

COMMON DONOR GREENING PRIORITY ACTIONS



PRIORITY ACTION 9 Facilitate access to sustainable and clean cooking solutions and services.

February 2026

In humanitarian settings, the lack of clean cooking energy solutions and services often contributes to local deforestation and soil erosion¹ as communities use firewood and charcoal as their main energy source. This also increases household vulnerability by exposing women and children to heightened protection risks including sexual and gender-based violence during firewood collection. Higher deforestation rates can also increase secondary hazards such as floods and landslides as the soil is destabilised from lack of vegetation. Beyond climate, environmental and protection benefits, integrating clean cooking into humanitarian response reduces household air pollution and respiratory diseases, and can generate opportunities for livelihoods through strengthened local energy markets².



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Systematically consider the energy needs of communities in the design of humanitarian assistance projects and programmes (e.g. food assistance, shelter), ensuring that it is considered an integral component of assistance rather than a stand-alone activity (either through in-kind or cash).
- ✓ Engage communities from the outset to understand their cooking practices, preferences, and cultural norms in order to introduce clean cooking technologies and practices which are accepted and adopted by communities in the long term.
- ✓ Explore a mix of clean cooking options such as liquefied petroleum gas, ethanol, biogas, electric stoves, higher-tier biomass³ stoves and efficient charcoal stoves (which can consume up to 60% less charcoal)⁴. The choice of options will depend on local needs, cultural habits and local market availability.
- ✓ Ensure that cookstoves or devices distributed in humanitarian settings come with maintenance systems, warranties, or access to spare parts/refills in the case of LPG and ethanol. Without this, households are likely to return, ultimately, to inefficient biomass-based cooking.
- ✓ In parallel to the distribution of clean cooking solutions, provide training on use, maintenance, and repair. Integrate energy-efficient cooking practices - such as food preparation techniques, fuel management, and safe use - into existing programmes such as food distribution or nutrition activities.

¹ DG ECHO “Environmental Footprint of Humanitarian Assistance” 2020

² UNITAR & Global Platform for Action “State of the Humanitarian Energy Sector” 2022

³ Organic matter (from plants or animals) used as a fuel

⁴ Clean Cooking Alliance, 2022 <https://cleancooking.org/news/10-key-co-benefits-of-clean-cooking-for-climate-nature-and-communities/>

- ✓ Prioritise - when possible - market-based approaches (e.g. supporting local businesses to supply, maintain, and scale up sustainable solutions), particularly in protracted settings.
- ✓ Coordinate with other humanitarian actors working in the same area to ensure that any kitchen kits, or other household items they distribute are also compatible with the clean cooking solutions being offered.
- ✓ Transition gradually: sometimes it is more effective to improve existing systems than introduce new ones. For example, where efficient charcoal stoves are culturally accepted and in demand, efforts should focus on greening the charcoal supply chains while pursuing longer-term measures to phase out reliance on locally harvested biomass for cooking - rather than on replacing these stoves.



KEY RESOURCES

Guidance on the operationalisation of the minimum environmental requirements and recommendations for EU-funded humanitarian aid operations

- **Organisation responsible:** DG ECHO
- **Short description:** the guidance refers to clean cooking energy and technologies in the section on Food Assistance (pages 41-45).
- **Accessibility:** English.

Clean Cooking Mapping Dashboard

- **Organisation responsible:** The Coordination Unit of the Global Platform for Action on Sustainable Energy in Displacement Settings (GPA) and partners.
- **Short description:** An interactive platform that maps clean cooking initiatives in displacement settings⁵, identifies actors, technologies, financing models, and highlights systemic gaps and opportunities for scaling.
- **Accessibility:** English.

Powering Progress: Market Creation Strategies for Solar E-Cooking

- **Organisation responsible:** UNEP Copenhagen Climate Centre, GPA and WFP with partners.
- **Short description:** Provides evidence and strategies for scaling solar e-cooking in places without electricity-grid and displacement settings, with financing and market recommendations.
- **Link to follow-on report:** [Business and Financing Models for PV-Supported Clean Cooking as a Critical Climate Technology for Last Mile Communities](#)
- **Accessibility:** English.

Toolbox for Energy Assessments in Refugee Settlements and Host Communities

- **Organisation responsible:** GIZ EnDev Uganda.
- **Short description:** A practical set of survey tools, interview guides, and monitoring instruments to assess household energy use, market conditions, and stakeholder perspectives. While the Toolbox was prepared by the Uganda country team, the tools included in the report have universal application.
- **Accessibility:** English.

Institutional Clean Cooking Community of Practice (ICC CoP)

⁵ The case for clean cooking applies to all humanitarian contexts, but in displacement settings there is often a high concentration of needs, combined with protection and environmental risks linked to cooking with firewood or charcoal cooking. According to the GPA, energy access for displaced people is also still not a priority in the global humanitarian system.

- **Organisation responsible:** GPA and WFP (co-chairs) with partners.
- **Short description:** Brings together public, private, humanitarian and development stakeholders to exchange knowledge on clean cooking solutions and initiatives for institutional settings. Those interested in joining can contact Iwona Bisaga (iwonab@unops.org) to receive invitations to meetings (every 2 months) and online resources.
- **Accessibility:** English.



PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Do not neglect users' cooking practices, preferences and cultural norms. This often results in limited uptake and eventual abandonment of clean cooking solutions (even where these perform well from a technical perspective). Some clean cooking initiatives have been unsuccessful due to a lack of acceptance by users (e.g. reluctance to use biogas, solar cookers or parabolic solar stoves for cooking).
- Do not assume that recipients of humanitarian assistance will adopt new cleaner solutions without meaningful awareness raising and training on this.
- Do not overlook the need for new clean cooking solutions and technology to be affordable.
- Do not assume that all solutions marketed as "sustainable" deliver genuine climate and environmental benefits. For example, some improved cookstoves that rely on biomass have weak outcomes in terms of climate impact, environmental performance, health, protection, and cost savings.



GOOD PRACTICES

- Embed clean cooking initiatives within wider humanitarian and development programmes, rather than developing them in isolation, to achieve greater impact. Linking energy access with food assistance, education (including school feeding), livelihoods, and protection not only increases uptake but also strengthens communities' resilience. Aligning electrification efforts - for example, for lighting - with clean cooking enables shared infrastructure, load balancing⁶ and economies of scale.
- Ensure rigorous monitoring, feedback and learning. This includes user surveys and independent evaluations that can help organisations to continuously adapt and improve programme design. Learning from successes *and failures* is critical to ensure mistakes are not repeated and that successful approaches and models are scaled up.
- Take time to correctly analyse the market, engage with communities and combine the project with livelihoods activities where appropriate (although these activities might not be suitable for very short emergency projects of under 3 months).

The INSPIRE+ Consortium is made up of IECAH, ODI, FAIREPROD and Groupe URD. It provides the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) with support in developing its policies via research, training, workshops and the dissemination of findings.

⁶ Load balancing refers to managing and distributing the electricity demand across different uses (like lighting, appliances, and clean cooking) so that the system is used more evenly and efficiently.