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## 4<sup>TH</sup> WORLD RECONSTRUCTION CONFERENCE

### RENEWABLE ENERGY FOR DISPLACED COMMUNITIES

Each session of the World Reconstruction Conference (WRC4) will be accompanied by a discussion paper detailing the topic(s) and the objective(s) that will be discussed during the session. The purpose of the paper is to familiarize the participants with individual sessions by providing background information and introduce them to the topic of the session. The paper is not expected to be simply descriptive of the topic(s) that will be discussed, but rather articulate the complexity of such topic(s), identifying the key issues and providing leads for discussion and positive action for DRM and recovery experts and other practitioners interested in learning and contributing more to the specific session topic.

When writing the discussion paper, please consider the following:

- Suggest various dimensions of the topic of the session;
- Highlight important issue(s)/observation(s) that the session is addressing in relation its chosen topic;
- Delineate key question(s)/challenge(s) that need to be discussed in the session.

In so doing, the paper will clarify the relevance of the topic /issue and how this session contributes to the overall WRC4 goal/objective. The paper will be uploaded on the WRC4 website before the conference and will be featured in the Post Conference Proceedings Publication.

#### Structure of the paper

- ⇒ Length: 2500 words
- ⇒ Template:
  - i. Introduction
  - ii. Background
  - iii. Issues related to the topic
  - iv. Questions/Challenges to be discussed
  - v. Conclusions
  - vi. References/Reading material

#### Timeline

1<sup>st</sup> draft: April 5<sup>th</sup>

2<sup>nd</sup> draft: April 19<sup>st</sup>

Final draft: April 30<sup>th</sup>

- ⇒ Editorial Review: **2 weeks**. The editor will review the final draft of the paper and send it back for review and approval to the writer(s).
- ⇒ Images and Illustrations you might want to add in the discussion paper: Please send these with the highest resolution.

#### SEND TO:

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## **I. Introduction: Renewable energy challenge and solutions for resilient recovery in crises contexts.**

Sustainable energy is a critical element for achieving goals of immediate recovery from disasters or protracted crisis and longer-term resilience in fragile and crisis contexts. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Arab region, where countries have experienced an expansion of conflict, climate change-induced disasters such as drought and an unprecedented level of displacement. The region's energy sector produces about 25% of the world's oil and gas needs, yet it also faces access to energy challenges, particularly in low-income countries and countries in crisis and fragile contexts.

Lack of energy solutions can undermine community and government responses, delay recovery and undercut resilience. Countries such as Somalia, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Iraq, Sudan and Palestine face different levels of fragility linked to protracted conflicts and climate induced disasters and they impact neighboring countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Djibouti as many displaced populations settle in these countries. Fragile countries in the region are unable to provide sufficient energy both for the general population as well as for communities affected by crises or disasters.

The ability of communities to cope with and rapidly recover from disasters or crisis hinges in many ways on their ability to regain sustainable access to energy. Energy fuels communities access to water, to social services like health and education, to transport and communication needs, and is critical for regenerating livelihoods and local economies. But too often countries affected by crisis or disaster events are unable to bring back online the type of energy systems needed for an effective recovery. In such contexts, decentralized energy solutions are now receiving greater attention, as a way of meeting the needs of affected communities and setting the foundations for resilience.

As countries seek new bridges between humanitarian and development interventions, and new resilience-based approaches to crisis and disaster recovery, the role of sustainable energy solutions has come into greater focus. Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7) on energy calls on countries to “ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.” Among those most in need are the record numbers of individuals globally and in the Arab region affected by conflicts, droughts and disasters. Many countries suffering the impacts of crisis are also energy poor, relying heavily on energy imports for economic and social needs. In these contexts, an all-inclusive approach of leaving no one behind, to expanding sustainable energy solutions is seen not as an end in itself, but as an enabler on the road from fragility to resilience. This is particularly important in the protracted situations of conflict, in regions affected by climate-induced disasters such as droughts and displacement faced by countries in the Arab region.

Globally, the number of people forcibly displaced by conflicts and disasters across the world at the end of 2017 based on the UNHCR data had reached record levels. The world now has a record 68.5 million forcibly displaced persons, including over 25.4 million refugees crossing borders, 2.9 million more than in 2016, and over 40 million internal displacements within countries.

To make matters worse, the vast majority of refugees and IDPs are hosted in developing countries which already face strained levels of energy security. Constraints often exist to extending energy access to displaced communities, either owing to ongoing conflicts and destruction of power grid infrastructure, or from lack of fiscal space and limited ability to expand already-stretched energy supplies. In such



communities, expanding use of decentralized energy solutions is important not only for short-term needs, but from a longer-term development perspective as it helps reduce pressures on host communities and fiscal pressures on the State.

Across the Arab region, a lack of access to energy is hindering the ability of crisis-affected communities to earn a living, access food and water, or access health and education services, and is an important obstacle to recovering from crisis. As further elaborated below, in many countries in the region, expanding access to solar solutions has emerged as one potential enabler of resilience building for affected communities. The ability to scale-up sustainable energy solutions in crisis contexts is an important aspect in bridging the humanitarian-development divide and crafting ‘resilient recovery’ solutions.

The SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development call for more integrated and resilience-based approaches to development. Energy is a key factor in helping individuals, households, communities, society and the State bounce back effectively from crisis and shocks, ensuring that crises do not lead to a downturn in human development indicators, while also helping communities transition to long-term resilient pathways.

## **II. Background: Closing the Energy Gap, Solutions for Resilient Recovery**

To help close the energy gap, UNDP helps countries achieve three key objectives, in line with the three pillars of SDG 7 – (i) reducing energy intensity of growth by enhancing energy efficiency in key sectors such as urban infrastructure, buildings and transport, (ii) de-risking the policy environment for expanded investments into renewable energy solutions and (iii) expanding energy access for poor and vulnerable communities. The latter objective has particular benefit for addressing the plight of communities in fragile and crisis contexts, with displaced communities being among the poorest and most vulnerable in society today. UNDP is the UNs largest provider of country assistance for action on climate change with close to US\$3 billion of grants today in over 140 countries including countries in Arab region, of which US\$ 655 million of country grants are for climate change mitigation and sustainable energy, in turn leveraging US\$ 3.4 billion in parallel co-financing from private and public partners.

The Arab region has seen a resurgence of poverty in recent times owing to rising levels of conflict and displacement. Achieving SDG 7 in such contexts could have a significant multiplier effect in fostering stability and resilience, enabling recovery, ensuring access to health and education services, and regenerating employment and livelihoods - as an accelerator across many of the SDGs.

A main focus is on building long term solutions and transformational change through the strengthening of policy and institutional capacities to overcome barriers to greater investments into sustainable energy. A tailored approach is now needed for crisis contexts, given high levels of complexity, reduced clarity of institutions and policies, constraints in domestic finance, and lack of data on energy needs needed for effective response. One-size-fits-all approaches do not work in such settings, given the highly contextualized needs of IDPs and conflict or disaster-affected communities, while decentralized solutions are often well-suited, given the large lag times for crisis or disaster-affected communities to recover power grid connection. In this regard, UNDP has commenced a series of new initiatives in the Arab region in recent times, specifically adapted to the needs of crisis or disaster-affected communities. Decentralized solar technologies are increasingly identified as a solution for communities hosting refugees and IDPs, especially in cases of protracted displacement.

UNDP has helped deploy solar solutions for broader development and recovery goals, seeing electricity not as an end in itself, but as an enabler of poverty reduction and community resilience. Through this support, UNDP helps achieve meet emergency development needs of crisis or disasters-affected communities, and supports broader goals of stabilization, recovery and resilience in the region. For instance, solar solutions



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help communities address needs for irrigation and food security, refrigeration needs in health centers for medicines and other vital supplies, lighting for household and education needs, and stable energy for small businesses to generate income and livelihoods.

Within this broader effort, UNDP has initiated a series of sustainable energy initiatives to address the important role of energy in stabilization and recovery. What follows are some examples of this new track of energy cooperation emerging in the region.

### *Solution 1) Energy Access and the Syria Crisis*

The crisis in Syria has caused tremendous devastation within Syria itself, and it has also had significant impacts in neighboring countries in the Arab region. While efforts have been underway to establish more effective global cooperation, today over 90% of all Syrian refugees are hosted within neighboring countries such as Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. In places like Jordan and Lebanon, most refugees reside not in camps, but in host communities. Meanwhile, both countries lack significant domestic energy reserves, with additional refugee populations having created new pressures on already stretched energy supplies and extra fiscal burdens from rising import needs. The protracted nature of the Syria crisis and its impact on neighboring countries has galvanized a growing realization that responses are needed not only for immediate humanitarian needs, but also for medium- and long-term development challenges.

Jordan for example hosts over 1.3 million Syrian refugees, while at the same time being one of the region's most energy insecure countries. The growth in energy demand from the refugee influx has resulted in an expansion of fossil fuel imports meant to ensure energy security and stability for the entire Kingdom. With Syrian refugees residing in cities and towns across Jordan, additional energy demands have increased pressure on public budgets and risks to fiscal stability and national resilience. Recognizing the important role of energy in achieving resilience, the Government in recent years has put in place a Jordan Response Plan to the Syrian Crisis (JRP), the national pillar of the UN's Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP). It covers various elements of the challenge, including for example access to health and education services in refugee host communities, and it also includes an important pillar on sustainable energy solutions. Through this support national partners were enabled to mainstream sustainable energy solutions into crisis response and recovery at the upstream policy level, with plans for resilience building able to meet host community energy needs for livelihood, health and education goals; offset rising energy demands with new energy efficiency and renewable energy measures; and reduce the fiscal burden of rising import needs.

### *Solution 3) Energy for Emergency Needs in Yemen*

The ongoing war in Yemen has resulted in more than 2.5 million IDPs, an unprecedented situation in the country's history. With over seven million people suffering from extreme food insecurity, and rapidly deteriorating health conditions, Yemen is now the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Yemen is one of the world's most energy insecure countries, with 23% energy access rates in rural areas, where 75% of the national population lives. The ongoing war and blockade of supplies to many areas have made the situation dramatically worse. Energy access in Yemen has traditionally been heavily dependent on local diesel generators for meeting the needs of small businesses, schools, clinics and irrigation. With lifting of public energy subsidies in the years just before the onset of the conflict, diesel costs rose significantly. The war has exacerbated this situation, with supply of diesel and other forms of energy cut off altogether to many areas in the country. For the millions of IDPs across the country, the lack of energy access affects their ability to meet basic needs.

UNDP launched in recent years the Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen (ERRY) programme with support of the European Union (EU), and in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Through this joint UN programme, UNDP supports the deployment of decentralized solar technology to expand energy access in



schools and health facilities, use of solar solutions for small businesses to regenerate community livelihoods, and expanded use of solar irrigation pumps Solar for crisis response.

#### *Solution 4) Energizing Recovery in Sudan*

Sudan hosts over two million IDPs, one of the world's highest concentrations of displaced persons, converging with high levels of poverty and energy insecurity. Despite benefiting from very high levels of solar radiation, only one third of the national population has regular access to electricity. Expanding decentralized sustainable solar solutions can help expand energy access in general as part of resilience building efforts under national poverty reduction initiatives, and it can also support the critical needs of refugees, IDPs and returnees of conflict.

In the Darfur region of Sudan for example, the area is now seeing returnees of the devastating conflict of years past. As IDPs return to Darfur, many recovery and development issues have arisen, including energy for household needs and for re-generation of livelihoods. UNDP with support of Qatar and in partnership with UNIDO, WHO, UN-Habitat and national partners implemented a Darfur Solar Electrification programme to help implement the Darfur Peace Agreement and build resilience for returnees of conflict. Through the initiative, solar solutions have been deployed across 70 villages in Darfur, enhancing health clinics and schools, street lighting and solar water pumping, and directly benefiting 7,000 returnee households, with additional dividends for neighboring 35,000 households in target areas.

### **III. Issues related to the topic**

- Scaling up renewable energy solutions for displaced communities
- Innovative partnerships for financing stabilization, recovery and long-term resilient development trajectory
- Global partnership for and scaling up inclusive and successful renewable energy solutions.

### **IV. Questions and challenges to be discussed**

The objective of the session is to discuss how to scale up the use of renewable energy solutions for resilient recovery in displaced communities in the Middle East and North Africa region while sharing of global initiatives such as from the GPA and country activities including in Yemen and Sudan.

The expected outcomes will be (i) a better understanding of how renewable energy solutions can meet emergency needs such as access to water, health and education services, and regeneration of livelihoods, and (ii) an understanding of what needed to be done to scale up innovative financing framework for expanding renewable energy solutions for displaced communities.

Moderator: **Stephen Gitonga**, Energy Specialist, UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States

#### Participant panelists:

- **Selva Ramachandran**, Resident Representative, UNDP Sudan
- **Arvind Kumar**, Project Manager, UNDP Yemen
- **Aimee Jenks**, Desk Officer, Global Plan for Action for Sustainable Energy Solutions in Situations of Displacement
- **Valentina Villoria** (TBC), Programme Manager, EU DEVCO Climate and Energy Unit

#### Questions:

- How are partnerships at Country level contributing to expanded use of renewable energy for inclusive and resilient recovery from crisis or disasters?
- Based in the experience of the Global Plan for Action, what is the global community doing on the use of renewable energy to foster inclusivity for resilient recovery for displaced communities?



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- From the perspective of the partners such as the EU, what innovative finance mechanisms are envisaged to encourage resilience recovery through renewable energy?

## **V. Conclusions**

Scaling up renewable energy solutions for the displaced in crisis or disaster context requires partnerships in implementing a financial model that is highly innovative to connect the interests of displaced communities at the short term while laying the foundation of long-term resilient recovery and stabilization. There is need to focus on linking upstream actions related to institutional capacities are to down-stream solutions targeted to deal with the impacts of the crisis or disasters and adjusting to post-crisis recovery challenges.

## **VI. References**

1. Global Tracking Framework (GTF) Arab Regional Report: ESCWA 2017, Progress in Sustainable Energy: The Arab Region.
2. Energy for Crisis Recovery: Solar Solutions for Crisis-Affected Communities in the Arab Region, Regional Policy Brief, UNDP 2018