



Sustainable energy for displaced populations: a call for action to improve livelihoods, reduce emissions and protect local environments

Side event during the Climate and SDGs Synergy Conference, UN City Copenhagen

1 April. 12:45-13:45, room 0.9.34

Organizers: UNEP DTU, UNHCR and UNITAR on behalf of the GPA Steering Group (IOM, WFP, FAO, the Moving Energy Initiative, Practical Action, SE4All, GIZ, UNDP, The Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, and the UN Foundation)

Target group: Humanitarian and development actors, NGOs, private sector suppliers of energy technologies, Impact Investors

Aim of the session

This session will provide an overview of the energy situation in humanitarian operations, include examples from the field on how investment in sustainable energy production and consumption can help deliver the protection mandate, improve livelihoods and trigger wider development and environmental co-benefits. It will also highlight the importance of inter-agency collaboration to help unlock climate finance and market creation initiatives for clean energy technologies, outlining where and how private companies and investors can get involved.

Background

Over 130 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance due to conflict, natural disasters, and other complex global challenges. For many of these people, access to sustainable fuel and energy is critical for survival, and how they access it impacts their health, livelihoods, safety, and well-being. Fuel and energy are a precondition for essential activities such as cooking meals, heating shelters, cooling vaccines, charging mobile phones and powering humanitarian operations. Lack of access to safe and sustainable energy exposes displaced women and girls to heightened risks of sexual and gender-based violence as they travel long distances to collect firewood and navigate poorly lit communal spaces.

Current energy practices in situations of displacement are often insufficient, inefficient, unsafe for users and harmful to the surrounding environment. Moreover, institutional humanitarian operations such as water pumping, community lighting, and health clinics rely heavily on unsustainable fossil fuels, costing 1.2bn USD annually. Given the complex nature of humanitarian response and the challenges of integrating energy into the humanitarian program cycle, there is a need for systemic actions to mobilize resources and build capacity on this issue. Through the introduction of sustainable energy solutions there are multiple positive effects for health, protection, food security, WASH and other topics.

To improve the situation, 13 international organizations and other partners with the support of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, Norway and the IKEA Foundation have launched a global Plan of Action for Sustainable Energy Solutions in Situations of Displacement (GPA) in July 2018. This framework outlines concrete actions to accelerate progress towards the vision of safe access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy services for all displaced people by 2030.

Guiding questions for the session:

- What are the key issues and challenges for energy in humanitarian response settings for households and humanitarian organizations?
- What is the Global Plan of Action for Sustainable Energy Solutions in Situations of Displacement (GPA)?
- What are the good practice examples from the field, in terms of innovative business models, funding and inter-agency collaboration?
- How can private companies get involved?

Session speakers

- Christian Friis Bach, Secretary General of the Danish Refugee Council. *Introduction, framing of the key issues and challenges for energy in humanitarian response.*
- Thomas Fohgrub, Coordination Unit for the Global Plan of Action for Sustainable Energy Solutions in Situations of Displacement (GPA), UNITAR. *What is the GPA?*
- Emmanuel Michael Biririza, Coordinator for Energy, UNHCR Tanzania. *Creating a market for non-wood fuel technology in the Nyarugusu refugee camp*
- Jakob Øster, Livelihoods Officer, UNHCR Copenhagen. *Private sector collaboration and business model innovation for household energy in Rwandan refugee camps*

Interactive discussion with the panellists. Session chaired by James Haselip (UNEP DTU).

This event is part of the outreach activities from the Global Plan of Action for Sustainable Energy Solutions in Situations of Displacement, which is steered by the following organisations:



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