Systems Evaluation
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Practical ACTION

Introduction

This evaluation report is based on the evidence and insights generated by a Systems Impact Assessment of the Renewable Energy for Refugees (RE4R) project implemented in partnership with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. This purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent of and prospect for systems change as a result of RE4R to re-shape the global humanitarian system in the recognition, uptake, and mainstreaming of RE in humanitarian response.

Funded by the IKEA Foundation, RE4R was a €10.6 million project jointly implemented by PA and the UNHCR between April 2017 and February 2022. It sought to reshape global humanitarian response to adopt (and adapt) market-based energy renewable (RE) models demonstrated in three refugee camps and host communities in Rwanda and the city of Irbid in Jordan. In addition to providing sustainable, efficient, affordable, and reliable RE solutions for refugees, host communities, and institutions in humanitarian settings, the market-based RE approaches piloted by RE4R sought to provide long-term economic improvement for target populations

Access to affordable, clean energy is a basic human right, and it is no coincidence that it is identified as one of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 7). In humanitarian contexts, access to sustainable energy is critical for essential activities such as cooking meals, providing lighting, providing heating, powering water pumps, cooling vaccines, charging mobile phones, and powering schools, hospitals, community centres

This evaluation is one of three evaluations of RE4R; the other two being at the country-level in the Jordan and Rwanda. It was conducted during a three month period (commencing in October 2021) by an independent two-person team in collaboration with PA's core evaluation team. Data collection included a desktop review of background documents and primary data collected remotely through informant interviews. A rubrics framework was used to structure the inquiry and data analysis, and to inform recommendations.

Key Findings

Key findings from the evaluation have been organized based on five key dimensions or evaluation criteria to assess systems change. The five evaluation criteria are sequenced to assess the extent of and prospect for global systems change in humanitarian response as a result of RE4R. The following discussion summarizes the key findings by criterion, for which **Section 5** of the report provides a more detail discussion:

Table 1: Summary of Key Findings Per Evaluation Criteria

1.Transforming Relevance Criterion	
Description	**Finding**
What is being done to effect systems change? This criterion refers to the extent the project was planned, implemented, and assessed to advance transformational learning and the change to RE in global humanitarian system. **It focuses on the process-related aspects of the project** to assess the extent the project applied systems thinking to achieve systems change in humanitarian response. Given the inherent limitations of attribution analysis of a single intervention such as RE4R to effect systems change relative to the many other factors and actors that can affect any observed change, this project narrative is an important source of evidence for contribution analysis. The criterion includes five sub-criteria: 1 Systemic assessment, as well as midline, endline an ex-post evaluations); 2)project design; 3)Project implementation; 4)Project monitoring and communication; and 5) Capacity development.	**RE4R was rated as "partial" for this criterion,** meaning that project preparation, implementation, and assessment have some elements to promote transformational learning and change in the GHS, but were limited in delivery. There was limited evidence to detail in the project design and implementation for global activity workstreams. This, compounded with other factors such as PA's staff turnover and partiality towards local implementation versus global-level advocacy, hindered the full implementation of planned global activities at the project start, which never fully gained momentum to be fully implemented. However, assessment activities for RE4R were systematically planned, budgeted and implemented with attention the objective to effect change at the GHS level. Related, the monitoring system was assessed as adequate, albeit limited, but at the same time not too burdensome. The reporting and communication for the project has had notable outreach, although advocacy and knowledge sharing at the global level could have been stronger. Formal capacity development for the staff focused on the GHS workstreams was not reported for the project.
2.Systems Change Criterion	

Description	Finding
What systems change has occurred? This criterion refers to the extent the project contributed to key conditions for transformational learning and change for the uptake of renewable energy (RE) in the global humanitarian system. Whereas Criterion 1 focuses on the project process to deliver systems change, this criterion focuses on the degree systems change has occurred. It consists of four sub-criteria: 1. **Structural –** the extent a project contributes to systems change in the policy, regulatory, financial and institutional frameworks that support and leverage uptake of RE in the global humanitarian system. 2. **Attitudinal –** the extent a project contributes to shifts in beliefs, values and norms for the uptake of RE in global humanitarian system. 3. **Transactional –** the extent a project contributes to processes and interactions among relevant stakeholders for the uptake of RE in the global humanitarian system. 4. **Speed-** the extent and the pace of a projects processes and outcomes are aligned with and realistic to the need for systems change for the uptake of RE in the global humanitarian system relative.	**RE4R was rated as "partial" for this criterion,** meaning that conditions from the project partly contributed to the uptake of RE in the GHS, but significant limitations remain. The quality, depth and intensity of systems change is a complex phenomenon, and while RE4R could potentially leverage tipping points that may result in significant observable systems change within the project timeframe, that is not the norm with such interventions and has not been the case with this project. Systems change is more often a longitudinal, protracted process. Therefore, it is unsurprising that a 5-year timebound project implemented in three camps/communities in one country and one city in another country has not re-shaped the GHS to mainstream RE. This is not to suggest that RE4R's system change work did not have any accomplishments. The sub-criterion for both Attitudinal Change and Transactional Change were each rated as sufficient. Affecting policy and institutional change, the core elements of structural systems change, is not easy, and despite some accomplishments from RE4R in this area, they were not enough to effect global systems structural change at scale. The slow speed of RE4R's systems work due to implementation delays also informed the Partial rating for this criterion.
3.Scalability Criterion	
Description	**Finding**
Extent systems change has/can increase at a broader scale? In essence, this criterion focuses on the extent RE had been mainstreamed to replace non-RE in humanitarian response. It consists of three sub-criteria: 1. **Vertical scalability –** the extent RE4R *scales-up* impact through institutional and policy reform to	**RE4R was rated "Partial for this criterion,** meaning that conditions from the project result that are partially on trajectories to or partially contribute to mainstreaming RE in the GHS, but are inadequate to gain ascendency over non-RE. Non-renewable energy sources remain business-as-usual, and it will take time for alternative RE to gain ascendancy and replace non-renewable energy sources in

mainstream RE in the global humanitarian system. 2. **Horizontal scalability** – the extent RE4R *scales-out* impact through wider geographic or demographic diffusion of and coverage by RE to mainstream it in the global humanitarian system. 3. **Functional scalability** – the extent RE4R adapted and improved its original strategy to increased scope, pace, or scale to mainstream RE in the global humanitarian system.	humanitarian response. The RE4R 2018 Intervention Plan refers to scaling-up but does not specifically articulate scalability or how it will be achieved. Given that the project aims to effect GHS change, the intention to scale up and out is implied, most notably in the Impact Statement's reference to replicating the RE4R market-based RE model with international humanitarian agencies, stakeholders and delivery agents. The MEL Framework, however, does provide a more detailed Impact at Scale conceptualization, and the delineation of different types of scales was specifically identified by PA and incorporated as the sub-criteria used to structure the analysis of this criterion. However, the project has not been deliberate in defining follow-up actions or an exit strategy to enable scale up. The Intervention plan identified potential supporting mechanisms for Rwanda but not Jordan and the GHS level.
4. Adaptive Sustainability Criterion	
Description	**Finding**
Prospect of systems change to persist and adapt in the future? This criterion focuses on the extent RE4R contributed to conditions or trajectories in the global humanitarian system for mainstreamed RE to persist and adapt to new circumstances as the market and external environment changes. This encompasses the extent or potential for institutional systems, values, and behaviours for RE in the global humanitarian system to be firmly embedded and dominant (hence, closely related to the scalability criterion).	**RE4R was rated as "Sufficient" for this criterion,** meaning that the project's contributions to structural change are partially sustainable to future change, but limitations remain. Non-renewable energy systems are unsustainable in the long run given they are destroying the very natural resource base required to sustain humanity. But for now, now-renewable energy sources remain business-as-usual, and it will take time for alternative RE to gain ascendancy and replace un-renewable energy sources in humanitarian response. Regardless, RE4R has made some promising contributions to sustain RE work in the GHS with its contributions to the GPA and with UNHCR partnership, which are assessed as more enduring than temporary. An important consideration for sustaining PA's RE objectives at the GHS level will be the degree it continues to invest funding and resources to strategic

	communication and knowledge sharing outputs derived from the learning of RE4R.
5. Transformational Coherence	
Description	**Finding**
Extent systems change work integrates with other transformational work? This criterion encompasses the extent RE4R aligns with and integrates relevant social, economic, and environmental transformational goals (e.g. SDGs) and benchmarks for cross-cutting priorities, (e.g. Leave No One Behind, Equity, and Gender Sensitivity and Inclusion). If project outcomes are not compatible with other transformations for a sustainable system, then the desired change, and for that matter the system itself, is not sustainable. It is, for this reason, the UN's 2030 Global Framework for Sustainable Development underscores the interdependencies between the 17 SDGs. In this regard, RE4R is well aligned to contribute to the SDGs that underpin the 2030 Global Agenda.	**RE4R was rated as "Exemplary" for this criterion,** meaning the project significantly contributed to wider transformational goals (SDGs). RE4R is situated at the nexus of key international humanitarian and development priorities. It is aligned with the broader transformational goals of the UN's 2030 Agenda, underscored by its relevance to nine of the seventeen SDGs. RE4R illustrates an inclusive, Leave No One Behind, approach to RE in humanitarian operations. Its focus on livelihoods through a market-based approach to RE has strong links to the empowerment of refugees and especially vulnerable groups. RE4R integrated gender-related priorities and dynamics as "an integral part of its energy programming work and is ensuring that gender concerns are systematically integrated through all phases of the project".

Recommendations

The following summarizes 16 potential areas of work for PA and its strategic partners to consider taking forward. Whilst some recommendations are more specific to RE4R project follow-up to its global RE objectives, other recommendations are more broadly relevant for PA (and its partners) to better pursue the strategy and collaborate to effect positive global systems change in the humanitarian sector. **Section 7** of the report provides a more detail discussion of each recommendation.

1. **Be aspirational, but realistic to frame and manage expectations.** If there was ever a time to be ambitious, it is now, echoed by the aspiration SDGs of the Global 2030 Agenda, and underscored by the formidable challenges the mirror. While RE4R can be seen as overly ambitious in its aspirational goal to re-shape the humanitarian sector, it is not just OK but important to articulate the alignment or causal link of smaller, discrete projects with larger global system change goals. What

is important is to make it explicit and manage expectations, that while the project is aligned with higher level goals, it aims to ***contribute*** to them rather than achieve them in and of itself.

2. **Pursue global systems change objectives such as RE as part of a comprehensive, coherent strategy that extends beyond the budget and time constraints of discrete projects.** Given the geographic and temporal scale and scope of global systems change, organizations seeking to effect systems change are advised to adopt a systems design where individual interventions (projects and programs consisting of multiple projects) are woven together as part of a comprehensive, coherent strategy. Such a strategic portfolio approach should be aligned with and reinforce overarching organizational strategy to sustain longer-term objectives such as advocacy, and the reform of policy and institutional frameworks for RE in the humanitarian sector.

3. **Complexity and systems mapping can be used as an important visual aid to support assessing, planning and informing the implementation of** systems**-level objectives.** Systems maps help identify key factors, actors and their interactions to inform systems change planning, including gaps that point to under-served needs, potential partners and champions to support objectives, gatekeepers with whom to contend, and "roadblocks" around which to navigate.

4. **Recognize, design, and implement global systems change work differently and unconstrained by the conventional project budgets and timelines.** The longer-term objectives of global systems change require a different design and budget to accommodate the longer timeframe, different workstreams, and specific subject matter expertise required. If global systems workstreams are designed into projects with in-country workstreams, separate budget lines and timelines are best allocated for the global systems change work. Otherwise, consider designing distinct projects focused on global systems change as part of a larger RE program or portfolio of programs (per Recommendation 2).

5. **Maintain a complex systems level perspective**. Discrete interventions like humanitarian RE projects do not operate in a political vacuum. Understanding the larger political economic context in which humanitarian and development goals are pursued is a critical aspect of complex systems analysis, especially when pursuing objectives that seek to contribute to global systems change such as the uptake of RE in the GHS.

6. **Pursue capacity development on systems design, monitoring, and evaluation within PA and among its partners**. Designing and delivering capacity development for systems thinking in the project cycle is important to socialize the understanding and appreciation to own and implement new concepts for projects targeting systems level change. Systems thinking can be incorporated into existing capacity development resources, such as a module in project management training, or a guidance note in a M&E Toolbox.

7. **Capitalize on PA's applied experience from RE4R and related work to establish itself as a global technical advisor and resource node in the humanitarian sector for market-based RE.** PA's practical experience in RE makes it well-place to be a provider of applied technical knowledge and assistance in the area of market-based RE. This encompasses not only the technologies and

interfacing with the private sector and conducting market assessments, but also working with communities, local and national authorities to tailor solutions to the context. Given the extensive technical knowledge that PA has accumulated in RE and the capacity gap in the sector, it can spearhead the development of practical, hands-on user guides, technical notes, checklists, etc., potentially with some of its strategic partners in this area (see Recommendation 10).

8. **Amplify learning and advocacy from RE4R after its end in early 2022 to scale out RE learning and uptake, and sustain work in this area.** There was consensus that one of the key contributions of RE4R is the practical example it provides applying market-based RE in the refugee camps and host communities. However, lessons and learning from RE4R are still formative, and it will be important that PA work with its strategic partners to prioritize and accelerate the development and disseminate of knowledge sharing and advocacy outputs to affect understanding and attitudes about RE in humanitarian contexts with documented lessons from RE4R.

9. **Continue to nudge and steer the momentum established with GPA in light of the gap for sustainable energy in the global cluster coordination mechanism for humanitarian response**. GPA is a significant initiative to leverage dedicated funding, subject matter expertise, and technical support for RE in the GHS, and an important platform to launch and host knowledge sharing and advocacy campaigns to contribute to global systems change for RE.

10. **PA and UNHCR should capitalize on their working relationship, as well as with project partners such as NRC and Chatham House, and explore additional partnerships with other influential actors in the humanitarian space to leverage the institutionalization of RE in humanitarian response.** PA's practical experience implementing RE on the ground can be an important asset for extending strategic partnerships with existing and new strategic partners in humanitarian response. If PA is proactive in engaging with influential humanitarian organizations in RE, it helps fuels a feedback loop that creates more demand for RE in the GHS.

11. **The IKEA Foundation should consider branding guidelines for investments they fund, especially joint, collaborative projects with multiple grantees and partners**. When not properly branded, the contributions of different implementing partners may be lost. The Ikea Foundation can consider whether implementing organizations use the project name, but with partner logos, or whether they brand themselves as they choose.

12. **Explore collaborative RE data collection and sharing to better support collective RE learning and implementation in the GHS.** A centralized, open-access database/platform can include data collection tools, data outputs, RE-focus evaluations and related assessments. Such a platform can be platform can be hosted by GPA and/or related RE initiatives. Collaborative efforts in developing standardized measurements and data collection tools can support an industry-recognized baseline to inform benchmarks and targets, and to ensure consistent and reliable measurement and support comparison across time, place, and measurer. Collaborative data collection can help reduce survey fatigue among target populations, conserve time and resources among implementing organizations, avoid duplicating data collection, and support collaborative sensemaking that can scale up and contribute to a GHS knowledge base.

13. **Support real-time monitoring *as* evaluation that does not just focus on the assessment of completed interventions, but on the current status of energy**

provision in camps. When shared through a common database (see Recommendation 11), or even through regular SMS text reports from a sample of target households or community/camp representatives, such timely information can support course correction among multiple actors in the humanitarian RE space, as well as developing a robust RE database for more longitudinal research to track trends and inform longer-term strategic planning.

14. **Proactively plan "transition" rather than "exit" strategies for global systems change work**. The idea of an "exit" strategy can reinforce the notion that there is a project end. However, given the longitudinal nature of global systems work and the need to sustain advocacy campaigns and the dissemination of lessons learned and knowledge sharing outputs, global system change interventions should be explicitly planned with attention to the continuation of the workstreams to effect global systems change after funding for the intervention runs out.

15. **Explore joint ex-post meta-evaluations that pool (and hence conserve) resources while supporting more longitudinal assessment realistic to the timeframes required to effect global systems change objectives.** Projects and programs are typically restricted in their ability to budget for and assess longer-term impact after the project end, and instead opt for the conventional end-of-project (summative) evaluation. However, if a percentage of multiple project budgets were allocated for ex-post assessment of more longitudinal phenomenon, like effecting global systems change, then there can be opportunity to conduct an ex-post assessment coherently at the strategic portfolio level, supporting cross-learning between projects and program areas, drawing upon prior assessment exercises as well as primary data collection of the current status and RE context.

16. **Iterate, pilot, and incorporate as appropriate the RE rubrics framework to support a more comprehensive, coordinated approach to the assessment of PA's work.** The rubrics framework is an adaptable analytical framework that can be used for the assessment of other PA intervention areas. It is typically intuitive with users and supports transparency and the systematic use of evidence that can be replicated over time or place for comparability. A key element for the success of rubrics frameworks is that it meaningfully engages key stakeholders to ensure the framework is relevant, and that the ratings have credibility and legitimacy among those who are to learn and apply learning