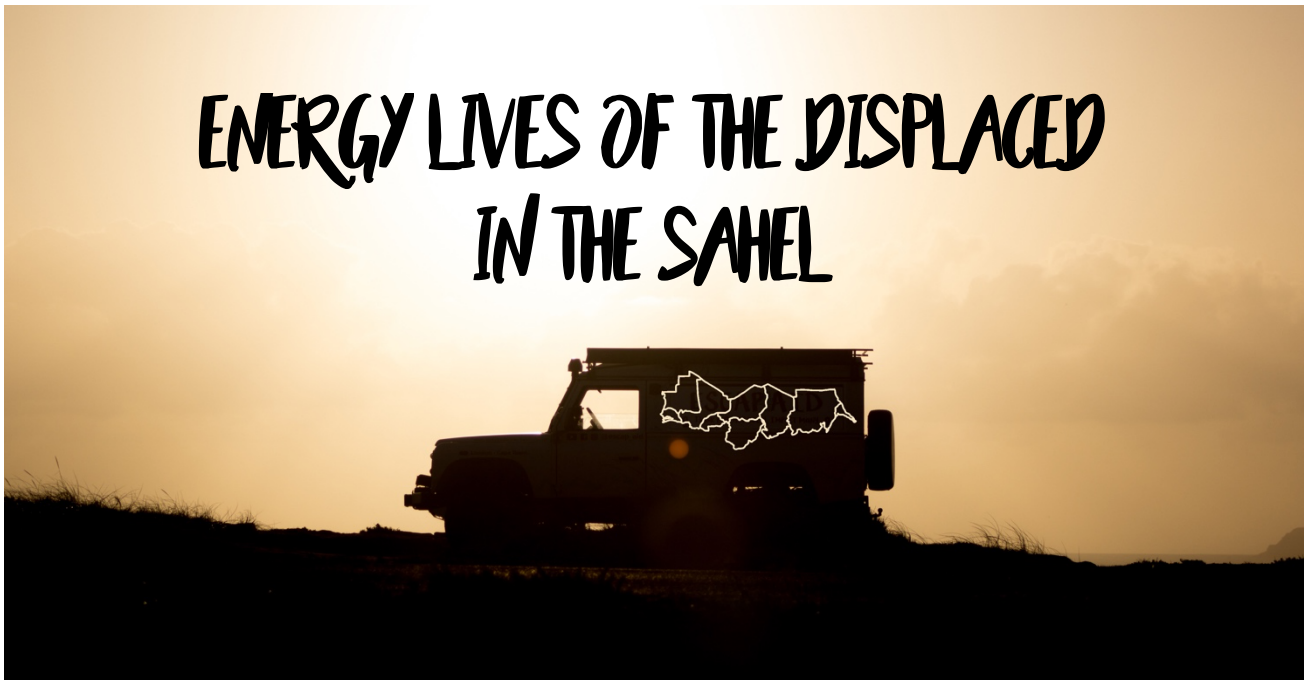


# ENERGY LIVES OF THE DISPLACED IN THE SAHEL



**Research Aims & Objectives:** The aim of this project is to document the energy lives of displaced people across the Sahel in order to, raise the issue of humanitarian energy access up the international agenda, embed the voices of displaced energy users directly into national and international policy decision-making, and provide a novel approach demonstrating the positive value of qualitative visual storytelling on energy access and forced displacement. We look to achieve this aim through three research objectives:

1. To co-design, co-produce, and collaborate with visual storytellers, local activists and climate organisations across three countries in the Sahel.
2. To produce three short documentary films and 100 photographs accompanied by three academic journal papers, a practitioner paper and a methodology paper to inform global policymakers on the lived experience of displaced energy users.
3. To complete the first crossing of the Sahel by vehicle with real time updates across social media platforms building a community of 100,000 people.

The research will be co-developed with local partners over the coming months. Currently the project is open to focus on any of the Sahel countries, (Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia), however, with the support of local activists and displaced people 3 focus countries will be chosen during the first months of the collaboration.

**Summary:** United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG7) aims to provide sustainable energy for all by 2030 (United Nations, 2016). Whilst there have been significant rises in energy access all across the globe, the Sahel Region still has extremely low energy access rates (less than 30% of the population (The World Bank, 2018)) in addition to significant conflict and climate change resulting in over 5 million displaced peoples across the region (Eizenga, 2019, UNHCR, 2019). Situated on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert, this is a region that is being left behind on the international development agenda and the path to sustainable energy access for all despite having the highest solar energy density of any area on the globe. The energy, conflict, displacement nexus suggests direct action is needed now otherwise many displaced people may take decades to escape poverty. Documenting of lived experience and the complex contextual barriers to energy access is of key importance to show why energy transitions are essential on a quicker timeframe and to demonstrate how and why displaced people in the Sahel urgently require sustainable energy access. The limited research and understanding of these issues have led to the failure of energy initiatives in providing energy access to the most vulnerable. Many organisations operating in this area are focused on humanitarian relief rather than building an understanding of the energy lives of the displaced. This project aims to change the focus by demonstrating that without access to modern energy, long-term progress on stability and local development is not possible (NORCAP, 2020). Access to these displaced people will be created through an overland expedition element immersing the collaborating partners in the Sahelian context. Additionally the ability to travel overland across this region allows unique collaboration with displaced people who are currently outside the reach of humanitarian aid organisations such as UNHCR

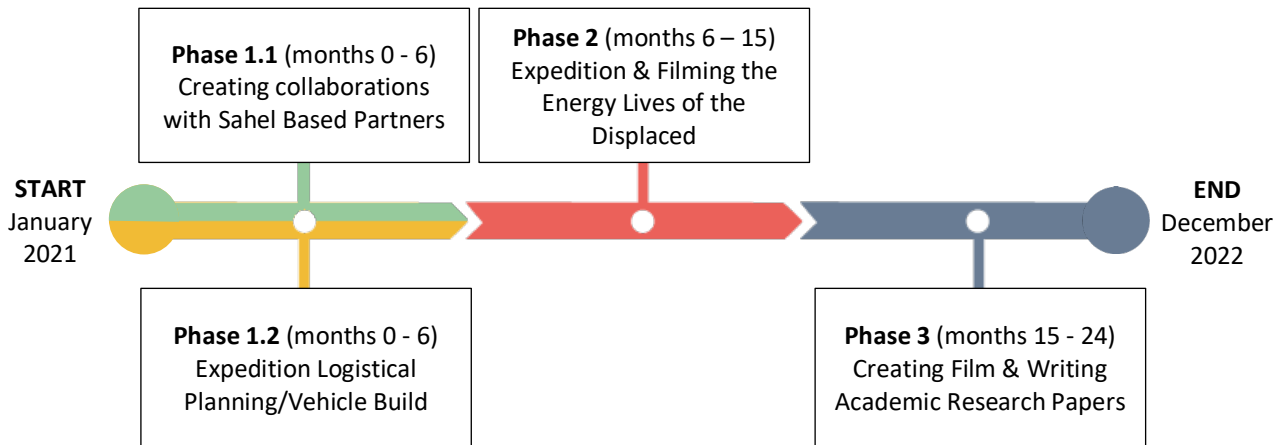
([www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)) or ICRC ([www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org)). The project will showcase incredible stories through photography/film and capture how displaced peoples currently interact with energy to raise the issue of humanitarian energy access up the international agenda, connecting real voices of the displaced with policymakers, a step in the correct direction for regional good governance. We will achieve this through a global collaboration of transdisciplinary experts encompassing anthropology, human geography, engineering, Sahel-based local storytellers, activists and climate organisations, and private energy actors across the project cycle (Rosenberg-Jansen et al., 2018). These documentary style short films and photographs will give insights into the complex contextual environments that displaced peoples live in as well as a celebration of little-known cultures and traditions.

**The Photographs/Films:** Storytelling is an ancient tradition, the original format for communicating our understanding of the world. Film and photography as two methods, lend strength to oral storytelling, as visual aids bring stories to life. As part of this research, three short documentary films and 100 photographs will document the lived experience of displaced peoples, with the informed consent of all participants. These films and photographs will capture the personal stories of people in the Sahel and their relationship to energy access. It is of central importance that these films are driven by African voices encouraging local participation across all levels of production. African filmmakers have the contextual knowledge to capture these complex narratives against the colonialist history of the continent and therefore must direct, film and produce these films. As well as acting as a tool to promote African voices and decolonising the narrative promoted by main-stream media, these short films will be a celebration of the Sahel, its people, culture and traditions. In addition, we look to recognise the balance between modernisation through energy access and the ancient traditions of the Sahel people. This storytelling element also creates a transparent, accessible method of communication between the global north and south, academics and people of the Sahel. In a world where there is an ever-widening gap between developed and developing nations, creating a strong connection and understanding of different cultures, environments and peoples is crucial for the completion of the SDGs.

**The Expedition:** This research provides the unique opportunity to combine the documenting of displaced energy lives with critical evidence that can be used directly in policy-making and humanitarian response. In order to maximise the research impact and raise the issue of humanitarian energy access up the international development agenda, bold and eye-catching initiatives are needed to connect the traditionally disconnected voices between displaced peoples in the Sahel and global development agendas – this is our expedition element. We will undertake the first crossing of the Sahel by vehicle, from Senegal to Somalia, the most western to eastern points of Africa. The expedition will look to tread lightly on unexplored regions to increase understanding of the Sahel. We do acknowledge that COVID-19 may impact our ability to complete this element however with careful planning we believe this is possible in the project timeline. The planned route is Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Nigeria, (Niger or Cameroon) Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia subject to change depending on local security status. Our expedition partner, ESCAPAID ([www.escap-aid.org](http://www.escap-aid.org)), will facilitate the logistical needs of building the vehicle, food, water, accommodation, prior safety experience whilst also providing access to previous expedition partners. As the safety of the team is of central importance, we will mitigate risk through: GO/NO-GO decisions based upon security, local guides in the Vehicle, a Personal Locator Beacon, 24hour live tracking, Satellite & Local Phone connections, pre-departure conflict diffusion & medical training, full medical kit provided by expedition specialists Nomad UK (<https://www.nomadtravel.co.uk>), extensive mechanical experience, key vehicle spare parts and a flexibility around route. In addition, we are working to get political cover from the UN and utilise existing networks of security specialists and collaborative partners who have detailed understanding of the Sahel.

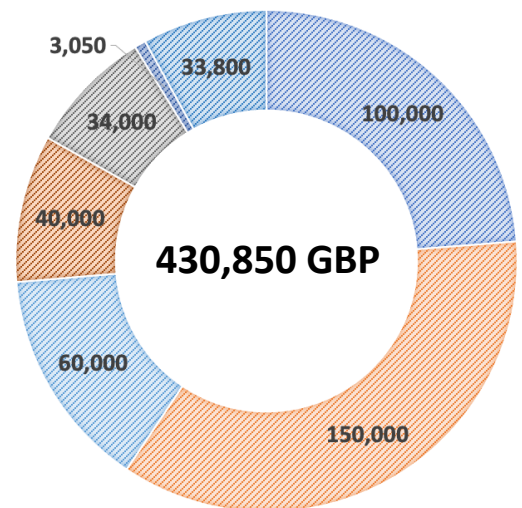
Why is the expedition an important element? First, research is often conducted on short field visits which give a snapshot of lived experience, the expedition allows a deep-dive and full emersion into the customs, traditions, issues of displaced people over a significantly longer time period. This also provides the opportunity to highlight everyday stories of research/expedition life as well as changing the mainstream media narrative of negativity surrounding the Sahel to positivity by providing relatable experiences of the Sahel. Second, by capturing imaginations through adventure we can build online following with groups that are not traditionally exposed to research. This increases the reach of the project to create a global community of collaborators who can champion Humanitarian Energy Access (HEA). In addition, the online element increases the proportion of youth activists interacting with research, inspiring the next generation of change makers. Lastly, the completion of a world first gives this research additional legitimacy and a significant platform to challenge the existing social order around HEA and complete the outputs stated in the final section.

**Budget & Timeline:** This project will be ideally conducted over 24 months, starting January 2022, and is divided into the following phases which may be subject to change dependant on COVID-19/Security in the Sahel:



The budget presented here shows an overview of the costs associated with the film and expedition; these estimates have been supplied by possible project partners. There are opportunities for multiple funding models where different partners take on a proportion of the project cost or sponsorship of equipment which will reduce the overall associated cost. A more detailed budget can be provided on request.

Budget	No.	Item	Cost GBP
Research Team	1	Lead Researcher (not including Educational Institution Overheads)	100,000
Partner Collaborations	1.2	Collaboration with Sahel based partners (3 refugee-led and displaced-led researchers based in 3 focus countries)	150,000
Film	2.1	Filming, Editing, Distribution	60,000
Professional energy access photographer	2.2	Qualitative visual research and 100 photographs	40,000
Expedition Vehicle + Kit (Facilitated by Escapaid)	4	Vehicle Preparation, Labour, Sponsor Logos	34,000
Safety + Medical (Facilitated by Escapaid)	5	Satellite Phone, Communication Equipment	3,050
Travel Costs	6	Vehicle Shipping, Fuel, Food, General Travel	33,800
Insurance	7	Cover for Medical, Ransom & Extraction	10,000



**Current/Potential Partners:** This project has been developed by Benjamin L. Robinson (University of Nottingham/ESCAPAID) in collaboration with a UN steering group, the Global Plan of Action for Sustainable Energy Solutions in Situations of Displacement (GPA) (<https://www.humanitarianenergy.org>). The GPA provide expertise in HEA research and funding methods as well as connectivity across UN agencies. This project is also endorsed by the Scientific Exploration Society ([www.ses-explore.org](http://www.ses-explore.org)) who are a global leader with over 50 years’ experience running scientific research expeditions.

We are currently identifying partnerships that will build connections, funding opportunities and expertise. Potential partners which are in varying stages of discussion include media partners such as National Geographic ([www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com)), academic partners such as Coventry University ([www.heed-refugee.coventry.ac.uk](http://www.heed-refugee.coventry.ac.uk)), and partners who can provide political cover such as the UN Secretary-General and ACT Alliance (<https://actalliance.org>). In addition to the partners outlined above there is the potential for commercial partners to sponsor/market through the project to increase brand visibility if there is there is the correct alignment of project/brand values. Other possibilities for partners and fundraising also include the integration into existing programming by organisations such as NORCAP (<https://www.nrc.no/norcap/>), IOM (<https://www.iom.int>), UNHCR (<https://www.unhcr.org/energy.html>), SEforALL (<https://www.seforall.org>).

**Examples of Research Outputs/Outcomes/Impacts:** Outputs; First, Photographs from previous work documenting, (clockwise from top left) the energy lives of marginalised communities in rural Nepal, the lived experience of a waste collector in Kathmandu, an earthquake victim who was not included in the Nepali National Rebuilding Policy, provide examples of the photographical elements.



Second, three short film documentaries. Films such as *Les Sauteurs* (2016), *Born in Syria* (2016), *Fuocoammare* (2016), *Human Flow* (2017), and *Operation Moonbird* (2020) all document the lived experience of refugees throughout the period of displacement and provide examples of the type of documentary film-making that this research wants to utilise from a humanitarian energy perspective. Third, the academic research outputs. Three academic journal papers, a practitioner paper and a methodology paper to document the project from an academic perspective providing methods of best practice, methodological reflections and learnings as well as a written documentation of the lived experience of the displaced in each focus country,

Outcomes; Presenting at film festivals, art galleries, partner events, universities, International Development agencies, academic conferences and side events at the United Nations General Assembly both in the Sahel and Europe targeting both general public, practitioners, other academics, policymakers in the Sahel and the international development community. These events will build recognition of the issues of energy access for the displaced, inspire future research and increase Funding to HEA. We look to link the voices of the displaced to policymaking and good governance in line with UN Secretary-Generals aims for the Sahel (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/02/1084732>).

### **Core impact; A Policy Change in the three Sahel focus countries to encompass Energy Access for the Displaced.**

EIZENGA, D. 2019. Long Term Trends Across Security and Development in the Sahel.

NORCAP 2020. Empowering Africa's Most Vulnerable: Access to Solar Energy in Complex Crises.

ROSENBERG-JANSEN, S., BARLOW, M., PEISCH, S., PONNAN, N. & RATHI, P. 2018. Sustainable Humanitarian Energy Services: Inclusive participation, lessons learnt, and paths forward.

THE WORLD BANK. 2018. *DataBank on Poverty and Equity* [Online]. Available: <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/source/poverty-and-equity> [Accessed 2nd July 2020].

UNHCR 2019. Global Trends - Forced Displacement in 2019.

UNITED NATIONS. 2016. *Sustainable Development Goals* [Online]. Available: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300> [Accessed 5th May 2019].