The Moving Energy Initiative

Innovating to improve sustainable energy access for displaced populations

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

NRC NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

GVEP International

UKaid from the British people

PRACTICAL ACTION Consulting

CHATHAM HOUSE The Royal Institute of International Affairs

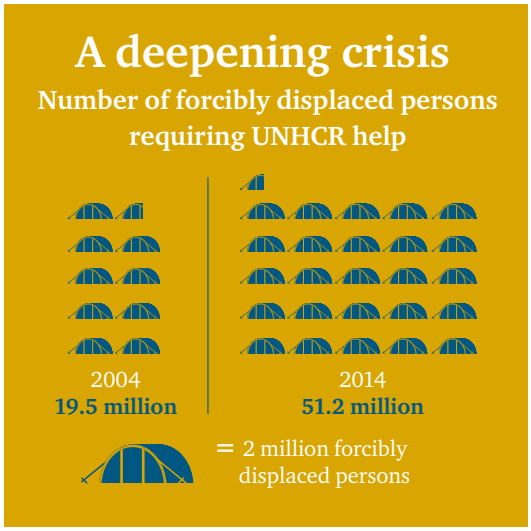
The Rationale

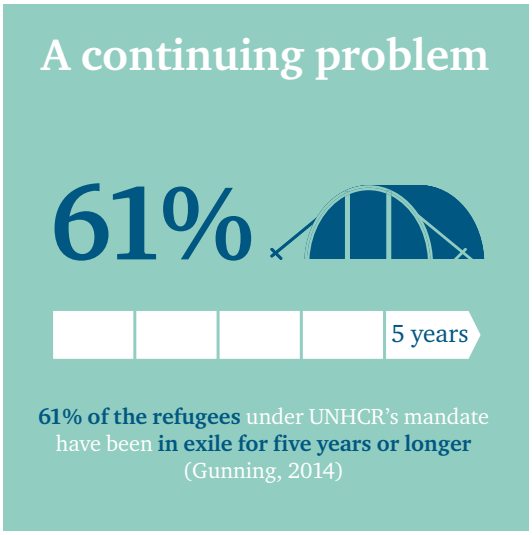
There is limited policy and practice on sustainable and clean energy provision within the humanitarian community. This means that the energy needs of millions of displaced people are being met inadequately and inefficiently, and not through the most effective or carbon-efficient interventions.

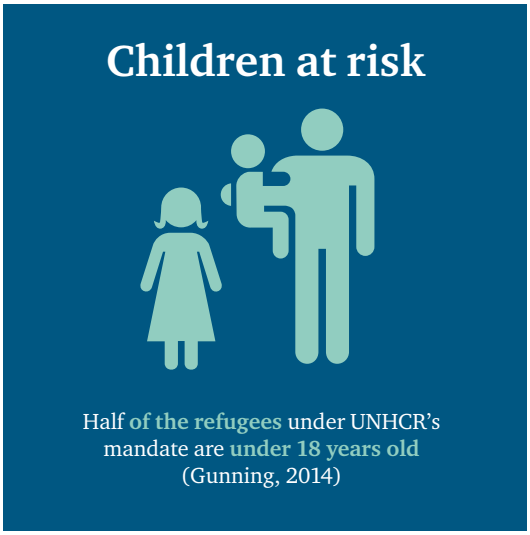
Interventions are often ad-hoc, and have mainly focused on the distribution of clean cookstoves, solar lanterns and solar street lights. These interventions have given little consideration to the context of the displaced communities, often overlooking their cultural traditions, and collective capacities and needs as well as technological availability.

The Moving Energy Initiative (MEI) will emphasize the relevance of local realities, and integrate them with global technological advancements, through the development of research, evidence-building and pilot projects relating to sustainable energy solutions.

The MEI seeks to meet the energy needs of displaced people in a safe, sustainable manner, developing solutions for heating/cooling, cooking, lighting, electrification and water and sanitation. To this end, it will work to reform the relevant humanitarian policies and practices that affect energy provision and engage and enable the private sector in this area. The work will also give special attention to the needs of women and girls in terms of health, safety and empowerment.







Refugee camps lack access to energy

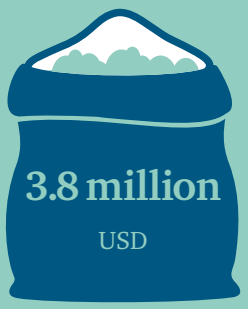
Access to modern energy is a basic human need, but for camp inhabitants access to safe, secure and reliable energy is often inadequate. Furthermore, camp inhabitants overwhelmingly use traditional biomass (primarily firewood) and kerosene to cover their basic energy needs and this is unsafe, unhealthy and inefficient.

The Case

Sustainable energy solutions generate many benefits for camp inhabitants, hosts, camp operators, and for the environment.

Cut costs

Providing charcoal and running the diesel generators that often underpin the fuel needs of refugee camps is expensive. Significant costs are also expended to transport fuel to the remote locations in which camps are based. As a point of reference, a study for the US Army estimated that for every litre of fuel used in remote bases, six litres were expended to transport it. Results are likely to be similar in refugee camps. (USAEPI, 2006)



In 2014, The Border Consortium spent **3.8 million USD** on providing charcoal for a camp population of **115,000** people

Release untapped potential

Sustainable energy initiatives can deliver benefits to refugee populations, enhancing safety, security, health and livelihoods. Reducing the time and distance that refugees travel to collect firewood frees additional time for livelihood activities, particularly among women and girls. A change of approach can transform the mindset about how camp residents are perceived – from 'beneficiaries' dependent on handouts – to agents able to choose, produce, consume and take part in the running of their own communities.

Replacing **traditional fires** with **fuel-efficient cookstoves** can reduce the time that refugees spend collecting firewood. In a survey in an Ethiopian camp, the total time collecting firewood **was reduced** from **1,659 hours** to **732 hours per month** (Egziabher, 2006)

Reduce emissions

Current energy practices in refugee camps are often dirty, polluting and damaging to the surrounding environment. Huge emissions savings are possible through small changes, and fundamental reform of the energy environment in camps can unlock a range of additional environmental benefits.

For a camp of 150,000, emissions savings from the use of **fuel-efficient cookstoves** and **solar-powered lanterns** could equal **104,700tCO_2e per year** (Gunning, 2014)

The Benefits of the Moving Energy Initiative

Benefits cited from access to sustainable energy

Environmental benefits	*Avoided deforestation and environmental degradation*	*Preserved biodiversity*	*Avoided CO_2 emissions*	*Reduced risk of contamination and local pollution*	
Security and protection	*Reduction in vulnerability to the risk of gender-based-violence outside camp*	*Reduction in night-time violence in camp*	*Reduction in risk of fire-related accidents*		
Health	*Reduction in indoor pollution*	*Reduction in risk of burns*	*Improved nutrition*	*Improved availability of clinical services*	
Livelihoods and resilience	*Time saved and longer hours available for other activities*	*Less reliant on local diminishing resources*	*Diversification of activities*	*Money saved*	*Improved education opportunities*
Benefits for host populations	*Reduction in tensions due to access to similar services*	*Reduction in reliance on limited natural resources*	*Improved livelihoods*		
Economic and energy security benefits	*Cost savings*	*Improved energy security*	*Better reliability*	*Reduced fuel price exposure*	*Increased operational lifetime*

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Further information and references are available at
www.chathamhouse.org/about/structure/eer-department/moving-energy-initiative-project
Or contact: Rob Bailey, Research Director, Energy, Environment and Resources, rbailey@chathamhouse.org

The cover image depicts tightly packed tents lit up at the Shah Mansoor relief camp in Swabi, Pakistan, June 21, 2009
Photo credit: Paula Bronstein /Getty Images News