

# Research and Scoping Summary on Key Humanitarian Energy Issues

Humanitarian organisations and organisations dedicated to promoting and providing access to energy in displacement settings are currently facing an increasing challenge due to a surge in crises and a wide range of underlying causes leading to an ever-growing number of displaced people around the world.

With approximately 104 million people forcibly displaced globally, with the majority being hosted in developing countries, the contexts and settings hosting these individuals are not conducive to accessing sufficient, affordable, sustainable, and reliable energy solutions. Unfortunately, over the past five years, with the significantly growing demand for energy in displacement due to the rapidly increasing number of forcibly displaced people, the provision and access to energy have worsened. As a result, the protection of forcibly displaced people is at risk while their well-being also deteriorates progressively. It is estimated that 94 percent of forcibly displaced people living in camps do not have access to power, and 81 per cent are still lacking anything other than the most basic fuels such as firewood and charcoal for cooking.

The current pressing need of the humanitarian sector as well as the energy need in displacement contexts requires a critical approach with broader blended solutions and mitigation strategies beyond traditional humanitarian interventions to be effectively addressed. Collective efforts are needed in the following areas to enable apposite shifts in energy access in displacement settings.

## Data Scarcity

The humanitarian energy sector is experiencing a critical challenge operating with limited data to inform energy practitioners of the quality and quantity of the energy supply and demand in displacement settings. This situation continuously pushes researchers to extrapolate and build assumptions of what is needed by duplicating data from one refugee context to another to have a global figure that would reflect the energy situation of displaced people. This is the case of the [Light, Power for Refugees](#) report. The impact of the data limitation researchers experience in the displacement context goes beyond the quality of work they can produce by making them fail to cover other specific displacement contexts, such as urban areas where data is still scarce. As a result, the energy need of some displaced fades away, and an aspect of exclusion emerges among displaced populations. Therefore, context-specific data is critical to understand energy needs in all displacement settings to inform ongoing and future energy solutions. The [State of the Humanitarian Energy Sector \(SOHES\)](#) report has presented the importance of data in the energy sector as a cross-cutting element to indicate what is needed and how to respond effectively to the displaced energy needs. Data allows tracking the energy project while measuring its impact and helping understand the process toward SDG7 in displacement settings.

## Leave No One Behind Barriers and Inclusive Investments

The importance and need for inclusion of the displaced people is imperative for sectoral changes. Displaced people play an important role in mitigating the energy challenges they face, regardless of their work and efforts being overlooked in the humanitarian space. Moreover, their expertise is less considered to be helpful in the sector. The existing 'Power dynamics' between the displaced people and the humanitarian agencies aiming to support them justify their level of engagement and shape the acceptance of the refugees' potential in this space. The long chain of brokers between donors and people at the grassroots level makes humanitarian responses very mysterious, while the available knowledge, expertise, and initiatives from within the displaced communities can help address different issues they face. 'Need is the motto of innovation; from the needs, people create innovative solutions for their lives, and they come up with solutions no one ever thinks about. This is true for the displaced communities as well. Therefore, there is a real need for states hosting refugees, humanitarian agencies, and donors to work collaboratively with displaced people in different capacities to make the humanitarian responses sustainable.

The SOHES report emphasises the need for inclusion in the energy response by highlighting that without substantive action, refugees and displaced people will continue to live without access to clean energy, and global emissions from humanitarian agencies will continue to rise. Millions of displaced people will continue to live in the dark, crouched over smoky fires to cook their food, and without the hope of a modern, "high-energy and low carbon future."

## Transformative UN/INGO Change

A radical shift in crisis response and project implementation in the humanitarian energy sector is desperately needed to sustainability address the energy needs of displaced people. The temporal nature of camp settings and the short-term funding in humanitarian grounds hinder long-term engagement and private sector intervention in humanitarian setup. As a result, displaced people are excluded from the national energy plan of countries hosting them while portraying them and their market as less attractive to the private sector. The limbo state that displaced people live in deprives them of living a dignified life during and beyond their stay in camps. Therefore, a need for de-risking the humanitarian setups and revising different policies to allow private sector penetration and allow displaced people to live in dignity with the hope of rebuilding their lives. It is time to question different actors in the humanitarian sector on their steps in embedding the energy agenda within their core principle. It is essential to decolonise this space by allowing other actors to penetrate and collaboratively address the energy issues in the displaced communities.

## Decarbonising the Humanitarian Sphere

A transformation in replacing diesel generators with clean energy is imperative to address gas emissions in humanitarian space. How to replace these generators is a critical question that reveals the most significant opportunity to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions in the sector.

As highlighted in the SOHES report, six UN agencies and ICRC operate more than 11,000 generators in displacement situations. More than three generators would need to be decarbonised every day for the next nine years to meet the 2030 targets. Integrating solar energy into existing diesel-powered electricity systems in refugee camps could reduce costs by more than 30% and greenhouse gas emissions by more than 80%. To meet this milestone, collective efforts are needed.

## Conclusion

To ensure the access and provision of affordable, sustainable, and reliable energy for displaced people, the following areas were highlighted as key.

- Support from the humanitarian in collaboration with the government hosting refugees is highly needed to enable researchers to access quality data in urban settings.
- Placing displaced people at the frontline of knowledge production is an effective way to address data limitation in displacement settings.
- Energy actors should involve the displaced people in the project design to understand the users' context better, mitigating the risk of energy failure and waste of time and resources.
- The right to work, freedom of movement, and access to finance are highly recommended in humanitarian settings to stimulate market-based solutions.
- An energy solution should be more impactful and beneficial beyond a lit premise. Economic, technical skills and capacity building should also be provided through the energy solution to enhance its sustainability.
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- Building the existing energy structure while relying on the refugee entrepreneurs' expertise could ease the private sector penetration in the refugee market to provide clean energy.
- Systems can be aligned with national and institutional power provisions to decarbonise the electricity supply effectively.

