. 2013. Young People on the Move: The Importance of Transferable Skills. The Brookings Institution.
- ^{vi} UNICEF. 2021. Unlocking the Power of Digital Technologies to Support 'Learning to Earning' for Displaced Youth, New York.
- ^{vii} Ibid.
- ^{viii} UN. 2018. World Youth Report.
- ^{ix} ILO. 2020. Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020.
- ^x Ibid.
- ^{xi} UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Out-of-School Children and Youth.
- ^{xii} UN. 2018. World Youth Report.
- ^{xiii} Barford, A. Coutts, A. Sahai, G. 2021. Youth Employment in Times of COVID, A global review of COVID-19 policy responses to tackle (un)employment and disadvantage among young people. ILO.
- ^{xiv} UN. 2018. World Youth Report.
- ^{xv} Ingaruca, M. 2022. Elevating Meaningful Youth Engagement for Climate Action. UNDP.
- ^{xvi} Kauschanski, A. 2020. The power of Youth, Instruments for Effective Youth Participation. UNICEF Desk-review.