Multi-Country Level Program of Activities Website Content Development

1. Background and Overview

Across East Africa, public institutions such as schools, hospitals, and other social facilities play a critical role in delivering essential services, including education, healthcare, and nutrition. However, the majority of these institutions continue to rely on **traditional biomass fuels primarily firewood and charcoal for large-scale cooking**.

While institutional feeding programmes are expanding rapidly to meet growing demand, their long-term sustainability is increasingly constrained by **rising fuel costs, environmental degradation, health risks, and climate impacts**. At the same time, many governments across the region have committed to ambitious climate, energy, and development targets, creating a strong policy imperative to modernize institutional energy systems.

The **Multi-Country Institutional Clean Cooking Programme of Activities (PoA)** has been developed to address this challenge at scale. The programme provides a **harmonised regional framework** to support the transition of institutional kitchens from polluting biomass-based cooking to **clean, efficient, and low-carbon cooking technologies**, while mobilizing **carbon finance** to ensure long-term financial sustainability. The PoA is designed to operate across multiple countries in East Africa, with the flexibility to expand to other regions of Africa over time.

2. The Problem

Despite progress in household clean cooking and electricity access, **institutional cooking remains one of the least modernized and most emissions-intensive energy end uses in East Africa**.

Key challenges include:

- **Heavy reliance on non-renewable biomass**

  In many countries, institutional kitchens depend almost entirely on firewood and charcoal, driving deforestation and forest degradation in surrounding landscapes.

- **Health and safety risks**

  Traditional cooking practices expose cooks, kitchen staff, and nearby users to harmful smoke and fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$), increasing the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses.

- **High greenhouse gas emissions**

  Inefficient biomass combustion releases significant quantities of CO_2 and other climate-forcing pollutants, undermining national and regional climate mitigation efforts.

- **Operational inefficiency and high costs**

  Traditional cooking systems are slow, fuel-intensive, and poorly suited for large-volume meal preparation, leading to escalating operating costs for public institutions.

- **Limited access to sustainable financing**

Although clean cooking technologies are available, **upfront investment costs** and the absence of long-term financing mechanisms limit adoption on an institutional scale.

These challenges are widely shared across East Africa, making a **programmatic, multi-country solution** both necessary and cost-effective.

3. Programme Objectives

The Multi-Country Institutional Clean Cooking PoA is designed to deliver **verified climate impact alongside tangible social, environmental, and economic benefits**.

The programme objectives are to:

- **Reduce greenhouse gas emissions** by displacing non-renewable biomass with high-efficiency, low-carbon cooking technologies in institutional settings.

- **Enable sustainable financing** for clean cooking transitions through the generation and monetization of high-integrity carbon credits.

- **Improve health and working conditions** by eliminating exposure to indoor air pollution in institutional kitchens.

- **Support national climate and energy strategies** by contributing to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and clean energy transition plans.

- **Create a scalable and replicable model** that allows rapid expansion across countries while maintaining environmental and social integrity.

4. Programme of Activities Structure

The programme is implemented as a **Multi-Country Programme of Activities (PoA)** under internationally recognized carbon market standards. The PoA establishes a **common framework** covering the carbon accounting approach, monitoring systems, safeguards, and stakeholder engagement requirements applicable across all participating countries.

Under this structure, individual countries participate through **Component Project Activities (CPAs)**, each reflecting national circumstances such as baseline cooking practices, energy mixes, regulatory requirements, and stakeholder priorities. This approach allows the programme to maintain **consistency and transparency at the regional level**, while enabling **country-specific implementation** through tailored CPAs.

The PoA integrates **digital monitoring, reporting, and verification (dMRV)** systems to ensure accurate, real-time tracking of energy use and emission reductions. By standardizing core programme elements and decentralizing implementation, the structure significantly reduces transaction costs, improves scalability, and accelerates the deployment of clean cooking solutions across East Africa.

5. Impact on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Multi-Country Institutional Clean Cooking PoA delivers benefits that extend well beyond emission reductions, directly contributing to multiple **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Good Health and Well-Being (SDG 3)

By replacing smoky biomass cooking with clean technologies, the programme reduces exposure to harmful air pollutants, improving respiratory health and overall wellbeing in institutional environments.

Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7)

The programme expands access to modern, reliable, and energy-efficient cooking solutions for public institutions, supporting national clean energy transitions.

Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8)

Implementation of the programme creates skilled and semi-skilled jobs across technology manufacturing, installation, maintenance, fuel supply, and digital monitoring services.

Climate Action (SDG 13)

Verified emission reductions contribute directly to national and global climate mitigation efforts under the Paris Agreement.

Life on Land (SDG 15)

Reduced demand for firewood and charcoal helps curb deforestation, protect biodiversity, and strengthen ecosystem resilience across participating countries.