

# LEARNING BRIEF

VOICE FOR CHANGE PARTNERSHIP | SEPTEMBER 2020



## Evidence-based advocacy for renewable energy

Through the Voice for Change Partnership (V4CP), SNV Netherlands Development Organisation strengthened civil society organisations (CSOs) to effectively voice their views. Jointly, V4CP contributed to systems change and effective solutions to ensure that the interests of low-income and marginalised communities are included in government and business policies and practices. This learning brief presents key advocacy successes of the V4CP programme in the area of renewable energy and outlines the most effective approaches for improving the enabling environment, including influencing energy policies and stakeholders.

### Introduction

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS) set up a policy framework focusing on capacity strengthening of civil society for 'lobbying and advocacy'. Under this framework, SNV – partnering with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) – has led the Voice for Change Partnership (V4CP), a multi-country and multi-sector programme focusing on evidence-based advocacy to improve the enabling environment. In Burkina Faso, Ghana, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya and Rwanda, the programme addressed four focus areas: Renewable Energy

(RE), Food & Nutrition Security, Resilience, and Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) – with close attention to gender and climate aspects. The V4CP programme empowered CSOs to engage with decision-makers by providing sound arguments and a solid evidence base, backing the proposed sectoral changes. The partnership enhanced the CSO capacities in terms of leadership, the use of evidence and thematic knowledge, advocacy skills, and organisational sustainability.

## Renewable energy advocacy focus

The advocacy topics, selected by the V4CP Energy CSOs, addressed main challenges towards increased access to affordable, efficient and sustainable energy solutions (Sustainable Development Goal 7):

- Better access to quality renewable energy services for the population (Burkina Faso)
- Increased access to and adoption of clean cooking technologies (Honduras, Ghana, Kenya)
- Increased delivery of mini-grids in remote and isolated areas (Ghana)

The CSOs, with support of SNV, generated contextualised evidence in support of their advocacy strategies, including studies presenting local energy-related data, impacts on gender, employment and environment, as well as economic and political analyses of the issues. As a result, the CSOs were able to speak with a stronger voice to advocate for policy improvements and better provision of services, both in the public and private sector.

In Burkina Faso, the advocacy addressed the lack of skilled workers to provide quality services and the absence of control and regulation in the sector. The CSOs advocated to improve training structures for renewable energy, include it in local development plans and stronger regulation.

In Ghana, there was limited supply of improved cooking products especially to rural areas. The

CSOs worked both at national and district level to advocate for supportive policies for clean cooking, while in parallel working with entrepreneurs and communities in rural areas to increase supply of and demand for cleaner cookstoves.

Despite almost 85% of the Ghanaian population having access to electricity, over 2 million people mainly in remote areas, including islands and lakeside communities, are still not connected to the grid. The V4CP partners [worked with local communities and mini-grid companies to stimulate the government to provide a stable policy environment and allow private sector participation in mini-grid development.](#)

In Honduras, the market for improved cooking solutions was very limited, and coordination amongst sector players lacking. The V4CP partners focused on [aligning a wide range of stakeholders \(including government\) building on solid new evidence](#), stimulating government to adopt a national strategy for the adoption of efficient cookstoves, and advocating for fiscal incentives for improved stoves.

The Kenya CSOs worked at national level to improve coordination between ministries working on clean cooking issues and support the adoption of health guidelines and standards for clean cookstoves and fuels. At county level, they trained community champions and jointly advocated county governments to include clean cooking in their climate and energy plans.



Launch of a report on health impacts of unclean cooking technologies by clean cooking women champions and GROOTS Kenya, presented to the County Government of Kitui. Photo credit: V4CP Kenya



A Honduran family using an improved cookstove. Photo credit: Francisco Morazán

## V4CP Advocacy results

### Alignment in the clean cooking sector

V4CP played an important role in increasing alignment of key stakeholders in the clean cooking sector, leading to key policy changes and better coordination of clean cooking programmes.

In Honduras, the V4CP CSOs initiated the *Inter-institutional Platform for the Development of the Value Chain of Improved Stoves and Other Clean Cooking Technologies*, now a network of 23 members from government, civil society, academia, and private sector. The Platform has proven a powerful vehicle for participative generation and dissemination of ten valuable studies in support of the V4CP advocacy. With state entities playing an active role, the Platform was the driving force behind the design of the National Strategy for the Adoption of Improved Stoves, and is expected to support its implementation.

In Kenya and Ghana, V4CP strengthened capacities of the national alliances CCAK and GHACCO as strategic representatives of clean cooking stakeholders. The alliances were able to generate solid evidence based on local data, strengthen relations with government institutions, organise high-level clean cooking events, and

highlight clean cooking issues in prominent media. They bolstered their reputation as national leaders in the sector, being instrumental in the development of regulations (Ghana) and quality standards (Kenya) for cookstoves. After a V4CP policy review in Ghana identified incoherence on clean cooking in policy documents, GHACCO effectively advocated for a Ghana clean cooking strategy, and is member of the task force developing this policy. CCAK successfully lobbied for the exemption of taxation and reduction of duties imposed on clean cooking technologies and fuels in Kenya. Despite broad outcry in the sector, the Kenya government reintroduced tax on cookstoves in 2020 due to changing political priorities in the COVID pandemic.

### Increased coordination with and within national government

The CSOs, empowered by V4CP, were able to intensify collaboration with key government actors and thus improve coordination between different ministries and public institutions involved in energy, contributing to increased government commitment to renewable energy. Policy processes are however time-consuming and often unpredictable, therefore sustained (post-programme) engagement with government is needed to guard advocacy achievements.

The V4CP CSOs in Burkina Faso, backed by a coalition of CSOs working on renewable energy, [engaged with key ministries related to energy issues and successfully advocated for better division of roles between the two main government agencies involved in energy](#). V4CP activities convened representatives from the Ministries of Energy, Education and Youth/Youth Entrepreneurship, increasing government coordination on the development of training curricula addressing the lack of qualified renewable energy technicians. This resulted in the first bachelor's course in solar energy, introduced at a vocational high school in 2019-2020 and other renewable energy vocational qualification certificate courses in the pipeline. The successful interactions with CSOs prompted the Minister of Energy to formalise CSO consultations on government decision-making and activities related to renewable energy. In Kenya, the Inter-ministerial committee on clean cooking, chaired by the Ministry of Energy with secretariat support from CCAK, developed the Clean Cooking Action Plan to guide planning



2018 V4CP Exchange visit to Ghana, field visit to production site of improved cookstoves. Photo credit: Rianne Teule/SNV

in key government ministries. The CSOs also convened the Technical Working Group on climate, health and energy, which developed the household air pollution manual for health workers in rural areas. The manual, aimed at scaling up adoption of clean cooking in Kenyan households, was piloted by community champions.

## Renewable energy plans by local governments

The V4CP CSOs successfully influenced local policies working with local governments and (women) community champions.

In Burkina Faso, the CSOs transformed the presidents of the regional councils into allies advocating for renewable energy issues to the national authorities. These regional councils have integrated clean energy in their regional development plans and annual investment plans.

As a community-based organisation, GROOTS Kenya [increased awareness of communities and engaged them in local advocacy to ensure inclusive county policies and increased budget for clean cooking](#). Jointly they ensured that the Kiambu, Kitui and Kilifi county governments not only mainstreamed clean cooking in the climate and energy policies, but also allocated budgets accordingly.

In Ghana, the V4CP CSOs engaged with local

assemblies on clean cooking and off-grid electrification. This resulted in the integration of clean cooking into the medium-term development plans (MTDP) of four Municipal and District Assemblies for the first time, and the subsequent development of clean cooking strategies including budgets covering 2020-2024. The districts have taken ownership and action, through community sensitisations, passage of by-laws and engagement with stove manufacturers to secure supplies.

V4CP in Ghana also worked with the Kwahu Afram Plains North District assembly to integrate mini-grid electrification in their development plans and develop an off-grid electrification plan in support of island communities. Ensuring local ownership, a high-level energy sub-committee was established to lead on developing the plan and subsequent engagement with the Ministry of Energy and donors to obtain support for implementation of the plan.

## Effective advocacy approaches

Based on the results and learnings from the V4CP, several approaches have proven effective for influencing the enabling environment. They are interlinked and can be applied depending on the specific context, the status of the sector, as well as the capabilities of (government and other) stakeholders.

### Strengthen the voice of the people

CSOs play a crucial role in accelerating systems change and mobilising citizens' voices. Empowerment of CSOs includes enhancing their legitimacy through increased capacities, accountability, transparency and relations with their constituency. An area for attention is post-project (organisational) sustainability of CSOs to ensure that they can sustain their role as advocate. V4CP, through CSOs, effectively worked with community champions, building their capacity on energy issues and giving them a voice as advocates working with local policy makers. Awareness raising and capacity strengthening activities directed at key local actors are key to ensuring local ownership and sustainable embedding.

### The role of evidence in influencing policy development

The V4CP experience showed that contextualised and up-to-date evidence (including local data) is essential to influence policy processes. It supports the advocate to be taken seriously, educates decision-makers and forms a basis for policies that sufficiently consider the needs of marginalised groups. Effective dissemination of the evidence to key audiences is crucial, with communication adapted to raise awareness, provide a thorough understanding and motivate them into action.

### Alignment of the sector

Societal changes are only achieved effectively when stakeholders involved align vision and strategies, harmonise their efforts and join forces. Only once stakeholders are sufficiently aligned, can they share valuable data and experiences, jointly setting the agenda and taking action. CSOs

and especially sector alliances can play a vital role in the facilitation of multi-stakeholder platforms (including civil society, public and private sector representatives), seeking willingness amongst key actors to collaborate and ensuring sustainability of changes. Sector alignment and policy changes however take time, hence long-term sustained support and effort are required.

### The role of multi-stakeholder processes in policy dialogue

The involvement of a broad group of stakeholders in policy processes has proven an effective way to move policy processes forward and ensure sector input is incorporated in policies, strategies and regulations. It increases mutual accountability, ownership and commitment between policy makers and relevant stakeholders, which is crucial especially in difficult contexts where lack of trust is prevalent. Also it supports knowledge sharing and coordination between key actors, leading to a stronger and more conducive policy environment.

### Increase coordination within government

Renewable energy issues fall under responsibilities of various ministries and government institutions. To ensure alignment between government policies, regulations, budgets and programmes, it is imperative that those involved are equally aware and capacitated on the advocacy issues and coordinate their efforts. Civil society can play a role by providing the necessary knowledge and evidence and facilitating coordination between different government stakeholders.

### Support local governments in developing & implementing programmes

To ensure that inclusive policies and programmes benefit the poorest and marginalised citizens, local authorities need to be capacitated on advocacy issues. Renewable energy targets and activities must be incorporated in local or regional policies and plans, especially in decentralised political systems. Support to local authorities is an effective way to ensure plans are developed, budget is allocated, and activities are effectively implemented.

## Strategic Partnership at a glance

**Title:** Voice for Change Partnership (V4CP)

**Partners:** Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS), Embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and 50 civil society organisations (CSOs) in the six project countries

**Duration:** January 2016 - December 2020

**Budget:** € 34.6M

## CSO partners in V4CP Renewable Energy

### Burkina Faso:



### Ghana:



### Honduras:



Asociación Hermandad de Honduras



FUNDACIÓN VIDA

### Kenya:



CLEAN COOKING ASSOCIATION OF KENYA



GROOTS KENYA

## SNV

SNV is a not-for-profit international development organisation that makes a lasting difference in the lives of people living in poverty by helping them raise incomes and access basic services. We focus on three sectors and have a long-term, local presence in over 25 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Our team of more than 1,300 staff is the backbone of SNV.

### Cover photo

CSO representatives from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Honduras and Kenya participate in an exchange visit to Kenya.

Photo credit: Rianne Teule/SNV

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