



The Inclusivity Strategic Outlook

Global Platform for Action
on Sustainable Energy
in Displacement Settings
(GPA)

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Acknowledgments

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Transforming
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Access





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Executive Summary



Care for Social Welfare International has helped displaced people in southern Nigeria farm more productively by supporting them with training and solar-powered water pumping. Credit: Emeke Obanor/Ashden.

The inclusion of displaced persons in the humanitarian energy sector is critical in building more effective, holistic, and sustainable responses to humanitarian crises. The Global Platform for Action for Sustainable Energy in Displacement Settings Transforming Humanitarian Energy Access (THEA) programme, in collaboration with the Global Refugee-led Network (GRN), Ashden, and Chatham House, have developed a Strategy Outlook which covers crucial aspects of inclusivity for displaced persons, emphasising the importance of prioritising their participation in the humanitarian energy sector. The Outlook is centred around six key areas, covering inclusion and meaningful participation of displaced communities in policy, workforce, research and innovation, partnerships, systematic change, and investment. The report highlights the challenges faced by displaced persons and supports promoting the agency and involvement of displaced people at the global, national, and local levels, with the overarching goal of enhancing inclusive practices within humanitarian energy policy and programming responses.

The Strategic Outlook highlights the hurdles displaced people face within the traditional humanitarian system, such as power inequalities, structural barriers, limited access to resources and work opportunities, as well as restricted agency in strategic spaces where critical decisions about their lives are made. Following this, the document presents a few recommendations to help the humanitarian energy sector embrace a paradigm change that enhances inclusivity and ensures the humanitarian system seeks to embrace a just and inclusive approach. The following list highlights the key recommendations presented within the Strategic Outlook:

Inclusivity in Policy

- Engage displaced people throughout the policy cycle and in the development of more concrete and sustainable policies at the local, national and international levels.
- Promote refugee leadership and facilitate meaningful participation of refugees and other forcibly displaced people in policy negotiations at the local, national and international levels.

Inclusivity in the Humanitarian Workforce

- Strive to ensure that at least 10% minimum of the workforce within humanitarian programming has lived experience of displacement.
- Encourage staff recruiting mechanisms that foster the hiring of displaced people within humanitarian organisations. For example, having at least one staff from a displacement background in each department and programme.

Inclusivity in Research and Innovation

- Engage Refugee-Led Organisations (RLOs) and other community leaders who work with displaced and host communities in the design of both qualitative and quantitative research.
- Support displaced people as authors and lead authors of research outputs, including journal articles.

Inclusivity in Partnerships

- Develop institutional policies that would enable more partnerships with refugee-led initiatives, including refugee-led organisations and enterprises led and owned by displaced people.
- Commit to delivering at least 25% of funding directly with or through local and displaced-led partners, in line with the Grand Bargain World Humanitarian Summit goal.

Inclusive Systematic Change

- Be intentional and learn about refugee biases, labels and stereotypes and be a champion of promoting the right terminologies in displacement settings.
- Put in place organisational strategies that have promoted inclusion and equal representation of the refugees and other displaced people regardless of their unique challenges that arise from the displacement status and supremacy of the humanitarian world over their lives.

Inclusivity in Investment

- The donor community, potential venture capitalists, financial institutions, and hosting governments should encourage a representation of 10% of displaced people at all levels of management, coordination, and implementation of the project. Donors and funders should have this target as a requirement for organisations to receive funding on humanitarian energy.
- Where feasible, project implementation should be implemented through community refugee organisations, refugee businesses, and/or build on existing local initiatives.

Considering the vital role inclusion plays in reforming humanitarianism and translating its interventions into more sustainable and meaningful programming, particularly in the energy sector, the THEA programme intends to further expand each of the topics outlined above. Over the coming two years, the programme will be developing an in-depth series of strategies based on the above six sub-topics with the aim of paving the way to enable humanitarian energy policy, planning and implementation to become “displaced person-centred”.



A night view of the streets/walk ways at the recently electrified Kalobeyei integrated settlement villages. Credit: GIZ

The Need for Inclusive Action in Humanitarian Energy

UNHCR estimates that the population of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons is now well above 100 million, with most forcibly displaced people (FDP) hosted in low- and middle-income countries. Although displacement is commonly regarded as a crisis or emergency issue, many displaced people remain in protracted situations and spend over 20 years in exile, often living for generations in refugee camps or situations of uncertainty. During emergency situations, displaced populations are often provided with basic provisions, such as food, shelter, and water. However, access to [modern forms of energy](#), such as clean cooking fuels and technologies or electricity connections are often overlooked. Where energy products are provided, they are often in the form of firewood or solar lanterns. The technologies and forms of access supplied are most often decided by humanitarian agencies. [Current humanitarian energy processes](#) rarely allow displaced people to have a say in the types of energy solutions provided and often do not consider individual, family or community needs. As many families live in situations of protracted displacement for generations, a shift in approach is required.

Refugees and displaced people should be included throughout the conceptualisation, design, and delivery of sustainable energy solutions in humanitarian contexts. Incorporating refugees and displaced people into the creation of sustainable energy solutions in humanitarian situations should be an ethical necessity and a strategic priority. This approach can help yield sustainable, enhanced, enduring, and just energy access solutions, benefiting both displaced populations and host communities. It can also foster long-term sustainability, facilitate innovations for the uniqueness of displacement settings and cultivate community ownership and resilience as communities assume responsibility for their energy choices.

The purpose of this Strategic Outlook is to outline how and why refugees and displaced people should be placed at the heart of decision-making on energy in displacement settings. It provides a primer on inclusion and an introduction to some of the barriers facing displaced people within the humanitarian energy sector. Throughout the report we provide a description of the need for inclusion within policymaking, recruitment and hiring practices, research and innovation, partnerships, humanitarian system reform, and financing and investment practices. We also offer practical suggestions that can be used by organisations and individuals to embed inclusive practices within their work and start to open-up the humanitarian energy sector.

The Strategic Outlook covers crucial aspects of inclusivity for displaced individuals, emphasising the importance of prioritising their participation in the humanitarian energy sector. The Outlook centres around six key areas - including policy, workforce, research and innovation, partnerships, inclusive investment, and the specific challenges faced by displaced individuals aimed at promoting the agency and involvement of displaced people at the global, national, and local levels. The key areas are organised with an overarching goal of enhancing the efficacy of humanitarian energy response. This document serves as an advocacy-oriented outlook intended to influence policies and practices that promote access to sustainable energy in displacement settings. It draws on the collective expertise and experiences of its primary co-authors, who possess first-hand knowledge and lived experience of displacement and its associated challenges. Special attention is given to the necessity of reforming humanitarian policies, programmes and frameworks, particularly within the energy sector.

This report has been produced as a part of the Transforming Humanitarian Energy Access (THEA) programme, which is led by the Global Platform for Action on Sustainable Energy in Displacement Settings (GPA), hosted at the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), in partnership with the Global Refugee-led Network (GRN), Ashden, and Chatham House. This project was funded with UK aid from the UK government via the Transforming Energy Access platform. The GRN and other Refugee-Led Organisations (RLOs) have supported efforts to build an inclusive case for refugees' meaningful participation and agency in decision-making processes that affect their lives, leading work on the meaningful involvement and influence of refugees and forcibly displaced individuals. "Meaningful Refugee Participation (MRP)" is particularly important within the humanitarian response, as is highlighted within the work of the GRN and the GPA's State of the Humanitarian Energy Sector (SOHES 2022) analysis. This report follows the guidance on meaningful participation and adheres to the principles of a human rights-based approach, including participation, accountability, non-discrimination, equality, empowerment, and legality.

THEA programme partners, including Ashden, Chatham House, and the GRN have been instrumental in developing the ideas on inclusive change presented in this report. While focused on humanitarian energy topics, many of the issues presented within the Strategic Outlook can be adapted to other humanitarian sectors. We hope that readers will find it valuable for other humanitarian contexts, recognising the importance of inclusive strategies where displaced individuals take centre stage in determining their future.



In Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kakuma Ventures has set up solar-powered Wi-Fi hot spots managed by camp residents.
Credit: Kelvin Juma/ASHDEN

Inclusivity in Policy

Humanitarian energy response is guided by international, regional, national, and local policy formulation and implementation. Policy-making processes have consistently neglected the voices of FDPs and host community needs. The protracted nature of displacement creates a situation where displaced people have to bear both the negative and positive impacts of policies without having their voices well represented. Currently, humanitarian energy policy can be exclusionary: interventions formulated without representative voices of displaced people miss critical components needed to formulate practical solutions to development challenges. This section argues that going forward, both international and national policy formulation and implementation relating to energy in displacement settings should be held with displaced people at the centre of discussions and decision-making processes. Inclusive, rights-based approaches to addressing displacement ultimately lead to better outcomes for displaced populations and the broader society. Overall, fostering the active participation of FDPs in energy policy formulation and implementation acknowledges their agency, leverages their expertise and ensures that policies are more effective, contextually appropriate, and sustainable.



Policy is a guiding framework that ensures people are accountable for their actions and engagement. Enhancing the inclusion of displaced people of a critical aspect of every policy, including the humanitarian policy. Unfortunately, in the current scenario of states hosting refugees and other displaced people, policy has been one of the greatest barriers to inclusion because the developed policies do not put people at the centre of their interests but rather what the government or region will benefit from the arrangement.

Anila Noor, Co-founder of GRN.



Policy on access to energy in displacement contexts is a critical aspect that intersects with meeting the various needs of displaced individuals, such as quality education, employment, sufficient income, adequate healthcare, and livelihood opportunities. The process of energy policy development, where guidance, frameworks, and standards are established, remains largely opaque to displaced individuals, who are expected to comply with outcomes without fully understanding the intended goals and resulting implications. Hence, institutional and governmental structures within the humanitarian energy sector have emerged as "invisible barriers," impeding the access of displaced individuals to energy, assistance, and essential services. Displaced individuals frequently express their frustration and despair regarding the realities of accessing humanitarian aid, primarily attributed to the inflexible and intricate system designed for their access, which is primarily aligned with the priorities of donors and other institutions rather than reflecting the actual circumstances and needs of displaced individuals. Listening to refugee leaders and opening-up spaces for leadership from displaced people can help to change this picture.

It is therefore essential for the actors involved in humanitarian energy to employ all available means, including incorporating inclusive approaches that prioritise the experiences of displaced people, to drive discussions on standards, sector development, and institutional arrangements that are inclusive and represent the reality in displacement settings. By questioning the institutional structures of the humanitarian energy sector and reflecting on their positionality and implications, humanitarian actors can initiate a path towards greater inclusion within the sector. From our research, a number of initial practical recommendations have emerged on enabling inclusion – these are included in all sections of the report, with the recommendations below covering humanitarian energy policy.



Summary of Practical Advice for Embedding Inclusivity in Humanitarian Policy:

- Engage displaced people throughout the policy cycle and in the development of more concrete and sustainable policies at the local, national and international levels.
- Promote refugee leadership and facilitate meaningful participation of refugees and other forcibly displaced people in policy negotiations at the local, national and international levels.
- Ensure all humanitarian events have a representative with lived experience of displacement, including but not limited to policymaking, advocacy, fundraising, events and processes.
- Invite refugees and displaced people to actively participate in standard-setting processes, policy development discussions, and review of international agreements.
- Develop online feedback forms to provide timely feedback from displaced people on policy documents and open document creation to authors with lived experience of displacement.
- For those who cannot access online resources, arrange for physical meetings to solicit representative feedback from the refugee and host communities.



In Uganda Kampala, PPDR hosting a Community information session. Credit:PPDR

Inclusivity in the Humanitarian Workforce

Millions of people are **employed** by the humanitarian sector globally. However, displaced people do not fill many of these roles beyond informal and voluntary work at the camp level. Staffing representation of displaced people in national, regional, and global offices is almost non-existent. Refugees are sometimes hired as enumerators or conduct unpaid work within their communities, but these roles are frequently not recognised as important or paid through formal structures. There are a considerable number of barriers – real and perceived – to employing refugees and forcibly displaced people.

Legal restrictions and institutional hiring policies can limit the roles displaced people can apply for. However, our research suggests that one of the key limiting factors in employing refugees in the humanitarian workforce beyond the camp level is a **perception issue** around what refugees can deliver and how it is possible to work directly with and through displaced communities. These challenges are in addition to the discrimination that FDPs already commonly face in their host countries, such as in policy formulation and employment rights. This typically results in what can be referred to as ‘double discrimination’: refugees often cannot secure private sector or government jobs due to their displaced status, whilst also facing barriers to employment within humanitarian organisations, even when qualified. To challenge this picture, the following section considers why it is deemed necessary to ensure inclusive practices in hiring processes and directly employ refugees and displaced people.



Including refugees and other displaced people in the humanitarian workforce is essential. Refugees and displaced people often have unique insights and knowledge of their situations, which can be invaluable in developing effective humanitarian responses. They have a deep understanding of the local culture, customs, and languages that can help humanitarian organisations communicate with and understand the needs of the affected communities. Including refugees and displaced people in the humanitarian workforce can give them agency and dignity. Many refugees and displaced people are forced to rely on aid and may feel disempowered and helpless. Providing them with opportunities to work and contribute to the humanitarian response can help them feel more in control of their lives and increase their self-worth. Hiring refugees and displaced people can also help to build more sustainable and self-reliant communities. By providing job opportunities and skills training, humanitarian organisations can help create a more resilient and capable workforce that can continue to address ongoing needs even after the immediate crisis.

Temesgen Futsumbrhan Gebrehiwet,
A researcher and refugee based in Oxford.





Turkana County Government Officials learning tour of Eldosol and Radiant utility scale solar power plants in Eldoret Kenya.

Research conducted with THEA programme partners suggests a number of practical mechanisms by which refugees can be included within staffing the humanitarian energy sector. First, ensure that at least 10% of the humanitarian organisation's workforce has a displacement background – including well-distributed roles from senior management to junior team members. For agencies serving in humanitarian settings, there should be a minimum 10% threshold of employees who have lived experience of displacement, as is currently advocated for by the international community under the leadership of the Global Refugee-Led Network (GRN), which states such as the Netherlands, Australia, the UK and Canada, and organisations such as IKEA and OXFAM International, have agreed to commit to. Inclusivity in the workforce begins by setting a target and working hard to meet it. Our research also suggests that donor funding for humanitarian energy programmes should be tied to the 10% minimum employment of professionals with displacement backgrounds across senior management, mid-career, and junior positions. It is important for the humanitarian sector to embed good practices such as the standards of most recent calls regarding the required representation level of displaced persons at major international processes of ensuring at least 10% of staff, team members, consultants, and the broader workforce have a displacement background within the humanitarian space within 1 to 3 years. The GPA Coordination Unit, for example, surpassed this target in 2023 with over 30% of its team members having a displacement background. This is an example that can be emulated by other agencies.

Second, design and provide paid internships to displaced persons to help identify capable candidates for long-term permanent employment in humanitarian energy. Internships are one of the most critical entry points to the job market. There is a need to cultivate tailor-made paid internship opportunities targeting displaced people, through which they can be gradually included in the humanitarian energy workforce. Exposure to the working practices of humanitarian energy from an early stage is crucial for long-term investment. Paid internships can be offered through various formats, including online, [remote](#), hybrid and in-person arrangements. This approach not only opens up further job opportunities but also provides a starting point for individuals to build their careers in the humanitarian energy sector. Internships need to be designed in a way that leads to full-time roles. This Outlook also suggests that all internships should be paid, and as a minimum seek to cover travel and subsistence costs if full salaries are not initially available.

Third, in cases where forcibly displaced people have advanced professional backgrounds, their inclusion in the workforce of humanitarian energy can be further nurtured by offering them consultancy opportunities and employing them in senior management positions with commensurate remuneration standards common in the sector. This is particularly relevant in contexts where displaced people continue to face barriers related to work permits. In general, recruitment procedures can be designed and implemented to be mindful of the specific needs of refugees, including incorporating professional development programmes as part of the onboarding or recruitment process. Many guides for hiring refugees are available depending on local and national hiring rules. For example, the TENT Foundation's [guidance on hiring practices](#).

Fourth, offer flexibility on requirements for formal academic documents in employing displaced people in roles that are not highly specialised. Aim for personal capacity rather than formal education and qualifications and encourage on-the-job training and capacity building. Many refugees, for example, may not be able to provide official documentation of their qualifications due to war or conflict in their home region. Therefore, some FDPs face challenges when there is a need for formal paperwork demonstrating their skills or qualifications. Problems of this nature can be resolved by accepting certificate alternatives, for example, assessing and improving applicants' capabilities via on-site training, monitoring, and evaluation. In that sense, the requirement of formal academic certificates can be replaced by an "alternative or equivalent experience level". Initiatives, such as the [Kiron Campus](#), which provides tailor-made courses to displaced people, are good practices that need to be expanded and emulated in different contexts in humanitarian energy.

Fifth, where possible, make lived experience of displacement a compulsory condition of employment for certain positions in organisations. Employment processes can incorporate specific clauses in job descriptions, such as requiring or encouraging "applicants with lived experience of forced displacement" for certain positions. Focus should also be drawn to ensuring gender equity and equality.

Sixth, when displaced people face barriers to obtaining work permits, the challenge can be overcome by offering the opportunity to work from home and/or virtually. The issue of intersectionality also requires consideration. For example, women affected by displacement are more likely to be challenged by barriers to employment. Employers must take these additional barriers into account.

Summary of Practical Advice for Embedding Inclusivity in the Humanitarian Workforce:

- Strive to ensure that at least 10% minimum of the workforce within humanitarian programming has lived experience of displacement.
- Recruit displaced people at all stages of programme development: from conception and programme design to implementation to evaluation and monitoring.
- Encourage staff recruiting mechanisms that foster the hiring of displaced people within humanitarian organisations. For example, having at least one staff from a displacement background in each department.
- Broaden work positions within an organisation to encourage inclusion of displaced people within the organisational programming and structure.
- Use phrases such as ‘applicants with lived experience of displacement are particularly encouraged to apply’ in job listings.
- Where possible, make the lived experience of displacement a compulsory condition of employment for relevant positions.
- Provide paid internships to displaced people and advertise widely for roles.
- Offer consultancy positions or flexible and remote working arrangements for people facing status or right-to-work challenges.
- Relax formal requirements for academic documentation such as school certificates or university documents and consider applicants with commensurate lived and practical experience.



Inclusivity in Research and Innovation

Undertaking research and innovation within the humanitarian energy sector can be led by displaced researchers. Humanitarian energy research is a relatively new field in which research began in earnest less than 10 years ago. However, the research, technologies, and pilot development are mostly conducted in the Global North. There is no doubt that significant innovation is needed to pre-test, test, and implement solutions in the settings where they are critically needed and should be adopted. However, crucial to this research and innovation in sustainable energy is changing the usual narrative: research should be predominantly researching ‘with’, not ‘on’, displaced people.



“In displacement settings, there is a critical need for energy research that has long been neglected in the humanitarian response. Research should be led by the displaced persons themselves, and all research should be conducted in collaboration with displaced researchers. The approach in research should cut across renewable energy, energy storage, energy efficiency, and smart grids. Investing in research in these areas with the inclusion of researchers with displacement backgrounds is an effective approach to promoting sustainable energy access and improving the quality of life for displaced populations.

Epa Ndahimana,
Inclusivity analyst at the GPA Coordination Unit and former refugee.



In Kakuma Refugee Camp, research led by refugee on the process of obtaining business and work permit—RLRH research project. Credit: Joelle Hangi

Across the globe, in displacement settings, displaced persons are constantly searching for innovative solutions to the challenges they face. For example, more research needs to be conducted in the energy sector to evaluate the impact, scale, and potential of energy innovations and businesses developed by displaced people. Many refugee-led and organized innovations simply go unnoticed. The engagement of forcibly displaced researchers has often been limited to data collection, research subjects, or beneficiaries with limited influence over the subsequent use of the data, and local innovations are rarely looked at as potential solutions to displaced persons' challenges, with research conducted to validate the solutions from elsewhere, especially from the Global North and led by Western researchers.

The growing body of refugee innovations and the increasing number of displaced scholars means that now is the time to consider evaluating refugee innovations led by researchers with displacement backgrounds. Recruiting displaced people within programmes can offer valuable engagement opportunities and directly invest in the development of skills and capacity, overcoming gaps and providing local opportunities to get the work done. Organisations should engage with displaced people as professional researchers, who should be well remunerated at the level of their counterparts in the Global North. Examples of good practice include the training courses offered by the University of Oxford Refugee-led Research Hub (RLRH) to support refugee researchers in developing their skills and publication records.

Summary of Practical Advice for Embedding Inclusivity in Research and Innovation:

- Promote leadership from displaced researchers in research projects.
- Build and support systems that provide alternatives to traditional academic outlets for sharing knowledge, such as short report papers and storytelling.
- At the stage of research conceptualisation, host online events with communities to scope ideas.
- Recruit and work with people with displacement backgrounds as co-researchers and promote and enforce capacity building in contexts where capacity is lacking.
- Engage Refugee-Led Organisations (RLOs) and other community leaders who work with displaced and host communities in the design of both qualitative and quantitative research.
- Organise data validation and visualisation analysis sessions and workshops to ensure that the views of the displaced are well captured.
- Conduct research on and with refugee-led energy innovations and explore the potential for replicability of viable local solutions in other displacement settings.
- Involve the displaced in the development of new prototypes and include views and take their views with high regard. In cases where new prototypes have already been developed, seek user feedback and testing before implementation or project rollout.
- Ask RLOs and community leaders on the best possible means of reaching out to community members.
- Support displaced people as authors, in particular lead authors, of research outputs, including journal articles.

Inclusivity in Partnerships

Inter-agency collaborations and partnerships in the humanitarian energy sphere can drive forward innovation and change. For example, involvement in preparatory processes for events such as the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) led by UNCHR are important commitments to place partnerships at the heart of the operation of agencies to foster collaboration. Currently, collaborations happen between governments, international organisations and local organisations, often leaving out RLOs, which are systematically underrepresented. RLOs must often self-fund their attendance at partnership meetings, which can be very expensive. Related bureaucratic processes, organisational and due diligence requirements preclude them from being in spaces where critical decisions are taken. Such structural challenges should be reformed if the displaced persons are not to be left behind under the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

One area that needs serious rethinking is the engagement of organisations led by forcibly displaced persons. Current engagements are simply not enough to guarantee sustainable change and development. In many cases, engagement of displaced people is tokenistic. Organisations led by forcibly displaced people can be engaged as co-partners from idea inception to piloting, implementation, monitoring and evaluating. Refugee-led organisations are grounded in local knowledge; their leaders generally encounter the everyday life of fellow displaced persons and know what may work or what may not work for the displaced persons better than many other organisations.



UNDP Yemen has supported displaced people and host communities to set up solar minigrids powering homes and businesses.
Credit: UNDP

If funding is channelled directly to refugee-led organisations and FDP-hosting areas, they can offer value for money. Their proximity to their respective communities enables a more direct transfer of funds. The allocation of significant sums of money necessary to uphold the bureaucratic branches and processes of traditional humanitarian aid can instead be allocated directly to the vulnerable communities. Additionally, the recent advances in shifting from a humanitarian aid approach to a development-focused approach in protracted contexts calls for the direct involvement of the private sector. This further opens doors for the involvement of refugee-led organisations and other community actors as agents of change, directly contributing to the social and economic development and well-being of displaced community members.



Working together from the start, where humanitarian actors and their refugee-led counterparts plan, initiate, design, and implement a project together, would be the best option. No one should be looked at as the super expert, while the other is looked at as a mere beneficiary. The partnership should also put displaced people at the centre of interventions, as opposed to the reputation or survival of partnering organisations.

**Simon Marot Touloung,
Team Lead, African Youth Action Network-AYAN.**



The focus and priorities of humanitarian collaborations and partnerships are often limited to a specific scope of work within a specific time frame, strongly influencing the current and future programming in displacement settings as well as the lives of displaced people. Unfortunately, the current funding and partnership channels stemming from inter-agency partnerships often result in collaborations of “broker agencies” between donors, humanitarian agencies, and large NGOs. Often, this results in considerable costs for these groups. It is estimated that only **10% of humanitarian funding** reaches displaced communities, as 90% of the funding is diverted to salaries, programme management, administration, and deployment of external experts in the displacement settings. Broadening the collaborations and partnerships to cover the spectrum of expertise that refugee-led organisations and other displaced community-based organisations offer is an opportunity to strengthen the energy response and various ranges of humanitarian programming in displacement. The partnerships and collaborations built between humanitarian agencies and refugee-led organisations should move from a “paternalism approach” to an “equal partnership” where each partner's contribution is equitable and equally valued.



Summary of Practical Advice for Embedding Inclusivity in Partnerships:

- Strive to build equal partnerships with displaced communities in all humanitarian energy programmes.
- Develop institutional policies that would allow more partnerships with refugee-led initiatives, including refugee-led organisations and enterprises led and owned by displaced people.
- Commit to delivering at least 25% of funding directly with or through local and displaced-led partners, in line with the Grand Bargain World Humanitarian Summit goal.
- Conceptualise and design energy programmes with displaced people from the onset of programming.
- Consider new and alternative partners when building humanitarian energy programmes.
- Aim to engage refugee-led organisations at programme or project inception and ideation and involve them throughout funding application, project implementation, and monitoring & evaluation.
- Commit to designing thinking processes together with displaced persons to come up with solutions that are informed by community members.

Inclusive Systematic Change

The humanitarian sector is influenced by certain **labels** for displaced people, as well as both conscious and unconscious biases. These biases often portray displaced individuals as vulnerable and solely dependent on aid, overlooking their potential contributions and capabilities. In many contexts, displaced persons are considered economic burdens, criminals, welfare seekers, job stealers, cultural threats, and helpless victims. Such stereotypes have robustly been proven to be inaccurate, as migrants and refugees **contribute to the economic systems** of regions where they reside. Media often depicts displaced people as homogenous groups, disregarding their diversity in skills and potential, forming the beginning of their discrimination and the negligence of their meaningful participation. It is crucial to challenge these biases and stereotypes by promoting accurate information, empathy, and an understanding of the complex circumstances that forcibly displaced persons face. Emphasising their resilience, diversity, skills, and potential contributions can help break down discriminatory attitudes and promote meaningful inclusive practices and systems.



The systematic exclusion of refugees from the humanitarian system through unspoken sad, lived realities such as stereotypes and misuse of power is an invisible ceiling created to limit us from reaching our full and high potential and a strategy to retain us under control and dependence only to benefit other people since numbers count in this sector.

Innocent Ntumba, Refugee entrepreneur.



Humanitarian decision-making is often in the hands of professionals with limited lived experience of what it means to live in displacement. It is based on assumptions and research that are not inclusive or representative. The power imbalance perpetuates a top-down approach where it is assumed that external professionals make decisions on behalf of displaced populations, with little to no consideration of the views, thoughts, and/ or aspirations of displaced persons themselves. The humanitarian energy sector is no exception to this and is often impacted by wider humanitarian sector issues and political constraints. Addressing power imbalances and structural injustices requires a shift towards more **inclusive and participatory approaches** to decision-making and programme implementation that involve local communities and affected populations in designing, implementing, and evaluating humanitarian programmes. This can be achieved through participatory two-way capacity building, community engagement, and accountability mechanisms that promote greater participation and inclusion of displaced persons in decision-making processes.

Worldwide, displacement settings are often places with limited options whereby the displaced persons' compliance with the system in place or solution provided, without questioning, is expected. Having a choice is often a luxury for forcibly displaced people. Humanitarian responses, including for energy access, often come as a ready package without alternatives, expected to be embraced without questioning. The time that refugees spend living in situations of displacement can be considered a dark moment in their lives where often the available and accessible interventions are inadequate, do not respond to their needs, and/ or do not prepare them to face life beyond displacement.



In Kakuma Refugee Camp, Okapi Green provides electricity to households and businesses through solar plans.
Credit: Vasco Amisi/ Okapi Green

Furthermore, displacement settings feature many common barriers, including limited finance, social-cultural impediments, inadequate and inhibiting infrastructure, and legal and policy limitations. To address these challenges, systematic reform is needed to ensure institutional and structural policy barriers are addressed. Particularly, there is a need to adopt a multi-sectoral approach that involves collaboration among governments, international organisations, civil society, the private sector, refugee entrepreneurs, refugee leaders, RLOs and overall community members. This approach should create an enabling environment for energy access by addressing legal, financial, infrastructure, social, political and cultural barriers.

Summary of Practical Advice for Embedding Inclusivity within Systematic Change Efforts:

- Put in place organisational strategies that have promoted inclusion and equal representation of the refugees and other displaced people regardless of their unique challenges.
- Critically consider what your organisation can do to reform its practices in order to be more inclusive: ask the hard questions and be willing to consider out of the box solutions.
- Listen to displaced people directly and reach out to organisations such as the Global Refugee-led Network (GRN) and other refugee-led organisations and networks to facilitate systematic change. Recognise refugee leadership and the voices of displaced people within decision-making processes.
- Mainstream meaningful refugee participation across organisational structures and departments.
- Be intentional and learn about refugee biases, labels and stereotypes. Be a champion of promoting the right terminology in displacement settings.

Inclusivity in Investment

When looking at the successful inclusion of displaced people in the humanitarian sector, and the energy sector in particular, it is imperative to highlight the need to reform the flow of money in financing models and options, and funding frameworks. Financing, donations, and investment regulations and patterns have been largely dominated by institutions and entities with limited knowledge of humanitarian settings or displacement contexts in particular. Funding in the humanitarian sector for a long time has been a game of "giants" and "small players", and the focus has not been on "what to fund" but on "who to fund." Indeed, current humanitarian funding models often validate organisations depending on their affiliation with a high-income country and pre-existing donor relationships. As a result, program funding and investment channels often flow through these organisations. Many organisations who have expert capacity with lived experience of displacement face restrictive due diligence requirements. The requirements often burden such organisations with security restrictions and in-depth assessments on country and context risk profiles, individual track records, technological requirements, and financing records. These reinforce the limitations for refugee-led organisations and enterprises to access the funds necessary to support their programmes. As a relatively new sector, humanitarian energy has the opportunity to change and challenge this working model and support inclusive investment models for sustainable energy.

Programmes structured to meet the set standards, interests, and appetites of donors, which are led by refugees and displaced people, also have the potential to deliver transformative change. To ensure energy interventions are accessible and sustainable in displacement settings requires a paradigm shift in financing energy projects. Addressing institutional and structural policy barriers to investment in energy access for displaced people will require a range of interventions, including improving the regulatory environment, reducing transaction costs, and increasing awareness of investment opportunities among potential investors. Additionally, there is a need for innovative financing models that can overcome the challenges of investing in displacement settings, including political and economic instability, security risks, and limited infrastructure.



Productive use of energy: Ms Hellen Etabo, a shopkeeper at Kalobeyei host town shares how high tier electricity access is driving her business operations. Credit: GIZ



Identifying the secret code of the humanitarian funding game is critical to understanding the need for a radical change in the traditional funding approach in the humanitarian sector.

The untold truth about the humanitarian funding approach is that programs find ways to fit the donors' priorities regardless of these not aligning with the demands of the population. Genuine humanitarian programs are being stifled by a group of western organisations with a track record of meeting donor priorities

**Joelle Hangi,
GPA Inclusivity Lead and refugee in Kenya.**



The current trajectory of moving from humanitarian aid to a development approach requires the conscious engagement of the private sector. Access to finance and supply of clean energy requires the presence of finance institutions, governments and humanitarian-private sector partnerships to subsidise clean energy access for the displaced. Furthermore, in many displacement settings, energy is already a need that many displaced persons are paying heavily to access. With over 80% of forcibly displaced people globally lacking access to affordable clean energy, there is no doubt about the energy demand. However, market segregation to understand differing energy demands, and developing inclusive financing mechanisms remain significant challenges. To ensure energy interventions are accessible and sustainable in displacement settings requires a paradigm shift in financing energy projects- moving beyond traditional funding approaches to more inclusive and impact-driven approaches. Several mechanisms can be used to improve traditional investment modes and deliver alternative investment approaches, including but not limited to blended finance, public-private partnerships, crowdfunding, green bonds, climate finance, refugee-led climate and energy projects and funds, and impact investing.

Summary of Practical Advice for Embedding Inclusivity in Investment:

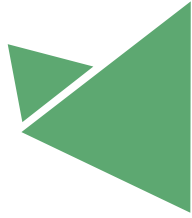
- Directly fund organisations and initiatives led by refugees and displaced people. Trial alternative funding mechanisms such as crowdfunding and awards to enable finance to flow to displaced communities.
- The donor community, potential venture capitalists, financial institutions, and hosting governments should encourage a representation of 10% of the displaced people in the project at all levels of management, coordination, and implementation of the project. Donors and funders should have this target as a requirement for organisations to receive funding on humanitarian energy.
- Where feasible, project implementation should be implemented through community refugee organisations, refugee businesses, and/or build on existing local initiatives.



- Support refugee-led energy businesses with investment, business mentoring, and partnership building.
- Invest in the identification, development, nurturing and replication of well-meaning and promising refugee-led energy initiatives that may qualify for funding under traditional funding mechanisms. For example, this can be done through energy boot camps and competitions.
- Enable alternative due diligence requirements to enable refugee-led initiatives to qualify for funding.
- Invest in research on refugee energy innovations and initiatives and set up funds for capacity building of promising initiatives.



In Uganda Kampala, Youth in livelihood response of PPDR. Credit: PPDR



Inclusive Action and Recommendation

Inclusion is the backbone of reform that leads to effective, sustainable humanitarian energy responses where displaced people are not just placed at the receiving end of aid but rather are actively and meaningfully engaged as critical drivers and stakeholders in the issues that affect them. Every actor in the sector has a vital role in ensuring radical reform where forcibly displaced people sit at the heart of the humanitarian programming and beyond. The donor community and all organisations working on humanitarian energy should put in place clear requirements and benchmarks ensuring the staffing and hiring of individuals with displacement backgrounds as a clear means through which to foster their presence and guidance in humanitarian programming and project delivery. Initiatives led by displaced community members and organisations should be prioritised in order to increase the impact and success rate of interventions, and ensure that funding is effectively allocated more locally. The ultimate goal is to make humanitarian energy interventions more efficient and effective in the short and long term and ensure that displaced people are not left behind on the SGD7 agenda.

Mainstreaming inclusion throughout the six core areas discussed in the Outlook outlines feasible system changes that pave the way for successful sectoral reform- emphasising the ultimate objective of directly involving displaced people in developing solutions. To this end, the diagram below highlights some of the practical recommendations presented in the report.



In Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya, Solar Freeze provides solar-powered cold storage that helps protect food and medicines. The company is also training camp residents. Credit: ASHDEN

Elements of inclusion in Humanitarian Energy Settings



- Promote leadership from displaced researchers in research projects.
- Build and support systems that provide alternatives to traditional academic outlets for sharing knowledge, such as short report papers and storytelling.
- At the stage of research conceptualisation, host online events with communities to scope ideas.
- Recruit and work with people with displacement backgrounds as co-researchers and promote and enforce capacity building in contexts where capacity is lacking.
- Engage Refugee-Led Organisations (RLOs) and other community leaders who work with displaced and host communities in the design of both qualitative and quantitative research.
- Organise data validation and visualisation analysis sessions and workshops to ensure that the views of the displaced are well captured.
- Conduct research on and with refugee-led energy innovations and explore the potential for replicability of viable local solutions in other displacement settings.
- Involve the displaced in the development of new prototypes and include views and take their views with high regard. In cases where new prototypes have already been developed, seek user feedback and testing before implementation or project rollout.
- Ask RLOs and community leaders on the best possible means of reaching out to community members.
- Support displaced people as authors, in particular lead authors, of research outputs, including journal articles.



- Engage displaced people throughout the policy cycle and in the development of more concrete and sustainable policies at the local, national and international levels.
- Promote refugee leadership and facilitate meaningful participation of refugees and other forcibly displaced people in policy negotiations at the local, national and international levels.
- Ensure all humanitarian events have a representative with lived experience of displacement, including but not limited to policy making, advocacy, fundraising, events and processes.
- Invite refugees and displaced people to actively participate in standard setting processes, policy development discussions, and review of international agreements.
- Develop online feedback forms to provide timely feedback from displaced people on policy documents and open document creation to authors with lived experience of displacement.
- For those who cannot access online resources, arrange for physical meetings to solicit representative feedback from the refugee and host communities.

One clear message has emerged throughout our research: the humanitarian energy sector is only at the beginning of its journey on inclusivity. This Strategic Outlook has presented initial ideas and key tips for those organisations and individuals who wish to get started now on changing the humanitarian system and provides advice on how to involve displaced people directly, but so much more work is needed. Over the coming years the GPA THEA programme will strive to open this door further and work to deliver the vision of transformative action on sustainable energy with displaced people across the world.



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