



SESSION SUMMARY

Session Title: Renewable Energy for Displaced Communities

Session Type: Thematic session

Date and Time: Tuesday, May 14, 14:00-15:30, Room 4

Key Speakers and Agencies:

Moderator:

- **Stephen Gitonga**, Regional Sustainable Energy Specialist, UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States

Speakers:

- **Nuralla Yaseen**, UNDP, Sudan
- **Arvind Kumar**, Project Manager, UNDP Yemen
- **Aimee Jenks**, Desk Officer, Global Plan of Action for Sustainable Energy Solutions in Situations of Displacement

The session highlighted the role of renewable energy in achieving resilient recovery for displaced communities in the Arab region. The transition to risk-informed, low-carbon, climate resilient forms of energy allows countries to be more resilient to crises, and helps ensure access to sustainable energy for communities when a crisis does occur.

Stephen Gitonga, Regional Sustainable Energy Specialist, UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States, highlighted that renewable energy in the entire Arab region is low, and with increasing poverty rates, it is essential to integrate renewable energy into crisis recovery to ensure no one is left behind. Countries hosting displaced populations are also under tremendous pressure so energy has to be about long-term inclusiveness to ensure cost-effective solutions to recovery from natural disasters, climate change induced impacts and shocks, and crisis impacts induced by protracted conflicts. He stressed a risk-informed approach to planning, increasing institutional capacity to help predict crises, actions to cope with crises as they unfold, and actions to



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recover from crisis sustainably and quickly. A combination of upstream policy support and downstream innovative actions is needed, and solar energy has emerged as the technology of choice. Partnerships for technical assistance and in line with SDGs allow scaling up of renewable energy for recovery. Inclusive recovery responses include integrating climate action into crisis prevention policies and integration energy responses into crisis response and recovery investments to build empowered communities and a resilient ecosystem. He emphasized that strong global, regional and local partnerships that promote integration of long-term sustainable energy actions for crisis recovery and responses are a prerequisite for energy investments in a crisis context for displaced communities, with an aim to allow a continuous transition from a humanitarian to a development trajectory.

Nuralla Yaseen, UNDP, Sudan, shared the Darfur Development Strategy, where the use of sustainable energy for basic services is being used for reconstruction of livelihoods to allow economic development and to improve access to social services. The inclusive, decentralized solar system has been implemented for basic services such as water, health, education, and security, and towards productive activities like agriculture. The project provides power to power services being offered by other agencies; vital partnerships which move the community towards resilience and sustainable development. Specifically targeting women, girls, midwives, elders and children has ensured inclusion. Sustainability issues are tackled from the perspective of project financing, and quality assurance and training. He shared that in two years of implementation, better health and educational services, safe movement at night, fast police responses to emergent situations, and entertainment were indications that a resilient solution had taken effect in the region.

Arvind Kumar, Project Manager, UNDP Yemen highlighted how solar power has not only helped healthcare by providing safe water drinking systems that have improved access to water and reduced water-borne diseases, but has also provided livelihood by teaching people to generate and sell electricity. In so doing, it has broken the gender barrier, enabling increased mobility of women and their engagement in economic activity. He highlighted that in Yemen's tribal culture, inclusion meant identifying areas and individuals who could not access aid despite their eligibility for it, including the marginalized such as the gypsies, who weren't even integrated into the community. A conflict sensitive approach and community engagement in terms of building capacity in terms of skill enabled the community to go from just service



delivery to building capacity on income generation. He concluded by recognizing renewable energy as a good entry point to build a humanitarian, development, and peace nexus.

Aimee Jenks, Desk Officer, Global Plan of Action for Sustainable Energy Solutions in Situations of Displacement discussed the Global Plan of Action, a multi-stakeholder process aiming to mainstream sustainable energy solutions in displacement settings at the household, community, and institutional operational levels. The challenges are manifold: energy is not a formal priority in humanitarian assistance, displaced people are not included in energy access agendas, lack of funding, limited expertise and capacity to plan and implement sustainable energy solutions, and limited and poorly shared data on humanitarian needs and solutions. Active forums for collective activity operate across five working areas viz. planning and coordination, policy, innovative financing, capacity building, and data. She shared success stories, and pathways for collaboration in the areas of advocacy, bundling of projects from different agencies, ensuring engagement with key stakeholders, sharing data and best practices, and liaising with the private sector.

The session showed that renewable energy for displaced communities has not only successfully helped them cope with crises as they unfold, and helped with sustainable recovery, but also worked hand-in-hand with development, inclusion, and income generation to break gender barriers and create a resilient community engaged in skill and capacity building towards a long-term development solution. There is a need for more partnerships across agencies, and with the private sector and NGOs so that gains can be collated and shared, and greater impact achieved faster.