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Mitigating Urban Air Pollution from Small-Scale Industries: A Policy-Industry-Community Tripartite Framework for Cleaner Production

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Received: 20 November 2025; Revised: 28 November 2025; Accepted: 5 December 2025; Published: 11 December 2025

ABSTRACT

Small-scale industries (SSIs) are major contributors to urban air pollution in developing and developed economies alike, emitting high levels of particulate matter (PM2.5/PM10), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) due to outdated technologies and limited regulatory compliance. This study develops a tripartite framework integrating policy incentives, cleaner production technologies (CPTs), and community engagement through a systematic literature review (n=211) and cross-case analysis of 14 urban SSIs across Europe, Asia, and Africa. The findings identify three core pillars—regulatory alignment, technological adoption, and stakeholder collaboration—as critical for scalable pollution mitigation. The framework addresses gaps in existing research by bridging top-down policy with bottom-up industry and community action, while accounting for resource constraints of SSIs. Practical implications for policymakers, industry owners, and community organizations emphasize cost-effective, context-adaptive strategies that balance emission reductions with economic viability. This research contributes to Global Pollution Solutions discourse by providing actionable pathways to transform SSIs into low-emission enterprises.

Keywords: Small-Scale Industries; Urban Air Pollution; Cleaner Production Technologies; Policy Incentives; Stakeholder Collaboration; Pollution Mitigation

1. Introduction

Small-scale industries (SSIs)—defined by low capital investment, limited workforce, and localized operations—are vital to global economic development, contributing 30–40% of GDP in developing countries and employing over 60% of the industrial workforce worldwide. Yet these enterprises are significant sources of urban air pollution, accounting for 25–35% of PM2.5 emissions and 15–20% of SO_2 emissions in urban centers. Unlike large-scale industries, SSIs often operate with outdated, energy-inefficient technologies, lack access to clean energy sources, and face limited regulatory oversight—resulting in disproportionate pollution impacts on surrounding communities. Vulnerable populations, including low-income residents and industrial workers, bear the brunt of this pollution, with increased risks of respiratory diseases, cardiovascular disorders, and premature death.

A critical gap in current scholarship lies in the lack of holistic frameworks that address SSI air pollution through integrated action across policy, industry, and community spheres. Existing research often focuses on isolated interventions: regulatory measures, cleaner production technology (CPT) adoption, or community awareness campaigns, failing to account for the interdependencies between policy support, technological feasibility, and industry-community trust. This siloed approach has led to ineffective outcomes, where strict regulations are unenforceable for resource-constrained SSIs, or CPTs fail to scale due to limited policy incentives and community resistance. For example, while India's environmental regulations mandate emission controls for SSIs, poor enforcement and lack of technical support have resulted in compliance rates below 30%. Similarly, CPT adoption in Senegal's textile SSIs remains low despite environmental benefits, due to high upfront costs and limited market linkages for cleaner products.

Against this backdrop, this study aims to develop a tripartite framework for mitigating urban air pollution from SSIs. Three research questions guide the investigation: (1) What core pillars define effective, inclusive SSI pollution mitigation? (2) How do policy, technology, and community interventions interact to reduce industrial emissions? (3) What strategies address contextual barriers across diverse economic and geographic contexts?

The significance of this research extends beyond academic contribution. For policymakers, it offers a model to design enforceable, supportive regulations that account for SSI constraints. For industry owners, it provides evidence-based guidance to adopt cost-effective CPTs and build community trust. For community organizations, it identifies pathways to engage with SSIs and advocate for cleaner production. By centering the tripartite collaboration between policy, industry, and community, this study advances the mission of Global Pollution Solutions to achieve equitable, scalable pollution mitigation in urban environments.

1.1 Theoretical Context

SSI air pollution research draws on three theoretical traditions: Pollution Prevention (P2) Theory, Collaborative Governance Theory, and Sustainable Industrial Development (SID) Theory. P2 Theory emphasizes proactive measures to reduce pollution at the source rather than end-of-pipe treatment. Collaborative Governance Theory highlights the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships in addressing complex environmental challenges, emphasizing shared decision-making and mutual accountability. SID Theory focuses on balancing industrial economic growth with environmental protection, particularly for resource-constrained enterprises.

Recent scholarship has begun to integrate these traditions, recognizing that SSI pollution mitigation requires policy support, technological innovation, and community engagement. Studies on CPT adoption in SSIs and multi-stakeholder environmental governance highlight the importance of cross-sector collaboration. This study builds on these developments by synthesizing cross-disciplinary insights into a unified framework that addresses the unique challenges of SSIs—including limited financial resources, low technical capacity, and informal operations.

1.2 Scope and Delimitations

This research focuses on SSIs in three economic contexts: high-income (Europe), middle-income (Asia), and low-income (Africa) countries—selected to capture contextual diversity in regulatory capacity, technological access, and economic constraints. The analysis includes 14 case studies of SSIs across key polluting sectors: textile manufacturing, metal fabrication, food processing, and small-scale chemical production.

Limitations include the reliance on secondary data for case analysis, as primary empirical research across diverse SSI contexts would extend beyond the study's scope. Additionally, the framework prioritizes generalizability over sector-specific detail, requiring future research to explore industry-specific adaptations (e.g., metal fabrication vs. food processing). Despite these limitations, the tripartite approach offers a valuable foundation for understanding cross-cutting principles of SSI air pollution mitigation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualizing SSI Air Pollution

SSI air pollution is defined as the emission of air pollutants (PM2.5/PM10, SO_2, NO_x, VOCs, and heavy metals) from small-scale industrial processes, resulting from inefficient energy use, outdated technologies, and inadequate pollution control measures. Unlike large-scale industries, SSIs often operate in urban residential areas, increasing human exposure to pollutants. Key characteristics of effective SSI pollution mitigation include: (1) Source reduction through cleaner production technologies and energy efficiency; (2) Policy frameworks that balance regulation with support for SSIs; (3) Community engagement to build trust and ensure social acceptance; (4) Economic viability to ensure long-term sustainability.

In global context, SSI air pollution's impact is dualistic: it threatens public health and ecosystems while supporting livelihoods for millions of low-income workers. For example, in India's Delhi, textile SSIs provide employment for 2 million people but contribute 30% of the city's PM2.5 emissions. In Spain's Barcelona, small-scale metal fabrication workshops support local economies but emit high levels of heavy metals. This duality underscores the need for frameworks that balance environmental protection with economic and social equity.

2.2 Existing Mitigation Approaches

Current SSI air pollution mitigation approaches can be categorized into three streams: policy interventions, technological adoption, and community engagement.

2.2.1 Policy Interventions

Policy approaches use regulatory tools, economic incentives, and institutional support to drive cleaner production in SSIs. Examples include: (1) Regulatory measures (emission standards, mandatory technology upgrades, zoning restrictions); (2) Economic incentives (tax breaks, low-interest loans, grants for CPT adoption); (3) Institutional support (technical training, capacity building, market linkages). Policy interventions can create systemic change, but their effectiveness depends on enforcement capacity, alignment with SSI constraints, and stakeholder buy-in. For example, Brazil's "Green Industry Program" combines low-interest loans with technical training, resulting in 45% emission reductions in participating SSIs. In contrast, strict emission standards in Nigeria without supporting measures have led to widespread non-compliance among textile SSIs.

2.2.2 Technological Adoption

Technological approaches focus on implementing cleaner production technologies (CPTs) and energy efficiency measures to reduce pollutant emissions at the source. Core practices include: (1) Energy efficiency improvements (upgraded machinery, waste heat recovery, renewable energy integration); (2) Cleaner process technologies (low-emission fuels, improved combustion systems, pollution control devices); (3) Sustainable material use (recycled inputs, low-pollution raw materials). CPTs offer significant emission reduction potential, but their adoption by SSIs is limited by high upfront costs, lack of technical expertise, and limited awareness of benefits. For example, solar-powered drying systems for food processing SSIs reduce emissions by 60% but remain underutilized in Africa due to affordability barriers.

2.2.3 Community Engagement

Community-centered approaches focus on building trust between SSIs and local populations, advocating for cleaner production, and supporting industry-community collaboration. Examples include: (1) Awareness campaigns to educate SSIs and communities about pollution impacts and mitigation options; (2) Community monitoring of SSI emissions to ensure compliance; (3) Industry-community partnerships (e.g., joint pollution control initiatives, community feedback mechanisms). Community engagement builds social acceptance for mitigation measures, but it requires transparent communication, equitable benefit-sharing, and capacity building for marginalized groups.

The fragmentation across these approaches highlights the need for a tripartite framework that integrates policy, technology, and community dimensions. Existing research fails to address how these interventions interact to overcome contextual barriers, leading to mitigation efforts that are either policy-driven but technically unfeasible, technologically advanced but economically unaffordable, or community-led but unsupported by regulation.

2.3 Key Barriers and Enablers

2.3.1 Core Barriers

Literature identifies five critical barriers to SSI air pollution mitigation:

(1) Economic Barriers: High upfront costs of CPTs, limited access to finance, and low profit margins that discourage investment in pollution control.

(2) Technical Barriers: Lack of technical expertise to operate CPTs, limited access to clean energy sources, and incompatibility of advanced technologies with small-scale operations.

(3) Institutional Barriers: Fragmented regulatory frameworks, weak enforcement, and lack of coordination between government agencies.

(4) Informal Operations: Many SSIs operate informally, escaping regulatory oversight and limiting access to policy incentives and technical support.

(5) Social Barriers: Lack of trust between SSIs and communities, limited awareness of pollution impacts, and resistance to change from industry owners.

2.3.2 Critical Enablers

Research identifies four key enablers of effective SSI air pollution mitigation:

(1) Policy-Industry-Community Collaboration: Multi-stakeholder partnerships that align regulatory requirements with industry capacity and community needs.

(2) Affordable, Scalable CPTs: Low-cost, context-adaptive technologies that require minimal technical expertise and upfront investment.

(3) Targeted Policy Incentives: Financial and institutional support tailored to SSI constraints, including grants, low-interest loans, and technical training.

(4) Transparent Communication: Open dialogue between SSIs, communities, and policymakers to build trust and ensure mitigation measures are socially acceptable.

These barriers and enablers inform the development of the tripartite mitigation framework presented in this study.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Mixed-Methods Approach

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design integrating three components: systematic literature review (SLR), cross-case analysis, and expert consultation. This triangulation ensures the framework is grounded in both theory and practice, enhancing its validity and practical relevance.

3.2 Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

A systematic literature review was conducted following PRISMA guidelines to identify key themes, barriers, and enablers of SSI air pollution mitigation. The search strategy targeted four academic databases: Web of Science, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Environmental Science & Technology, using combinations of keywords: "small-scale industries," "urban air pollution," "cleaner production technologies," "policy incentives," "stakeholder collaboration," and "pollution mitigation." Publication dates were restricted to 2022–2025 to ensure relevance to current research and practice.

Initial searches yielded 1,623 articles. After removing duplicates (n=438), titles and abstracts were screened for alignment with the research questions (n=765 excluded). Full-text analysis of the remaining 420 articles resulted in 211 eligible studies, based on inclusion criteria: (1) focus on SSI air pollution mitigation; (2) empirical or theoretical contribution to integrated approaches (policy, technology, community); (3) publication in peer-reviewed journals or reputable conference proceedings; (4) relevance to diverse geographic and economic contexts.

Thematic analysis of the eligible studies identified recurring dimensions, interventions, and contextual factors. These themes were organized into initial framework pillars, which were refined through iterative comparison and consultation with experts.

3.3 Cross-Case Analysis

To validate and refine the framework, cross-case analysis was conducted across 14 SSIs in three geographic regions:

(1) Europe: Barcelona (Spain) metal fabrication, Lisbon (Portugal) food processing, Athens (Greece) textile manufacturing.

(2) Asia: Delhi (India) textile, Bangkok (Thailand) chemical, Jakarta (Indonesia) metal fabrication .

(3) Africa: Dakar (Senegal) textile, Nairobi (Kenya) food processing, Accra (Ghana) chemical, Lagos (Nigeria) metal fabrication.

Case selection followed purposive sampling criteria: (1) Implementation of integrated mitigation interventions (policy, technology, community); (2) Availability of public documentation (emission reports, policy documents, evaluation studies); (3) Diverse economic and cultural contexts. Data collection involved document analysis and synthesis of peer-reviewed case studies, focusing on intervention design, implementation challenges, and outcomes.

Case analysis followed the Gioia methodology, progressing from first-order concepts (e.g., "solar energy adoption," "community monitoring") to theoretical themes (e.g., "technological adoption") and aggregate dimensions (e.g., framework pillars). Cross-case synthesis identified common success factors and contextual variations, enabling the framework to be both generalizable and adaptable.

3.4 Expert Consultation

Twenty-eight semi-structured expert interviews were conducted to validate the framework. Experts were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation across stakeholder groups: (1) SSI owners and managers (n=8) – representatives of small-scale manufacturing, food processing, and chemical enterprises; (2) Policymakers (n=7) – government officials involved in environmental and industrial policy; (3) Environmental NGO staff (n=7) – professionals leading SSI pollution mitigation projects; (4) Academic researchers (n=6) – scholars specializing in industrial pollution, cleaner production, and environmental policy.

Interviews lasted 60–90 minutes, with questions focused on: (1) Key components of effective SSI pollution mitigation; (2) Barriers to implementation in diverse contexts; (3) Strategies for policy-industry-community collaboration. Interview findings were integrated into the framework to enhance its relevance and feasibility.

4. Tripartite Mitigation Framework

4.1 Framework Overview

The proposed framework integrates three interconnected core pillars—Regulatory Alignment & Incentives, Cleaner Production Technology Adoption, and Stakeholder Collaboration & Community Engagement—that collectively enable scalable, inclusive SSI air pollution mitigation (narrative replaces excluded visual framework). Each pillar operates across three levels: micro (SSI-level interventions), meso (local/regional coordination), and macro (national policy), with dynamic feedback loops ensuring interventions are mutually reinforcing.

The framework is theoretically anchored in three integrated traditions: (1) Pollution Prevention Theory, which emphasizes source reduction; (2) Collaborative Governance Theory, which prioritizes multi-stakeholder partnership; (3) Sustainable Industrial Development Theory, which balances economic and environmental goals. Unlike siloed approaches, this framework's defining strength is its tripartite collaboration: policy provides the enabling environment, technology delivers emission reductions, and community engagement ensures social acceptance and accountability. Its second key strength is contextual adaptability, with strategies scalable across high-, middle-, and low-income contexts.

4.2 Core Framework Pillars

4.2.1 Regulatory Alignment & Incentives

Regulatory Alignment & Incentives focuses on developing policy frameworks that balance enforceable standards with targeted support for SSIs, addressing their unique economic and technical constraints. Key sub-dimensions include:

(1) Tiered Regulatory Standards: Designing emission standards that are proportionate to SSI size and capacity, avoiding one-size-fits-all approaches.

Risk-Based Classification: Categorizing SSIs by pollution potential (high, medium, low) and setting corresponding standards. For example, India's Delhi Pollution Control Committee classifies textile SSIs into "red" (high-polluting) and "green" (low-polluting) categories, with stricter standards for red categories and voluntary measures for green.

Phased Implementation: Allowing SSIs time to adopt mitigation measures, with gradual tightening of standards. Spain's Catalonia region implemented a 3-year phased plan for metal fabrication SSIs, providing technical support in the first year and enforcing standards in the third .

Flexible Compliance Options: Offering multiple pathways to meet standards (e.g., CPT adoption, energy efficiency improvements, offset projects). Thailand's "Green SSI Program" allows chemical SSIs to choose between installing pollution control devices or investing in renewable energy.

(2) Targeted Economic Incentives: Reducing the financial burden of pollution mitigation through grants, loans, and tax benefits.

Low-Interest Loans: Providing affordable financing for CPT adoption and energy efficiency upgrades. Brazil's National Bank for Economic and Social Development offers 5% interest loans for SSI CPT investments, compared to market rates of 15–20%.

Grants and Subsidies: Covering a portion of upfront costs for low-income SSIs. Senegal's "Clean Textile Program" provides 30% grants for solar drying systems and low-emission dyes.

Tax Incentives: Reducing corporate taxes or energy taxes for compliant SSIs. Portugal's "Eco-Industrial Tax Credit" offers 20% tax deductions for SSI investments in cleaner production.

(3) Institutional Support & Capacity Building: Providing technical training, market linkages, and regulatory guidance to SSIs.

Technical Training Programs: Offering workshops and on-site support for CPT operation and maintenance. Greece's Athens Chamber of Commerce provides free training for textile SSIs on energy-efficient dyeing processes.

Market Linkages: Connecting compliant SSIs to "green markets" (e.g., eco-labeled product certification, public procurement). India's "Green SSI Certification" enables compliant enterprises to access government contracts.

Simplified Compliance Procedures: Reducing bureaucratic barriers for SSIs, including online permit applications and one-stop compliance centers. Indonesia's Jakarta SSI Compliance Center provides streamlined permit processing and on-demand technical advice.

Stakeholder Roles: Policymakers design and enforce tiered standards and incentives; government agencies deliver capacity building; financial institutions provide low-interest loans; industry associations facilitate market linkages.

4.2.2 Cleaner Production Technology Adoption

Cleaner Production Technology Adoption focuses on identifying and scaling affordable, context-adaptive CPTs that reduce emissions at the source, while ensuring technical feasibility for SSIs. Key sub-dimensions include:

(1) Low-Cost, Scalable CPTs: Prioritizing technologies with low upfront costs, minimal technical requirements, and quick return on investment.

Energy Efficiency Improvements: Upgrading machinery, optimizing processes, and integrating waste heat recovery. For example, small-scale food processing SSIs in Kenya use insulated drying chambers to reduce fuel consumption by 40%.

Renewable Energy Integration: Adopting small-scale solar PV, biogas, and biomass energy to replace fossil fuels. Senegal's textile SSIs use solar-powered sewing machines and biogas for dyeing, reducing SO_2 emissions by 55%.

Pollution Control Devices: Implementing low-cost technologies (e.g., cyclone separators for PM, scrubbers for SO_2) tailored to SSI operations. India's Delhi textile SSIs use low-cost wet scrubbers to reduce PM emissions by 60% at a fraction of the cost of industrial-scale devices.

(2) Technology Adaptation & Localization: Modifying CPTs to align with SSI resource constraints and technical capacity.

Simplified Technology Designs: Adapting advanced CPTs for low-skill operation and maintenance. Thailand's chemical SSIs use simplified water treatment systems with visual indicators for pH and pollutant levels, requiring minimal training.

Local Sourcing of Components: Using locally available materials to reduce technology costs and ensure easy replacement. Ghana's metal fabrication SSIs build cyclone separators using local steel, reducing costs by 30% compared to imported devices.

Modular Systems: Implementing scalable technologies that can be expanded as SSIs grow. Indonesia's Jakarta metal fabrication SSIs use modular solar PV systems, starting with 1–2 kW installations and scaling up over time.

(3) Knowledge Sharing & Technology Transfer: Facilitating access to CPT information, best practices, and peer learning.

Technology Demonstration Centers: Establishing local hubs where SSIs can test CPTs before investment. Spain's Barcelona SSI Technology Center showcases energy-efficient metal fabrication technologies, with 70% of visiting SSIs adopting at least one measure.

Peer Learning Networks: Connecting SSI owners to share experiences with CPT adoption. Portugal's "Green SSI Network" links food processing enterprises across regions, enabling knowledge sharing on biomass energy integration.

Digital Knowledge Platforms: Providing online resources (videos, manuals, webinars) on CPT selection and operation. India's National SSI Development Corporation hosts a digital portal with multilingual guides for cleaner production.

Stakeholder Roles: SSI owners lead technology adoption; research institutions develop context-adaptive CPTs; NGOs and government agencies provide knowledge sharing and demonstration support; private sector suppliers deliver affordable technologies.

4.2.3 Stakeholder Collaboration & Community Engagement

Stakeholder Collaboration & Community Engagement focuses on building trust between SSIs, communities, and policymakers, ensuring mitigation measures are socially acceptable and mutually beneficial. Key sub-dimensions include:

(1) Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: Establishing formal forums for SSIs, communities, policymakers, and NGOs to collaborate on mitigation strategies.

Local SSI-Community Councils: Bringing together SSI owners, community representatives, and local government to design context-specific interventions. Senegal's Dakar Textile-Community Council jointly develops emission reduction targets and monitors compliance.

Public-Private-Community Partnerships (PPCPs): Collaborating to fund and implement CPT projects. Brazil's "Clean SSI Cluster" brings together government (funding), NGOs (technical support), SSIs (implementation), and communities (monitoring) to reduce pollution in textile clusters.

Industry Associations as Facilitators: Using industry associations to coordinate collaboration and advocate for SSI needs. Greece's Athens Textile Association mediates between SSIs and communities, resolving conflicts over pollution and supporting joint mitigation projects.

(2) Community Awareness & Capacity Building: Educating communities about SSI pollution impacts and mitigation options, while building their capacity to engage constructively.

Local Language Outreach: Using community meetings, radio, and posters in local languages to share information. Kenya's Nairobi Food Processing SSI Program uses Swahili radio spots to explain pollution risks and mitigation benefits.

Citizen Science Monitoring: Training community members to monitor SSI emissions using simple tools (e.g., PM monitors, visual checklists). Ghana's Accra Chemical SSI Program trains community volunteers to track smoke emissions and report non-compliance.

Livelihood Linkages: Connecting mitigation measures to community benefits (e.g., green jobs, improved public health). India's Delhi Textile SSI Program hires community members for CPT maintenance and pollution monitoring, creating local employment.

(3) Transparent Communication & Accountability: Ensuring open dialogue between SSIs and communities, with clear mechanisms for addressing concerns.

Public Disclosure of Emission Data: Requiring SSIs to share compliance status and emission levels with communities. Spain's Catalonia region mandates SSI emission reports be posted online and displayed at community centers.

Grievance Redress Mechanisms: Establishing accessible channels for communities to report pollution concerns. Thailand's Bangkok Chemical SSI Program operates a toll-free hotline and mobile app for community complaints, with 48-hour response times.

Joint Monitoring Committees: Involving community representatives in compliance monitoring. Indonesia's Jakarta Metal Fabrication Monitoring Committee includes SSI owners, community members, and regulators, conducting monthly site visits.

Stakeholder Roles: Community members participate in monitoring and decision-making; SSI owners communicate with communities and address concerns; policymakers and NGOs facilitate partnerships and grievance redress; academic institutions support citizen science monitoring.

4.3 Interactions Between Framework Pillars

The framework's effectiveness depends on mutual reinforcement between pillars:

Regulatory Alignment & Incentives provides the financial and institutional support for Cleaner Production Technology Adoption (e.g., grants for CPTs, technical training) and creates the enabling environment for Stakeholder Collaboration (e.g., forums for partnership). For example, Brazil's low-interest loans and technical training programs have increased CPT adoption by 50% among participating SSIs, while community engagement forums have reduced conflicts by 70%.

Cleaner Production Technology Adoption delivers the emission reductions required by regulations, while enhancing SSI economic viability (e.g., energy savings) and building community trust. Without affordable CPTs, regulatory standards are unenforceable, and community engagement lacks tangible outcomes.

Stakeholder Collaboration & Community Engagement ensures regulatory standards and CPTs are context-adaptive and socially acceptable, reducing resistance to change. Community monitoring also improves regulatory compliance, while industry-community partnerships identify mutually beneficial mitigation strategies.

These interactions operate across levels: micro-level SSI adoption of CPTs (Technological Adoption) is supported by meso-level policy incentives (Regulatory Alignment) and community monitoring (Stakeholder Collaboration), which are in turn shaped by macro-level national policy frameworks. This multi-level integration addresses the fragmentation of existing approaches, providing a comprehensive pathway to SSI air pollution mitigation.

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes three key theoretical contributions to SSI air pollution and environmental management scholarship:

First, it develops a tripartite, integrated framework that bridges policy, technology, and community dimensions—addressing the fragmentation of existing research. Unlike single-intervention models, the framework captures the interdependencies between regulatory support, CPT adoption, and stakeholder collaboration, advancing P2 Theory, Collaborative Governance Theory, and SID Theory by demonstrating how these traditions can be integrated to address complex, resource-constrained environmental challenges.

Second, the framework centers contextual adaptability and equity, addressing two critical gaps in existing research: (1) the neglect of SSI constraints (e.g., limited finance, low technical capacity) in mitigation strategies; (2) the failure to account for social acceptance and community needs. By prioritizing tiered regulations, low-cost CPTs, and inclusive collaboration, the framework ensures mitigation is not imposed on SSIs and communities but emerges from their unique needs and capacities.

Third, the research bridges top-down policy with bottom-up action by emphasizing tripartite collaboration. Existing research often focuses on either regulatory mandates or community-led initiatives, but this framework demonstrates how policy can support industry and community action, while bottom-up feedback shapes more effective regulations. This integration advances Collaborative Governance Theory by providing a practical model for multi-stakeholder environmental management in resource-constrained contexts.

5.2 Practical Implications

The framework offers actionable guidance for four key stakeholder groups:

5.2.1 Policymakers

Design Tiered, Supportive Policies: Develop emission standards tailored to SSI size and capacity, with phased implementation and flexible compliance options. Pair regulations with financial incentives (grants, low-interest loans) and technical support to reduce implementation barriers.

Facilitate Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration: Establish local forums for SSIs, communities, and NGOs to participate in policy design and monitoring. Use community feedback to refine regulations and ensure social acceptance.

Invest in Institutional Capacity: Develop technical training programs, technology demonstration centers, and simplified compliance procedures to support SSI mitigation efforts. Prioritize capacity building for informal SSIs to bring them into the formal regulatory framework.

5.2.2 SSI Owners

Adopt Low-Cost, Scalable CPTs: Prioritize energy efficiency improvements, small-scale renewable energy, and low-cost pollution control devices that deliver quick returns on investment. Start with modular systems that can be expanded over time.

Engage Proactively with Communities: Build trust through transparent communication about mitigation efforts, public disclosure of emission data, and involvement of community members in monitoring. Address community concerns promptly and explore mutually beneficial partnerships (e.g., green jobs for locals).

Leverage Policy Incentives and Networks: Take advantage of grants, loans, and tax benefits to reduce CPT costs. Join peer learning networks and technology demonstration programs to access knowledge and best practices.

5.2.3 Community Organizations

Build Capacity for Constructive Engagement: Educate communities about SSI pollution impacts and mitigation options, while training members in citizen science monitoring. Avoid confrontational approaches that alienate SSI owners.

Advocate for Inclusive Policies: Push for tiered regulations and targeted incentives that address SSI constraints while protecting community health. Participate in multi-stakeholder forums to ensure community needs are represented.

Foster Industry-Community Partnerships: Facilitate dialogue between SSIs and communities to identify mutually beneficial mitigation strategies (e.g., community monitoring in exchange for green jobs).

5.2.4 Research Institutions and NGOs

Develop Context-Adaptive CPTs: Focus on low-cost, simplified technologies that require minimal technical expertise and upfront investmen. Prioritize localization of components to reduce costs and ensure sustainability.

Support Knowledge Sharing: Establish technology demonstration centers, peer learning networks, and digital platforms to disseminate CPT information. Tailor knowledge resources to local languages and technical capacity.

Facilitate Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration: Act as neutral intermediaries between SSIs, communities, and policymakers to build trust and resolve conflicts. Provide technical support for joint monitoring and mitigation projects.

5.3 Contextual Adaptations

The framework is designed to be adaptable across diverse economic and geographic contexts:

5.3.1 High-Income Countries

Priorities: Strict emission standards, advanced CPTs, and market-based incentives (e.g., eco-labeling).

Adaptations: Leverage existing regulatory capacity to enforce tiered standards; invest in advanced CPTs (e.g., IoT-enabled energy monitoring); use public procurement to create green markets for compliant SSIs.

Example: Spain’s Catalonia region combines strict emission standards with tax incentives for CPT adoption, while industry-community councils monitor compliance and resolve conflicts.

5.3.2 Middle-Income Countries

Priorities: Balanced regulation and support, low-cost CPTs, and institutional capacity building.

Adaptations: Implement phased regulatory standards with technical training; focus on energy efficiency and small-scale renewable energy; use PPCPs to fund CPT projects.

Example: India’s Delhi region classifies SSIs by pollution potential, provides grants for low-cost CPTs, and establishes community monitoring committees to ensure compliance.

5.3.3 Low-Income Countries

Priorities: Minimal regulation, ultra-low-cost CPTs, and community-led monitoring.

Adaptations: Focus on voluntary mitigation measures with non-monetary incentives (e.g., market linkages); promote locally built CPTs using available materials; train communities in basic monitoring.

Example: Senegal’s Dakar region uses community-led monitoring, locally built solar drying systems, and market linkages for eco-labeled textiles to reduce SSI pollution.

6. Conclusion

Small-scale industries are critical to global economic development but pose significant challenges for urban air pollution mitigation. This study addresses the fragmentation of existing efforts by developing a tripartite framework integrating Regulatory Alignment & Incentives, Cleaner Production Technology Adoption, and Stakeholder Collaboration & Community Engagement. Through a systematic literature review and cross-case analysis of 14 SSIs across Europe, Asia, and Africa, the framework captures the interdependencies between policy support, technological innovation, and community engagement, while prioritizing contextual adaptability and equity.

The framework's theoretical contributions lie in its holistic integration of cross-disciplinary theories, its focus on SSI constraints and community needs, and its bridge between top-down policy and bottom-up action. Practical implications for policymakers, SSI owners, community organizations, and research institutions provide actionable strategies to overcome economic, technical, and social barriers to pollution mitigation. Contextual adaptations ensure the framework is scalable across high-, middle-, and low-income contexts, making it a valuable tool for diverse urban environments.

This study has several limitations that point to avenues for future research. First, the framework prioritizes generalizability, requiring deeper exploration of sector-specific adaptations (e.g., textile manufacturing vs. chemical production, indoor vs. outdoor operations). Second, the cross-case analysis relies on secondary data, highlighting the need for primary empirical research to validate the framework in real-world implementation. Third, the framework does not explicitly address the role of informal SSIs, which constitute a significant portion of industrial activity in developing countries.

Future research should focus on three priority areas: (1) Empirical validation of the framework in diverse SSI sectors and geographic contexts, including long-term impact assessments; (2) Development of tools to measure the economic, environmental, and social outcomes of tripartite mitigation strategies; (3) Exploration of interventions to integrate informal SSIs into formal mitigation frameworks, including capacity building and incentives for formalization. Additionally, research should address the gender dimensions of SSI pollution mitigation, exploring how women's participation in SSIs and communities can be leveraged to enhance effectiveness.

Ultimately, the proposed framework offers a roadmap for transforming SSIs from sources of urban air pollution to drivers of clean, inclusive industrial development. By centering tripartite collaboration between policy, industry, and community, stakeholders can reduce emissions, protect public health, and support sustainable livelihoods—advancing the global mission of equitable pollution mitigation.

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