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United Nations Institute for Training and Research

Update on the Clean Energy Challenge

Affordable, Reliable and Sustainable Energy for
Displaced and Host Communities

June 2020

What is the Clean Energy Challenge?

A vast majority of the 70.8 million displaced people have minimal access to energy, which is needed for cooking meals, lighting their homes and providing access to livelihood opportunities, resulting in daily risks to their health, protection and wellbeing. In addition, humanitarian organisations rely on fossil fuels to provide energy for their operations, clinics, schools and water supply.

In order to take on the energy access challenges faced by humanitarian organisations, displaced and host communities, the UNHCR launched a [Clean Energy Challenge](#) at the [2019 Global Refugee Forum](#), gathering an Action Group of partners to work toward the vision that “*all refugee settlements and nearby host communities will have access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy by 2030*”. The Challenge outlines four outcome areas for integrated action:

- **Outcome 1:** The priority energy needs of refugee households in emergencies (cooking, lighting and heating) are met swiftly
- **Outcome 2:** Refugees and host communities have sufficient access to safe, sustainable energy to cook three daily meals.
- **Outcome 3:** Refugees have access to 200 Wh/household/day, allowing for basic lighting and connectivity.
- **Outcome 4:** Energy-efficient technologies and renewable energy are used to meet the electricity needs of communities: centralized water supplies, street lighting, educational and health facilities and humanitarian support facilities such as offices and staff accommodation.

The Clean Energy Challenge provides renewed political leadership and vision, building on the action-oriented architecture of the UN-led inter-agency [Global Plan of Action \(GPA\) for Sustainable Energy Solutions in Situations of Displacement](#). The Challenge also aims to externalise the [UNHCR Global Sustainable Energy Strategy \(2019-2024\)](#), acknowledging that this cannot be implemented by UNHCR alone. The Clean Energy Challenge is aligned with [Sustainable Development Goal 7](#), which aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030.

The Challenge Action Group presents a multi-stakeholder forum to work toward these outcomes through joint, integrated approaches to energy programming for refugees and host communities in line with the [Global Compact for Refugees](#).

Taking Stock after the 2019 Global Refugee Forum

Since the Global Refugee Forum, the Challenge Action Group has expanded to include over 200 individuals from more than 50 organisations. During periodic coordination meetings, the Action Group has met to take stock of existing energy initiatives in displacement settings and to solidify the multi-

stakeholder cooperation. Three workstreams around Data, Finance and Funding, and Project Pipeline development were announced to the group for collective work in 2020. A Challenge implementation plan is under development by the Challenge Secretariat, for consultation with the Action Group in the latter half of 2020. Updates on the workstreams as of June 2020 are found below.

- **Data: Harmonising core indicators and data collection methods, identifying energy needs.** Research partners in the Action Group have supported a process to develop a common framework for gathering energy data and conducting needs assessments. This provides guidance for GPA partners, in order to 1) measure energy access levels (aligned with SDG7 tracking processes) in humanitarian contexts and 2) design new clean energy projects for displaced and host communities. The Action Group is working together on harmonising data collection and analysis processes, then coordinate energy needs assessments in order to deliver a set of investable energy programmes that enable cleaner cooking and electrification for displaced and host communities. In conjunction with this harmonisation process, the UNHCR is working on mapping energy needs to refine the initial baseline and identify sites for integrated energy programmes with WASH, Shelter, education and health sectors.
- **Project Pipelines: Launching the Clean Energy Challenge Marketplace.** The Challenge Secretariat has developed and launched the Challenge Marketplace, as an innovative matchmaking space to connect the demand of energy needs identified by implementing partners to the supply of resources existing in the Action Group members. The Marketplace is held on a regular basis, and partners are encouraged to contact the Challenge Secretariat with existing project ideas or pledges of support. In 2020, the energy projects pitched in the marketplace are focused on a sustainable and resilient COVID-19 response. In the longer term, the Marketplace will be used to develop innovative projects and partnerships towards the challenge goals, based on more systematic data collection and analysis.
- **Funding and Finance: Developing a De-risking Mechanism for energy infrastructure.** In May 2020, the GPA Secretariat facilitated a series of online workshops with UN agencies and NGOs to define a process that will enable humanitarian agencies to buy renewable energy as a service from private companies. The workshop series explored existing approaches to decarbonising humanitarian energy infrastructure, considered the approach to developing long term agreements with energy service providers, and identified opportunities for funding decarbonization activities and solutions, which can be enabled through the adoption of a financial guarantee mechanism. Results and recommendations from the workshops are being defined, with an aim of rolling out the energy infrastructure guarantee mechanism in 2021 which in turn would support the energy transition of a pipeline of renewable energy projects.

Call to Action

We all have a responsibility to act, both to reduce our own emissions and to ensure displaced and host communities can access clean and renewable energy for improved wellbeing. Through the Clean Energy Challenge, partners from Member States (host and donor governments), International Organisations, private sector and researchers are invited to join the Action Group and commit pledges to the Challenge outcome areas. The following calls for support are requested by the Clean Energy Challenge Secretariat.

Member States (host governments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commit to the clean energy challenge principles and goals.• Co-develop integrated refugee and host community energy programme planning.
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Member State (donors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to the clean energy challenge principles and goals. • Consider providing funding for assessments and programme development. • Support coordinated donor engagement efforts. • Engage in innovative financing and de-risking processes conducted under the GPA and Challenge.
UN Agencies and Implementing Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify energy needs of displaced communities. • Coordinate on existing energy projects and expertise. • Develop inter-agency integrated energy programming for displaced and host communities. • Explore shared value partnerships with private sector and development partners.
Private sector and technical assistance partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide assessment tools and advice on data collection and analysis. • Share information, in kind support, expertise and training on existing solutions. • Conduct assessments in conjunction with implementing partners • Support the Secretariat in developing a pipeline of sound, investable energy projects. • Explore shared value partnerships with UN agencies and implementing partners.
Research and data partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct site specific analysis (energy needs, appropriate technologies, socio-cultural factors, etc). • Support data visualisation portals. • Evaluation of existing energy in displacement programs.

Joining the Challenge

To join the Challenge, please write to the Secretariat by emailing Christina Gkouvali, Associate Liaison Officer UNHCR (GKOUVALI@unhcr.org), and Aimee Jenks, Desk Office GPA Coordination Unit (aimee.jenks@unitar.org).

Clean Energy Challenge Action Group Members:

