



Effective Engagement with Host Communities

Natasha Butorac | March 2019



About the Moving Energy Initiative

The Moving Energy Initiative (MEI) is working to achieve access to clean, affordable and reliable energy among displaced populations by:

- **Working with humanitarian agencies and donors** to change policies and practices based on evidence from practical projects;
- **Working with the private sector** to design and implement innovative market-based solutions;
- **Improving the evidence base** through original research and the demonstration of new approaches tried and tested in camps and host communities; and
- **Cooperating with host governments and national NGOs** to improve energy security among both local and refugee communities.

The MEI is a collaboration between Energy 4 Impact, Chatham House, Practical Action, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID).



Preface

Findings from Phase I of the MEI in 2015, published in the Chatham House research paper *Heat, Light and Power for Refugees: Saving Lives, Reducing Costs*,¹ highlight the negative impacts of limited sustainable energy provision on the security of displaced populations. The paper also identified some of the challenges for energy programmes in this sector, such as the lack of robust data on energy access and the priorities of refugee populations.

In Phase II of the MEI, Practical Action led detailed research into the energy needs of refugees in Burkina Faso and Kenya. Chatham House analysed data on global refugee energy use in displacement contexts and produced an interactive map. Energy 4 Impact explored sustainable funding options, private-sector contract models and non-wood cooking concessions. The market development and low-carbon energy initiatives in Burkina Faso, Jordan and Kenya were managed by Practical Action and Energy 4 Impact, with the support of local partners. These projects purposely included, and in some cases targeted, host communities as beneficiaries.

Drawing on examples from Phase II of the MEI in Burkina Faso, Kenya and Jordan, this 'learning brief' highlights the MEI's approach to engaging and including host communities of displaced populations in low-carbon projects and market development activities. The paper explores these MEI projects and reflects on their successes and differences. The paper is intended for practitioners and policymakers working in the humanitarian sector and host-country governments.

¹ Lahn, G. and Grafham, O. (2015), *Heat, Light and Power for Refugees: Saving Lives, Reducing Costs*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://mei.chathamhouse.org/heat-light-and-power-refugees-saving-lives-reducing-costs-summary-page> (accessed 6 Mar. 2019).

Summary

- There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to effective engagement between communities. Every host country has a unique political, economic and situational context, with varying national strategies for the management of displaced populations.
- It is crucial to understand and respect the different operational environments between camp and non-camp settings. For example, the practical challenges of different regulations applied inside and outside of camps, and challenges around perceived or actual differences in willingness to pay for market-related goods and services.
- Government support for energy initiatives serving displaced populations is often contingent on the abilities of initiatives to also benefit the local community.
- Stakeholder engagement and mapping exercises were critical in selecting MEI pilot projects and ensuring that the selected interventions would be relevant, valued and accepted by the communities.
- Involving both host communities and displaced populations in MEI activities has often led to greater interactions and reduced tensions between the communities.
- Government buy-in typically makes the difference between a long-term, sustainable project and a short-term project that peters out.

Introduction

In many displacement situations, tensions exist between refugees and their host communities. These tensions can arise when displaced people are perceived as competing with the host community for valuable resources such as land, water and fuel, or using government and other assistance funding that would otherwise benefit host communities. These strains can manifest themselves in numerous ways, ranging from feelings of resentment towards displaced populations to even verbal or physical violence. Restrictions are routinely placed on the rights of refugees and sometimes internally displaced persons, such as the ability to work or own land, in order to minimize perceived competition between the communities. Engendering social cohesion is therefore an important consideration in situations of refugee settlement, and something that the MEI has strived to achieve in its pilot projects.

Poor access to and use of energy is not unique to displaced populations. In many displacement contexts host communities that live with or close to displaced persons are equally impoverished and marginalized. It therefore makes perfect sense that initiatives could and should consider both displaced and host populations as part of their beneficiary groups and as members of staff. MEI workstreams six and seven, which looked at low-carbon projects and market development activities, respectively, engaged with both host communities and displaced populations, with numerous positive outcomes.

The type of possible engagement varies greatly depending on the political context and the situation in which displaced persons live. For example, in Jordan, only approximately 10 per cent of the Syrian displaced population live in formal refugee camps, while the remaining 90 per cent are resident in urban or rural settings, among the host community.² As a result, direct engagement between host and displaced populations occurs on a daily basis as they access the same public facilities and markets. Conversely, in Kenya, only 13 per cent of displaced persons reside in urban areas, with the vast majority of the remainder split between Dadaab and Kakuma camps.³ This situation is closely mirrored in Burkina Faso, where the vast majority of displaced persons also reside in camp settings.⁴ However, in these cases there are opportunities for engagement with host communities residing in the vicinity of camps in question, through local markets and public facilities (many facilities such as hospitals in camps serve both the refugee and host community). Many of these host communities are also caught in situations of poverty and similarly lack adequate access to energy resources.

At the political level, and within the policy environment, tensions often exist that prevent effective engagement between host and displaced populations. As *Heat, Light and Power for Refugees* identified, situations of protracted displacement are becoming increasingly common, with the average time spent as a refugee between 10 and 15 years.⁵ This places

² Dockery, W. (2017), 'What's Jordan's policy towards Syrian and Iraqi refugees?', InfoMigrants, 5 October 2017, <http://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/5470/what-s-jordan-s-policy-towards-syrian-and-iraqi-refugees> (accessed 20 Aug. 2018).

³ UNHCR (2018), 'Kenya: Figures at a Glance', <http://www.unhcr.org/ke/figures-at-a-glance> (accessed 20 Aug. 2018).

⁴ UNHCR (2017), *Operational Update: Burkina Faso September 2017*, Ouagadougou: UNHCR, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/59b7f9454.pdf> (accessed 20 Aug. 2018).

⁵ Devictor, X. and Do, Q.-T. (2016), 'How many years do refugees stay in exile?', The World Bank blog, 15 September 2016, <http://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/how-many-years-do-refugees-stay-exile> (accessed 20 Aug. 2018).

governments in a difficult situation as they are often reluctant to recognize the semi-permanence of displaced populations and continue to restrict the rights of displaced persons to work or draw upon government services. Governments are also sometimes unwilling to make or authorize long-term investments such as energy infrastructure in areas where displaced populations are located. No government wants to be seen to favour displaced populations over their own nationals.⁶ This reality formed part of the impetus for the MEI programme. At the same time, host governments have an interest in minimizing tensions between displaced and local populations, to mitigate adverse consequences arising from clashes between them. There are likely to be some positive economic effects from the additional population, which can be harnessed. In addition, governments can take advantage of the investment and economic benefits that the presence of humanitarian agencies can bring to the wider community.

These dynamics therefore pave the way for and legitimize efforts on the part of initiatives, such as the MEI, to try to effectively engage with host communities and displaced populations as the primary beneficiaries of their services.

⁶ Lahn and Grafham (2015), *Heat, Light and Power for Refugees: Saving Lives, Reducing Costs*.

Case Studies

Many of the low-carbon projects and market development activities of the MEI have involved both the displaced and host communities, either directly through their design or indirectly through their impact or customer/client base.

Jordan

The MEI project in Jordan engaged with both the displaced and host communities as most of the displaced persons live in urban settlements. As a result, the populations share numerous resources, and both utilize public services. The government and local population's positions on refugees were key considerations in the design of MEI activities. One of the challenges in this respect has been balancing the need to provide for forcibly displaced persons with the desire of government and hosts that foreign assistance also benefits Jordanians.

Consequently, stakeholder engagement and mapping exercises were critical in selecting MEI pilot projects. Such community engagement from the start helped to ensure that the selected interventions would be relevant, valued and accepted by the communities. In the case of the Green Affordable Homes Project, consultations identified the necessity to promote more sustainable use of energy within low-cost housing. This necessity would have existed irrespective of the additional pressures created by the influx of displaced persons; however, the resulting extra strain on the housing market and energy resources has acted as a catalyst. As a result, the project aimed to promote greater social cohesion between communities, including low-income Jordanian families that are often overlooked in the response to the crisis. The MEI also selected the Al Mafraq General Hospital project from a number of proposals. The project addressed the need highlighted by stakeholders to reduce the energy burden on the national government. In addition, the longer-term, sustainable benefits that could be achieved by the pilots were a key consideration, ensuring benefits and market linkages would continue even if displaced populations dwindled.

Box 1: Al Mafraq Hospital project

The Al Mafraq Hospital project in Jordan included a new solar water heating system and boiler and solar PV to improve electricity provision, support water heating in the hospital and reduce costs. The impetus for the project stemmed from capacity issues and pressures related to the influx of displaced persons needing treatment. The hospital serves both populations and has a direct impact on both communities. Figures for 2017 show that the emergency department treated Syrians and Jordanians at an approximate ratio of 100:135.⁷

Feedback related to the project has been broadly positive, with some respondents noting that it has effectively navigated the tension between the hospital's capacity and

⁷ Millennium Energy Industries (2018), *Low Carbon Projects – Solar Systems for Mafraq General Hospital*, Presentation, Jordan.

the additional pressures placed on it due to the burgeoning displaced population. It has been designed to align with the government-led Jordanian Response Platform (JRP) that coordinates refugee and development activities. The works have been conducted by a Jordanian company, which trained five Syrian refugees and helped to build local and refugee capacity to install and maintain similar systems in the future. One of the Syrian trainees was taken on as a full-time employee. One government informant, who spoke to the MEI evaluation team, noted that the project's focus on increasing the host community's ability to cope with a larger population makes the government feel supported in hosting displaced populations, and the longer-term benefits of improving local amenities help in managing local frustrations when they arise.

Box 2: Green Affordable Homes Project

The MEI Green Affordable Homes Project, in cooperation with the Jordan Green Building Council and Habitat for Humanity, aims to increase energy efficiency and resilience in refugee-affected areas by retrofitting housing with green building materials, raising awareness and capacity-building initiatives. The idea was originally proposed by a number of stakeholders through an initial MEI workshop as a way to learn how best an inclusive 'neighbourhood improvement' approach might be adopted by some humanitarian agencies working outside of camps. The initiative has focused on retrofitting the homes of low-income Jordanians and has involved both local and displaced construction workers to create greater cohesion between the communities.

The fact that refugees are unable to own property was one of the main challenges. Had the MEI chosen to work on improving the homes of displaced households, this would have meant dealing with landlords, who may see such improvements as an impetus to increase rents, which could leave tenants priced out of the rental market. Instead, the project sought to circumvent such challenges by focusing on homes for low-income Jordanians but involving displaced persons in training in order to equip them with greater skills and abilities to earn an income. As such, the pilot has sought to benefit both communities, while illustrating suitable approaches to reduce the national energy burden faced by Jordan resulting from the influx of displaced persons.

Burkina Faso

The MEI projects in Burkina Faso faced a different set of challenges and opportunities than those in Jordan. Similarly, however, the MEI had a stated aim from the start to engage with both host and displaced populations, primarily those settled in Goudoubou camp and in the surrounding Dori municipality. Indeed, the MEI website clearly outlines:

By bringing together refugees, host communities, energy companies, financial institutions and government agencies, the MEI aims to empower

refugees as energy consumers and build a thriving market for clean energy products in Goudoubou camp and neighbouring communities.⁸

Within this context, effective engagement with the municipal government has been crucial. Obtaining their support for the project was key in allowing the MEI's low-carbon projects and market development activities to reach their full potential, and numerous stakeholders have noted that without this support it would have been very difficult to achieve the stated aims.

In a similar vein to the Jordanian context, getting municipal buy-in also meant ensuring that the programme's operations would include benefits for the local community and the refugees in Goudoubou camp. This was confirmed through interviews with the deputy mayor of Dori, who praised the programme for the opportunities it had created, which encouraged other local stakeholders to take part, and for the fact that activities had been practical and well targeted in the community.

Box 3: Business centre for entrepreneurs

In the case of the business centre for entrepreneurs, which was developed as one of the low-carbon projects, the request for proposals was issued in a non-discriminatory manner to both the host population and to refugees. This approach was considered as having the highest chance of receiving the best quality business propositions to benefit the whole community. As it happened, when the proposals came in, it was clear that those submitted by refugees were of a higher quality than those from the host population. Despite best efforts to include a host proposal, the final decision was made to pursue the best proposals, which all came from refugee entrepreneurs. This decision was supported by the municipality and there has been no resentment from the host community.

In addition, the Market Gardening project, which is implemented by the Health, Education and Literary Programme (HELP) NGO and supports the use of a solar powered irrigation system in the growth of vegetables and crops, has effectively engaged 150 people from both the refugee and host communities (80 refugees – 40 men and 40 women – and 70 host community members – 37 men and 33 women).

Within the MEI's market development activities in Burkina Faso, it became clear that the only viable approach was to develop a combined host and displaced population market. This is partly due to the limited ability of the displaced community to pay for goods and services on offer. The market was further restricted by NGO handouts to refugees in the camp that could reduce demand for goods. While refugees are permitted to work in Burkina Faso, few have been able to find formal employment.⁹ This further confirmed the need to include the host population. Municipal government engagement was crucial, particularly in organizing a

⁸ Moving Energy Initiative (2018), 'Where we work: Burkina Faso', Chatham House, <https://mei.chathamhouse.org/where-we-work/burkina-faso> (accessed 20 Aug. 2018).

⁹ Corbyn, D. and Vianello, M. (2018), *Prices, Products and Priorities: Meeting Refugees' Energy Needs in Burkina Faso and Kenya*, Research Paper, London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2018-01-30-meeting-refugees-energy-needs-burkina-faso-kenya-mei-corbyn-vianello-final.pdf> (accessed 20 Aug. 2018).

trade fair for private energy companies and in facilitating contacts that will make the projects sustainable once the MEI comes to an end.

Box 4: Market development activities in Burkina Faso

The market development activities in Burkina Faso brought a wider variety of products to the Sahel region than were available in the past. These include solar lamps provided by BETA and improved cookstoves, cooking accessories and solar lamps from Nafa Naana. Marketing activities were held inside and outside the Goudoubou camp, and while there was a lot of interest (approximately 700 attendees at the camp marketing activity and 500 in the host-community forum), ultimately the majority of customers came from outside the camp. Some host community members have taken up the chance to work as resellers and distributors from the two energy product companies, BETA and Nafa Naana. This created a further opportunity for regular engagement between the refugee and host populations, helping to foster greater cohesion.

Kenya

The UNHCR in Kenya is particularly conscious that it needs government support in order to promote the sustainability of MEI energy initiatives. This approach requires careful consideration of the needs of both communities and other factors, such as the impact on the environment and security. For example, under workstream eight (non-wood fuel concession), the MEI designed and awarded a prize that supports the introduction and provision of non-wood fuel in and around the Kakuma camp complex.¹⁰ While this proposal may be reasonable from an environmental and refugee-protection perspective, it risked significantly damaging relationships with the host community, which generates income by selling wood and charcoal. This was a key consideration and the winning design proposed to integrate local fuel sellers into new supply chains in an attempt to mitigate a souring of relations.

In addition, displaced persons and the host community often face different challenges, especially when engaging in business. They therefore require slightly different solutions. The MEI supported 45 micro businesses, which were engaged in retailing solar products, such as solar lanterns and panels, and promoting solar use in businesses. Since refugees are limited in their movement, they cannot easily travel to larger commercial centres to buy products to bring back to the Kakuma camp complex, as a member of the host community can. Refugees struggle to link with quality suppliers outside of the immediate area, this often means they get poor value for money or are cheated. As such, a solution might be to bring suppliers to Kakuma so they can form business linkages with the refugees and build trust between suppliers and their customers. Similarly, the market reach of refugee entrepreneurs is limited, so this may also require a different marketing approach to those successfully used by host communities.

¹⁰ Kakuma refugee camp consists of four sub-camps or zones (Kakuma I–IV). In the context of this paper, the term 'Kakuma complex' also includes the nearby Kalobeyi integrated settlement.

There have been other examples in which MEI initiatives have tried to balance the needs of two populations, although in practice this has proved challenging, as noted in Box 5.

Box 5: Solar powered ICT centre and learning hub

Crown Agents implemented an initiative to build a solar powered ICT centre and a learning hub for the residents of the Kakuma camp complex, which targeted a 50:50 host community–refugee-user ratio. The centre plans to provide capacity-building workshops on topics such as entrepreneurship, trading and ICT. It is also a place for users to access services such as PCs and charging ports. By making the centre available to both displaced persons and the host community, it creates a space in which the entire local population can come together for mutual benefit. As one observer noted, '[The initiative] is helpful because host and refugee communities can access the internet and also it will enable the community to come ... and do their e-learning, browsing and chat with others while they are here.'¹¹ Bringing populations together in spaces that serve common interests can be an effective means by which to improve refugee–host relationships, as individuals are able to build bonds in situations where they are both benefitting from the services on offer. Although this was the aim of the initiative, in reality, access data from the hub indicates that less than 10 per cent of users are from the host community, perhaps due to its location inside the camp. Crown Agents plan to increase the marketing and publicity of the services on offer within the host community to try and increase their use of the hub.

As seen in Burkina Faso, the MEI's market development activities in Kenya had to overcome the concern of some partners about the impact of humanitarian handouts on the potential market. This caution on the part of MEI partners was demonstrated by the approach of the BBOXX, a provider of pay-as-you-go solar equipment for household lighting. The company decided to set up a shop in the local town rather than in the camp. While this was partly due to security concerns and the need to access the Kenyan power grid, another consideration was the impact of the UNHCR's programme for providing free lighting. However, while BBOXX targeted sales in both communities, the majority (approximately 90 per cent, according to the company's August 2018 figures) of sales have been to refugees, as these products have allowed children to study at night and users to charge their phones on demand. This low uptake among the host population may also be attributed to the fact that power is already available in Kakuma town through its connection to the Kenyan power grid. As such, though the BBOXX sales to date are encouraging, the main market for these goods has been among refugees. This idea is supported by a UNHCR representative who noted that 'in Kakuma, there is an ability and willingness to pay... [for] something that is of good quality.'¹² However, BBOXX see opportunities to use their Kakuma branch to expand further into the host community outside of the main town.

¹¹ MEI evaluation interview with project user, Kakuma, August 2018.

¹² MEI evaluation interview with UNHCR representative, Kakuma Camp, August 2018.

Conclusion

The examples presented in this paper indicate that successful engagement with host communities has been achieved in all MEI focus countries, however, it is difficult to draw direct comparisons between what works most effectively in each context. Jordan, Burkina Faso and Kenya have different political and situational contexts, with contrasting approaches to the management of displaced populations, their rights and access to services. Consequently, it is not possible to apply a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to effective engagement between communities.

That said, there are common themes that have appeared across the three countries. Firstly, government support for energy initiatives serving displaced populations is often contingent on the abilities of initiatives to also benefit the local community. Furthermore, government buy-in often makes the difference between a long-term, sustainable project and a short-term project that peters out.

Secondly, creating space for both host communities and displaced populations to be involved in MEI activities has often led to greater interactions between the communities. The programmes are providing opportunities for mutual benefit and serving to reduce tensions between host communities and displaced populations.

However, effective engagement also rests upon initiatives being properly researched and tailored to the context in question. It is crucial to understand and respect the different operational environments between, for example, camp and non-camp settings. These range between practical challenges such as different regulations applied inside and outside of camps, and those related to issues such as perceived or actual differences in willingness and ability to pay for market-related goods and services.

About the Author

Natasha Butorac is an international development and humanitarian professional specializing in programme design and management, with a technical focus on gender and international forced migration and displacement.

Natasha is currently based in South Sudan as the project manager of IMC Worldwide's Evaluation and Learning Facility for South Sudan. She previously worked for the United Nations Office in Geneva, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and the European Commission's DG DEVCO in the areas of international relations, gender and communications.

Natasha holds an MSc International Migration and Public Policy from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

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Cover image: A man carrying a bundle of firewood on his bicycle in Kakuma Town, Kenya

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The Royal Institute of International Affairs
Chatham House
10 St James's Square, London SW1Y 4LE
T +44 (0)20 7957 5700 F +44 (0)20 7957 5710
contact@chathamhouse.org www.chathamhouse.org
Charity Registration Number: 208223