



Alex Tenney
Humanitarian Energy Conference
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
July 29th – August 2nd, 2019



Introduction

Today there are over 70 million displaced people around the world, of which 25 million are refugees and over half of whom are under the age of 18. This number continues to climb as we see major conflicts and political unrest in Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Venezuela, and other countries. Research has shown that only 10% of refugees living in camps have access to electricity, which is essential for health, safety, education, and job opportunities. Efforts to provide energy to those displaced by emergencies are insufficient, inefficient, and harmful to the environment.

Thankfully, the introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in 2016 has increased the focus of the international development community on energy as an essential pillar of development with SDG 7: “Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.” Displaced populations lack access to clean water, proper medical attention, and insufficient education, with a lack of adequate energy as a root cause for these issues. Refugees, displaced people, and the communities that host them are truly the hardest to reach; it is imperative that we focus on working collaboratively to find sustainable solutions to address the energy needs of those most vulnerable if we hope to achieve SDG7.

Conference



I attended the Humanitarian Energy Conference, which brought together over 200 participants from over 40 countries in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to improve and increase energy access for displaced people. The conference provided an opportunity to share lessons learned, develop innovative solutions, and identify potential future partnerships in the humanitarian-energy space. For me, it was a great learning experience and networking opportunity.

Internship

This summer I joined Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL) as a short-term consultant on the Energy for Displaced People Intervention, which is an effort to increase energy access and leave no one behind. While there have been encouraging advances in energy for displaced peoples with an increase of innovative partnerships there continues to be a need for data, research, and collaboration. SEforALL is positioned to strengthen existing partnerships and accelerate momentum at the humanitarian-energy nexus. My role was to meet with stakeholders in the UN, World Bank, private sector and elsewhere in order to better understand what is needed. I also helped write an article for World Humanitarian Day around energy in displacement, as well as organize country-level energy access design workshops in Uganda and Kenya.

Capstone

My trip to Ethiopia for the Humanitarian Energy Conference also allowed me to make some great connections for my capstone research. My capstone is looking at solar solutions in refugee camps with a focus on Jordan as a case study of success. At the conference, I had the opportunity to meet with the Senior Electrical Engineer who helped lead the implementation of the solar farms in the refugee camps of Zaatari and Azraq. We talked for hours about the work that has been done, what is left to do, and the ways that it could be implemented in other countries. I will be traveling to conduct field research on solar solutions in those camps in the end of August to further strengthen my capstone.

