



Azraq refugee camp continues to embrace clean energy

Azraq, 20 September 2018 – The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, inaugurated today a new extension of the solar plant in Jordan’s Azraq Syrian Refugee Camp. Funded by the IKEA Foundation, the first phase of a 2 megawatt solar photovoltaic (PV) farm was inaugurated in May 2017 and brought renewable power to a population that lived for two and a half years without electricity. Thanks to the newly constructed solar plant and electricity grid extension, the whole camp population will now benefit from regular access to clean energy.

The Azraq’s solar farm is the first to be built in a refugee setting in the world, and its benefits have been life-changing for the camp residents. Prior to its construction, the lack of electricity made even daily activities difficult, such as cooking, washing clothes, studying or walking safely to the washroom at night, especially for women and children. Now, solar power provides affordable and sustainable electricity to at least 40,901 Syrian refugees living in up to 10,470 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.

The 1.5 megawatt extension brings the capacity of the solar PV plant to a total of 3.5 megawatt. With this extension an estimated 55% of the Azraq camp electrical needs will now be met through renewable energy. An additional two villages in the camp – of capacity up to 5,567 shelters – will be connected to the national grid thanks to EDCO, the Electrical Distribution Company that powers the region. This grid electricity will be offset by the solar plant’s generation through a net metering and wheeling arrangement with EDCO. By mid-2019, the construction of an additional 1.5 megawatt extension off-site is expected to be achieved, bringing the total capacity of the farm to 5 megawatts. Once the solar plant operates at full capacity, it is estimated to generate approximately 7,800 megawatt hours per year, and cover 70% of all shelter’s energy needs in the camp.

With the new extension these solar plants will result in savings of US\$ 2 million per year and reduces CO² emissions by approximately 4,500 tons per year, with these benefits increasing with each new shelter connected to the grid. Thus, Azraq illustrates UNHCR’s ambition to transition towards more clean energy, and contributes to the Jordan national energy strategy to achieve a greener economy by 2020. It also provides income and employment opportunities for 50 refugees who have been employed in the construction of the solar plant, an additional 120 employed in the electrical network, and 10 trained as electricians to support electrical activities in the camp.

“Today’s inauguration represents another big step towards our goal to cover Azraq camp’s entire electricity needs through renewable energy. We want all camp residents to have access to the benefits and opportunities that solar power provides. Everyone should be able to store food and medication when it’s hot, to have light to work and study in the evenings, to feel safe in the street and comfortable in their home. We are working with the IKEA Foundation, the Electrical Distribution Company and the Jordanian government to ensure that refugees can lead dignified lives in exile.” said **Stefano Severe, UNHCR Representative in Jordan**.

The solar plant is a great examples of how UNHCR, in collaboration with the Government of Jordan, the private sector and the refugee community can come together to find innovative and sustainable solutions for those forced to flee. As the number of forcibly displaced persons continues to grow, this sort of forward-looking partnership and integrated collaboration will become essential, not only to deal with the humanitarian crises brought by forced displacement but to empower refugees to reach their full potential as active members of society.

PRESS RELEASE

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