

Powering Peace

How UN field missions can use renewable energy to enhance effectiveness

Powering Peace, a joint project of the Stimson Center and Energy Peace Partners, explores how UN field missions can begin using more renewable energy to improve their effectiveness, save money, enhance security, and in turn, leverage greater access to energy for populations while mitigating climate change.

LEVERAGING THE UN FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

Over two dozen countries—primarily in Africa, the Middle East, and Southern Asia and home to over 850 million people—are classified as fragile states, as vulnerable to climate change, and as lacking access to electricity. The UN is engaged in these countries to promote peace and prevent conflict, as well as to lead on humanitarian response. That important work is increasingly complicated by the effects of climate change, from drought to migration, in places without strong infrastructure to support development and access to energy. There is an opportunity to leverage that presence for longer-term, sustainable peace.

International operations in fragile states spend roughly \$1.6 billion on energy for their missions annually. In 2016, for example, the international community spent more than \$35 billion on UN humanitarian aid and peace operations, with the largest UN operations deployed in parts of Africa and the Middle East. That life-saving work is heavily dependent on dirty, inefficient diesel generators to operate in some of the globe's most fragile, least-electrified countries. These generators are expensive; even when they are donated after a mission departs, they do not offer a source of long-term electricity access or infrastructure for local communities.

SEEKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

The UN has an opportunity to reimagine the way it resources its field missions to save money, increase efficiency, reduce pollution, and better support climate targets. It can set the stage for sustainable development in energy poor areas. The

REPORT

[Renewable Energy & UN Peacekeeping: Untapped Potential in the DRC](#)

The report examines ongoing efforts by international actors in the DRC to boost the share of renewable sources of energy; articulates the benefits of increasing diesel-to-renewable energy transitions for both the operations and the host country; details viable opportunities and potential challenges for implementing such transitions; and recommends next steps.

LEADERSHIP

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UN and its member states, however, need to reorient toward more modern energy options for peacekeeping missions. The organization has made progress aligning its operations with its commitments to reduce greenhouse gases and the Sustainable Development Goals, but more needs to be done. In September 2019, the UN Secretary-General announced new goals: that the UN will reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent and to get 80 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030. Meeting this challenge requires transformational change and leadership from within the UN to shift the bureaucracy to begin to address the interconnected challenges of conflict, climate, and poverty.

This project explores how the UN can adjust its policies and practices to respond to the institution's new, ambitious climate targets. To achieve the system change needed, Powering Peace combines research, analysis, data-collection, outreach and advocacy to (1) identify incentives and disincentives to a clean energy transition within the UN system for its field missions; (2) conduct case studies in crisis regions that host international peace and humanitarian field operations to understand local dynamics around energy practices and opportunities for specific missions to adopt more renewables; and (3) use this data to identify ways to shift to more energy options for UN missions and fragile states. The project engages key partners in the UN and international community to outline the current system of energy provision, articulate the benefits and challenges of a transition to more renewable options, and support ways to shift how energy is provided to missions.

Our goal is to help the UN incorporate resilient, sustainable energy technologies in its operations, build on member states commitments to address climate change, and introduce new climate solutions to fragile settings. With decades of experience and expertise, the project team works with experts and decision-makers from the UN, member states, non-governmental organizations and the commercial sector to better understand the institutional realities and use country-specific analysis to see how field operations will be affected. Powering Peace is at the forefront of studying and socializing the benefits of a renewable energy transition in UN field missions. We are among the first in the field to engage the UN on this issue and at a pivotal time for the organization.

Contact

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