



Ivorian Center for  
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# NATIONAL/REGIONAL POLICIES AND UNPAID CARE



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**Cover page photo:**

Women coming back from the fields with bundles of firewood in the TONKPI region of western Côte d'Ivoire

**Note:**

*This note aims to explain the good understanding of the overall policy framework within which the project entitled "**Use of the TIKA improved stove to reduce the domestic workload of women in rural Côte d'Ivoire**" is contextualized. This framework is crucial to ensuring the coherent integration of research-based evidences into national and regional public policies. It also provides a clear overview of potential synergies and funding opportunities, as well as persistent gaps and challenges. Additional information on the project [JN1] are available on the CIRES website <https://cires-ci.com/>*

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## INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment is in itself a universally recognised development goal, essential for promoting inclusive and sustainable development. To achieve this, it is essential to secure women's rights in order to unlock their potential and promote their participation in political, economic and social life. An institutional framework ensuring equal opportunities is necessary to secure women's involvement in all spheres of society, so that no woman or girl is left behind. This equality of opportunity must be noteworthy in several domains, including education, training and access to women labour-saving technologies that reduce the overloaded domestic activities on women, particularly unpaid care work, which hinders their participation in the local economy. The project entitled "Using the TIKA improved stove to reduce the domestic workload of women in rural Côte d'Ivoire", implemented by the Ivorian Center for Economic and Social Research (CIRES) with the funding support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), aims to produce evidence-based results to promote the scaling up initiatives of clean technologies to reduce the time spent on unpaid care work in rural households while ensuring the socio-economic empowerment of women and girls and reducing the carbon footprint of households.

This project deals with the women empowerment, the transition to clean cooking technologies and environmental protection nexus. This summary note aims to present the national and regional policies governing these issues, while highlighting the inter-related dynamics. It also includes a gap analysis and synergies between national and regional policies in order to optimise coordination between them and enhance the effectiveness of actions.



### POLICY AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR UNPAID CARE

- **At the sub-regional level**

In 2004, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) adopted a gender policy aimed at "ensuring equal rights and opportunities for both sexes in the region". This vision was consolidated by the 2015 Supplementary Act on Gender Equality, which requires member states to take legislative and institutional measures to promote women's economic empowerment. The text also commits them to valuing women's unpaid work by integrating it into national accounts and promoting appropriate technologies to lighten domestic tasks. Concretely, this means providing households with appropriate infrastructure and equipment (water, energy, clean cooking) to reduce the burden of unpaid care work on women and measure their unknown economic contribution.

- **At national level**

The main framework for women's empowerment in Côte d'Ivoire is the **National Policy on Equality, Equity and Gender (PNEEG 2024-2030)**. This policy has two objectives: the effective integration of gender in all sectors of public and private life, and the change in the population mindsets and behaviour leading to the respect of women and men, girls and boys rights, in all their specificities. Through the second objective, this policy includes the promotion of a more equitable distribution of family tasks.

The National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2025, without making it a specific strategic focus, addresses the issue of unpaid domestic tasks and care through the lens of women's empowerment and the reduction of gender inequalities. The issue of unpaid care is addressed in pillar 4, "Human Capital Development". The key objectives of this pillar, related to unpaid care work, are the economic empowerment of women, the reduction of burdens through access to basic social services (water, electricity, health) and the improvement of productivity by freeing domestic working time for alternative economic activities.

### Unpaid care work: progress and pain points

Strategically, there is clear alignment between Côte d'Ivoire and regional bodies such as ECOWAS on the issue of unpaid care work. This convergence is particularly observed in the common recognition of the need to reduce the domestic burden on women by improving access to basic infrastructure such as water, energy and clean cooking technologies.

**For example, at the national level, progress has been made in the following areas:**

- **decree No. 2025-120 of 16 February 2025** on common procedures for the application of the Law on the General Statute of the Civil Service in its Articles 104 and 107 extends maternity leave from three to six months and paternity leave from three to up to 30 days at the request of the civil servant;
- the emergence of community nurseries and village daycare centers in some areas plays a key role in the social and economic transformation of communities, in terms of women's empowerment, access to employment, and the socio-educational development of children. Côte d'Ivoire currently has 112 Early Childhood Protection Centers (CPPE), 159 Community Action Centers for Children (CACE) and two public nurseries and daycare centers;
- the installation of drinking water fountains or borehole water points in remote villages, which reduces the time spent for water collection, a tedious task merely allocated to women and girls;
- the extension of the electricity network in rural areas, enabling more households to acquire basic electrical appliances, thereby making domestic work a little less arduous.

**However, gaps remain:**

- the ECOWAS directive on the explicit integration of unpaid work into national accounting systems has yet to be translated into concrete policy or institutional measures in Côte d'Ivoire, leaving a significant gap between regional commitments and their implementation at the national level;
- the PNEEG (2024–2030) represents a significant step forward in promoting gender equality, but its general nature limits its effectiveness in terms of specific measures relating to unpaid care work;
- budgetary mechanisms remain limited, as most sectoral ministries do not have clearly identified funding to address issues related to unpaid care work. The resources allocated remain insufficient and do not adequately cover the needs related to reducing the burden of unpaid care work.

**Unpaid care work: persistent challenges**

- the weight of socio-cultural norms remains a major impediment to the transformation of gender roles in the domestic and family sphere;
- the lack of integration of cultural and social transformation themes in programs promoting equality (training in schools, community interventions);
- the absence of unpaid care in social protection policies for vulnerable people;
- The lack of recognition for unpaid care work contributes to its undervaluation in economic policies, which partly explains the limited budget allocation for social infrastructure intended to ease this burden.



## POLICIES FOR ACCESS TO CLEAN AND IMPROVED COOKING TECHNOLOGIES

- **At the regional level**

The **ECOWAS Renewable Energy Policy (PERC)** places particular emphasis on promoting clean cooking technologies, which are a key lever in the domestic energy transition. It aims to improve access for households, particularly in urban areas, to modern and sustainable solutions such as improved cooking stoves and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). Of the three sets of objectives defined by this policy, the third specifically targets the development of the domestic energy sector related to cooking and similar activities, through improved access to efficient cooking technologies and the dissemination of improved production practices for charcoal.

Adopted in 2013, this policy incorporates a clear regional ambition to halve the number of people without access to modern cooking technologies by 2030, in particular by reducing dependence on traditional and polluting methods. This momentum was reinforced with the creation of the **ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE)** in 2010, based in Cape Verde. ECREEE launched the **West Africa Clean Cooking Alliance (WACCA)** program, a regional alliance to promote clean cooking solutions. WACCA facilitates the sharing of experiences, mobilizes funding and supports each country in developing its Cooking Action Plan.

Furthermore, in 2015 ECOWAS approved a policy on gender mainstreaming in energy access, which emphasizes the need to promote improved stoves and other technologies (biogas, briquettes) to ease the burden on women and improve their health in rural areas.

- **At the national level**

As part of its energy transition, Côte d'Ivoire has put in place a coherent set of strategic instruments aimed at ensuring universal access to modern, sustainable and inclusive energy. The National Energy Pact serves as the strategic foundation for the energy transition in Côte d'Ivoire, providing a comprehensive and integrated vision for the sector by 2030. It focuses on several priority areas, including: butane conversion in households, dissemination of improved stoves and promotion of alternatives (biogas, briquettes made from agricultural residues). Several policy documents have been adopted by the Government to promote the use of clean cooking technologies. These include the **National Renewable Energy Action Plan (PANER)** for the period 2016–2030, the **Sectoral Policy on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (PSDEREE) 2020–2030**, the **National Action Plan for Clean Cooking (PANCP) 2024–2030**, the **National Bioenergy Action Plan 2020–2030**, and the **SE4All (Sustainable Energy for All) Agenda**, which commits the country to comply with international standards on energy access, energy efficiency and clean cooking.

### Specifically:

- the PANER aims to enable 10% of the population accessing improved stoves by 2030, while ensuring that 90% of households use modern fuels for cooking, such as butane, biogas or biochar. In addition, it plans for 16% of charcoal to be produced using improved carbonisation methods that are more environmentally friendly;
- the SE4all Agenda plans to supply 67% of households with butane gas and equip 10% of households with improved stoves by 2030.

In addition to these public policies and initiatives, strategic partnerships have been established to strengthen the effectiveness of interventions in the field. In this regard, the creation in 2016 of the Ivorian Alliance for Improved Stoves and Clean Cooking Energy (CI-ACC) represents a significant step forward. This alliance brings together the efforts of public institutions (including the relevant ministries and the National Agency for Rural Development – ANADER), the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in a dynamic synergy aiming at promoting access to clean cooking solutions that are effective and adapted to local realities.

Furthermore, cross-sector coordination has gradually been established as part of the implementation of national policies on energy transition and improving domestic cooking conditions. The Ministry of Water and Forests is responsible for wood energy (regulating the production of firewood and charcoal), while the Ministry of Energy manages national energy policy, including petroleum products such as butane.

The Ministry of Mines, Petroleum and Energy is involved in particular in the supply of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG).

Several initiatives are currently underway:

- the **Biomass Energy and Clean Cooking Valorisation Project (VABICUI)**, launched in April 2025 and supported by the Belgian Development Agency (ENABEL), aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030. The project encourages the use of sustainable energy solutions and the recovery of agricultural waste;
- The project led by oil company ENI (Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi), in partnership with the Ivorian government, incorporates a key environmental dimension, combining responsible exploitation of the Baleine field with flagship initiatives promoting clean cooking. Through collaboration with the NGO AVSI (Volunteer Associations for International Service), more than 300,000 improved stoves have been distributed to vulnerable households in Côte d'Ivoire since 2021. This equipment promotes greater energy efficiency and contributes to a significant reduction in pollutant emissions linked to domestic cooking.

### **Clean cooking technologies: between converging ambitions and diverging approaches**

The transition to clean cooking technologies is a key issue for energy policy in West Africa. At the crossroads of climate, health and social objectives, the strategies deployed in Côte d'Ivoire and at the regional level reveal strong synergies, but also structural disparities that hinder consistent and effective implementation.

#### **Synergies driving transformation**

- a shared goal of universal access to clean cooking by 2030, enshrined in national and regional commitments, demonstrating political will and compliance aligned with international recommendations;
- the growing integration of gender issues into energy policies is a driver of social transformation. These measures recognise the central role of women in the use of cooking technologies and the need to improve their quality of life.

#### Differences in approaches that undermine the effectiveness of actions

- In Côte d'Ivoire, the emphasis is generally on butane gas as the main driver of transition. This policy has been successful in urban areas, with more than 90% of households in Abidjan using gas for cooking, while rural areas remain largely excluded. Around 95% of rural families continue to rely on wood energy, revealing a persistent gap in access to modern cooking technologies. This approach contrasts with the recommendations of the regional strategy, which advocates an option by context approach integrating various solutions such as improved stoves, biogas or densified fuels (pellets) in order to better respond to the specific socio-economic characteristics of each country;
- the lack of harmonised regional standards framework for equipment is a major obstacle. It leads to disparities in the quality, safety and efficiency of available technologies, limiting their widespread adoption.

#### Access to clean cooking technologies: persistent challenges

- subsidies are poorly targeted and unevenly distributed, with public support for LPG mainly benefiting urban households, while rural populations remain without adequate support for the purchase of small cylinders or improved stoves;
- the promotion of clean cooking technologies relies mainly on ad hoc initiatives led by NGOs or technical partners. The absence of a large-scale national program hinders the scaling up of effective and accessible solutions for vulnerable populations;
- the lack of effective implementation of energy policies, both at national and regional level, combined with fragmented adoption of solutions by states, is significantly hindering the harmonization and widespread use of clean cooking technologies in West Africa;
- Inter-sectoral coordination remains insufficient, even though the complex nature of issues related to cooking—energy, health, environment, gender and finance — requires close collaboration between institutions;
- the WACCA financial mechanism remains fragile, relying on coordination and advocacy without sustainable regional funding, with ad hoc support depending on external donors and without structured budgetary commitments from Member States.



#### CLIMATE ACTION

##### • At the sub-regional level

The ECOWAS environmental policy, adopted in 2008, aims to ensure rational and sustainable management of the environment and natural resources in the region. Among the major environmental challenges identified, deforestation occupies a central place due to its profound impacts on biodiversity, soil stability, water resources and resilience to climate change. The accelerated loss of forest cover is a cross-cutting threat that exacerbates land degradation, increases the vulnerability of ecosystems and undermines sustainable development efforts in West Africa. Wood energy is addressed within the framework of specific objectives related to the sustainable management of natural resources, with a view to strengthening local capacities in forest management and raising public awareness. The policy therefore encourages Member States to develop and promote renewable and more sustainable energy sources in order to reduce dependence on wood energy. This includes solar energy, domestic gas and improved stoves.

#### NATIONAL ENERGY PACT REPUBLIC OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE

- INCREASE THE PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION USING CLEAN COOKING TECHNOLOGIES TO 50% BY 2030
- INCREASE THE PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION USING IMPROVED STOVES TO 16% BY 2030

The West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) also has a Common Policy for Environmental Improvement (PCAIE) and a Strategy for the Development of Energy Hubs (SDPE). While the PCAIE focuses on sustainable forest resource management and reducing deforestation caused by wood energy exploitation, the SDPE complements this approach by promoting the development of diversified energy hubs, including cleaner alternatives such as butane gas, bioenergy and renewable electricity. Together, these policies encourage Member States to adopt sustainable energy solutions, strengthen regional cooperation and improve access to cleaner energy, while preserving forest ecosystems and reducing pressure on natural resources.

- **At national level**

Côte d'Ivoire has a **National Environment Policy (PNE)** that was first developed in the 1990s and then updated in 2018 to incorporate new issues such as climate change and waste management. This policy aims to reduce GHG emissions by 28% by 2030. It recognizes that the use of wood for energy, although essential for the domestic needs of many populations, especially in rural areas, is a major factor in deforestation in Côte d'Ivoire. Faced with this growing pressure on forest resources, it actively encourages the use of more sustainable energy alternatives, such as domestic gas, improved stoves or renewable sources, in order to reduce dependence on wood and preserve forest ecosystems.

Furthermore, as part of its international commitments, Côte d'Ivoire has submitted its **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**, which reflect its alignment with the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The revised NDCs set a mitigation target of 30.41% of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, or 37 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent compared to the reference scenario. At the same time, the NDCs promote a sustainable energy transition, marked by the abandonment of coal and an increase in the share of renewable energies in the national mix, in order to reduce pressure on forest resources, limit greenhouse gas emissions and encourage cleaner energy solutions. Thus, the international guidelines defined in the NDCs confirm that Côte d'Ivoire is committed to a development path compatible with the global objectives of the Paris Agreement.

### Policy gaps

- at the regional level, particularly within ECOWAS and UEMOA, environmental priorities focus on natural resource governance, while at the national level, attention is more focused on reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapting to climate change;
- weak institutional coordination at the regional level leads to fragmentation of environmental actions, exacerbated by the absence of specific platforms dedicated to deforestation;
- the lack of mechanisms for cross-sectoral consultation leads to differentiated management of policies related to wood energy and deforestation, despite the involvement of multiple sectors, which undermines the coherence and effectiveness of actions taken at the national and regional levels.

### Persistent challenges

- national policies are characterised by limited integration of incentives capable of stimulating the production and adoption of more sustainable energy sources;
- insufficient public investment and mobilization of strategic partnerships in the areas of reforestation, infrastructure and clean cooking equipment.

## CONCLUSION

Analysing national and regional public policies highlights that, despite progress in recognizing the importance of clean cooking and reducing deforestation, institutional and budgetary mechanisms remain limited in their ability to meet the real needs of rural populations. In Côte d'Ivoire, as in West Africa as a whole, wood energy governance remains weak, incentives to adopt alternative energies are insufficient, and policies that integrate the reduction of unpaid care work—the burden of which falls mainly on women—are virtually non-existent. Reducing this burden requires not only technical innovations, but also policies for redistributing time, access to local services (water, energy, childcare) and economic valorisation of these activities in national statistical frameworks.

In this context, the project "Using the TIKA improved stove to reduce the domestic workload of women in rural Côte d'Ivoire" provides a concrete response by offering a more efficient cooking solution that reduces women's domestic workload and supports an inclusive energy transition. Its results will also inform public policies that are better targeted to reducing unpaid domestic work. Aligned with the strategic commitments of Côte d'Ivoire and ECOWAS to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDGs 5, 7 and 13, this initiative shows the way forward.

However, in order to achieve large-scale impact, it remains essential to strengthen advocacy for dedicated funding, increased cross-sectoral coordination and more ambitious regional harmonization.



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