

# Jordan

January 2020

## Innovation in Refugee Response and Protection

In the wake of the Syrian crisis and the massive influx of refugees in Jordan, the UNHCR Jordan operation has attracted worldwide attention thanks to its unique approach to invest in new technology and partners with the Private Sector to support its refugee programmes. In recent years, the return of those smart investments has allowed UNHCR not only to reduce its expenditures and make its programmes more sustainable but has also enhanced UNHCR's role as a catalyst to bring new, development actors to support refugees in the long-term.

Eventually, refugees are the ones benefitting from new opportunities that give them the dignity of life to express their potential, reduce their dependency on aid while profiting from more accessible daily services. These provisions are in line with [UNHCR Global Strategic Priorities](#) and [the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).



### Renewable Solar Power Plant in Refugee Camps

The development of electrical infrastructure in Jordan's Syrian refugee camps by ensuring that all refugees can meet their energy needs for cooking and lighting in a safe and sustainable manner, without fear or risk to their health, well-being and personal security, is one of the main goals for the UNHCR.

In this respect, in May 2017, funded by the IKEA Foundation, the first phase of a 2 MW renewable solar power plant was inaugurated in Jordan's Azraq refugee camp and brought renewable electricity to a refugee population that lived for two and a half years without electricity.

In September 2018, UNHCR inaugurated a new extension of the solar power plant with the support of Jordanian company EDCO (Electrical Distribution Company). This 1.5 MW new addition takes the overall camp renewable generation to 3.5 MW which covers 55% of shelter electricity needs. Thanks to the newly constructed solar plant and electricity grid extension funded by the Saudi Fund for development, the whole camp population will now benefit from regular access to clean energy; this shall eventually be diverted to the local grid for the benefit of host communities when the camp shuts down in the future.

Prior to the construction, the lack of electricity made even daily activities difficult, washing clothes, storing food and medication, opening shops and studying or walking safely to the washroom at night. Now, solar power provides affordable and sustainable electricity to at least 40,000 Syrian refugees living in up over 10,000 shelters. Each family can have light inside the shelter, connect essential appliances such as fridges and fans, and charge their phones, an invaluable resource to keep in touch with relatives and friends abroad. Additionally, the further construction of a 1.5 MW off site completed on August 2019. In total, Azraq refugee camp powered by a 5 MW solar power plant, which is covering 70% of the total quantity of energy required for the whole camp providing 14 hours of electricity from 10:00 AM – 12:00 AM

UNHCR, in partnership with the Government of Jordan, funded by KfW Development Bank have established the largest solar power plant providing 14 hours electricity per day from 15:30 pm to 5:30 am in Zaatari refugee camp. This renewable energy connects 100% of shelters in the camp via the newly renovated medium and low voltage power network supported by the Government of Czech Republic.

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japanese government organization, trained 109 refugees who now have been internationally accredited as electricians and who have been involved not only in the construction of this solar plant and network, but also in the ongoing maintenance of the whole electrical system.

The implementation of the project will continue in 2020.



## Electricity Consumption and the Control System in Azraq Camp

UNHCR is exploring innovative options to control the electricity consumption at household level in Azraq refugee camp. At the Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE) Workshop in Kenya in December 2017, UNHCR met Schneider Electric who introduced a promising technology called “Energy Dispenser”. These ‘smart devices’ are linked to customized software that monitors energy consumption over periods of time to better inform how the network is managed and electricity is delivered to households.

From September 2018, as a first phase of the pilot project, UNHCR began a practical engagement with Schneider to support electrical monitoring on 24 shelters. The 24 energy dispensers are distributed to village 6 in Azraq refugee camp. As a second phase of the pilot project, UNHCR procured new energy dispensers and already setup those dispensers in 200 shops inside Azraq refugee camp. From June to December 2019, the monitoring of energy consumption in 200 shops will be conducted by UNHCR.

On January 2018, UNHCR got exposed to cutting-edge technologies in Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, two technologies were identified which considered very interesting and innovative in terms of energy storage and rapid installation.

Power Blox, cubical, safe, ready to use energy storage system usable for household level can store up to 200 W / 1200 Wh for each unit and it can be scaled up to reach 2.3 KW.

Renova Gen, heavy duty cubical, high power, ready to use in 3 minutes, foldable energy storage system with solar mats for offices level can store up to 10 KWh/ 3.3 KW.



## © EyeCloud – Enhancing the Delivery of Refugee Assistance

The © EyeCloud is a secure and encrypted network connection that can be used to authenticate refugees against biometric data stored in the UNHCR database since 2016. UNHCR uses biometrics (iris scanning) during the registration of refugees in Jordan. Iris scanning measures the unique patterns in a person’s irises, which are used to verify and authenticate identity. Third parties like partner humanitarian agencies, banks and supermarkets can instantly authenticate refugees through the EyeCloud without sharing any personal or biometric data. It ensures that more refugees benefit from essential services and goods in a fast and dignified manner. The © EyeCloud guarantees the security of refugees’ data and reduces fraud. 90% of the refugees currently in Jordan have been registered by UNHCR using iris scanning. The remaining 10% is either too young (under 3 years of age), or too old (over 70 years), has congenital eye diseases or has experienced eye injuries.

By using the © EyeCloud, the result of an innovative public-private partnership with the biometrics company IrisGuard and a local bank, UNHCR is the first agency ever to provide biometrically authenticated cash assistance to refugees. Additionally, it is important for donors that aid agencies can receive detailed reporting for the assistance disbursed, which improves reporting and complies with audit requirements. The platform system processes over 83 billion identity comparisons daily with an average 0.35 second response time.



## The Common Cash Facility (CCF) – Partnering for Better Cash Assistance

In 2019, the Common Cash Facility (CCF) is a platform used by 28 partners including UN agencies, the Government of Jordan and International NGOs deliver the cash assistance provided to the most vulnerable refugees in Jordan who live outside camps. It is based on an innovative public-private partnership between UNHCR, financial service providers such as banks and mobile wallet payment providers and the biometrics company IrisGuard.

In Jordan, UNHCR uses iris scanning during the registration of refugees. Refugees withdraw cash from cash points using iris scanning without the need for a card or PIN. The iris scan authenticates the beneficiaries by linking to UNHCR's secure biometric registration data of refugees (iris scanning measures the unique patterns in a person's irises, which are used to verify and authenticate identity) through an encrypted network, © EyeCloud. Aimed at creating shared value for all organizations, the cash transfer arrangement was developed and procured by UNHCR and made available to all humanitarian partners on a direct and equal basis, with no management fees.

It provides value for money as it maximizes the impact of donors' funds: the agencies participating in the facility used to pay between 2.5% and 5% in bank fees, whereas a joint approach under the CCF has allowed them collectively to bring the cost down to 1% with surcharges. The fees for mobile wallet transfers are even lower. The lower costs of digital banking, coupled with economies of scale through several partners coming together, improve efficiency and allow CCF partners to reach more families. The Common Cash Facility (CCF) is jointly managed by representatives from participating organizations. All humanitarian partners joining the facility – large and small – can access the financial service provider on an equal and direct basis, under the same terms and conditions and at the same record-low overheads, with no entry or exit barriers.



## Self-Renewal Registration Centre for Beneficiaries

In 2018, UNHCR Jordan has started to implement a self-renewal methodology in registration procedures, the first operation globally to do so. The short-term objective of this innovative project is to empower persons of concern as data owners, by enabling them to validate and update data previously collected during registration. Self-renewal will save time for refugees when doing registration and renewal procedures, avoiding long waiting lines in UNHCR registration centres. The long-term objective of the project is to enable refugees to update their data remotely, and to have access to a unique, portable, authenticated digital identity, inter-operable with State population registries and Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems.

The self-renewal process will be managed through kiosks that include an Iris camera for biometric verification, a monitor, and a printer. As of June 2019, 20 kiosks in UNHCR Registration Centre in Amman are in operational, and 2 kiosks in Nuzha Community Center are also in operational. By August 2019, additional 15 kiosks in Irbid and 15 kiosks in Mafraq will be operational for self-renewal registration by refugees. [Read more here.](#)



## Mobile Payment Systems for Refugees

UNHCR Jordan has been able to harness innovative technologies available in the country to meet the different needs of refugees. A new innovation is the use of "mobile wallets" to increase financial inclusion. UNHCR is working with a Jordanian national mobile payment system. The system was originally developed in response to low rates of financial inclusion among Jordanians, with only 25% to 30% of Jordanians having access to digital financial services. There are five licensed mobile payments services providers (MPSPs) which are interoperable with mobile wallets, bank accounts, and prepaid cards. The mobile payments are designed to work through applications developed by the five MPSPs and works on analogue phones and phones without internet connection. The expected impact is to expand refugees' access to useful and affordable financial services that meet their needs – transactions, payments, savings and credits - in Jordan.

In 2018, 728 refugee students enrolled in the DAFI Programme are using mobile wallets. In May 2019, 618 refugee students are currently enrolling in the DAFI Programme are using mobile wallets.



## Smart Integrated Voice Response in UNHCR Infoline

The Infoline is the dedicated helpline offered by UNHCR to refugees. Refugees can call between 8:00 am and 16:00 pm and speak to an UNHCR Infoline staff member for asking questions about UNHCR's services. In 2018, to

provide better access to information of UNHCR services for refugees, UNHCR introduced the “Smart Integrated Voice Response (SIVR)” that allows refugees to access refugees’ data without speaking to an Infoline staff. The SIVR allows refugees to call the Infoline, enter their UNHCR case number, along with a security code, and access various information about their own personal data. This eliminates the costs of having to come to a UNHCR registration center and allows refugees to access real-time data.

## **Alternative Building Materials for Shelters and UNHCR Offices**

As a more cost effective, durable and light alternative to caravans made of multiple panels, UNHCR started to utilize a new type of prefabricated light cement panel called Expanded Polystyrene (EPS). Various combination of structures can be designed for office or housing purposes. Cheaper and more durable than caravans, structures made of EPS can be built rapidly, offering better insulation and soundproofing. The lifespan of building made of EPS is 70 years and the EPS panels can be also easily recycled. UNHCR already uses EPS panels in its offices in Azraq refugee camp, Irbid and Khalda with an idea of potentially expand its use for other purposes in refugee settings in Jordan.

## **Reducing the Environmental Impact on UNHCR Operation**

In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) and the Global Compact for Refugees, UNHCR has setup in 2019 an Environmental Management System (EMS) with the support of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) and funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

The initiative fits into larger commitments for Climate Neutrality and for the implementation of environmental sustainability management systems within UN entities. It also translates the ambition of the UNHCR Jordan to shift from non-sustainable business models based on non-efficient energy and resources consumption, while maintaining the quality in assistance delivery, addressing the needs of the Persons of Concern.

UNHCR Jordan aims at implementing innovative processes and alternative solutions to make incremental improvements in the environmental performance of operating activities and buildings management. In the first quarter of 2019, UNHCR Jordan has established its priorities for environmental improvement, based on an environmental assessment and the involvement of key staff: waste management, energy efficiency, water quality and greenhouse gases emissions reduction. Based on these priorities several improvements have already been implemented in 2019 and with the support of MSB and SIDA more will be implemented in 2020.

## **Innovative Education Approach – Connected Learning**

UNHCR, together with its national NGO partner the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD), launched the first Connected Learning Hub in Amman as part of its education strategy to advance inclusive and equitable education for all refugees in Jordan. This is the first of a network of 10 innovative learning hubs in community centers throughout the Kingdom of Jordan that UNHCR is launching in collaboration with Learning Equality Jordan, and thanks to generous contribution from Google.

**Thank you very much for your generous contribution for the sake of refugees.** With support from donors, UNHCR can provide protection and assistance for millions of displaced people in need. Your support makes a huge difference to people who have lost everything.

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