The Challenge

Energy is an essential part of the solution to nearly every sustainable development challenge, from health to education to gender equality to climate change. Despite some progress in reducing the global energy access deficit, some 1.1 billion people still live without electricity while another 3 billion people rely on heavily-polluting solid fuels for their daily cooking and heating needs. The rate of progress on energy access must be accelerated significantly if the world is to achieve not only universal access to modern energy by 2030, but this broad range of inter-related sustainable development imperatives as well.

Our Work

The United Nations Foundation is committed to connecting people, ideas, and resources to help drive access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. We build momentum and high-level support for energy access with our unique set of partners, including the United Nations, Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL), and practitioners from around the world. We do this by creating and leading pioneering initiatives that support new ways of expanding energy access — particularly through clean distributed energy — while ensuring that they address the needs of vulnerable and hard to reach people. The United Nations Foundation has invested and mobilized tens of millions of dollars in support of these causes and is assisting — through thought leadership, partnerships, communications, and our convening power — thousands of practitioners and stakeholders to expand energy access.
Expanding Pathways to Energy Access with Distributed Clean Power

Distributed clean energy technologies offer an increasingly affordable and sustainable way to close the energy access gap; however, their development and deployment remains fragmented and their value is still not fully appreciated by policymakers, which creates barriers to scaling up the sector.

The United Nations Foundation is addressing these barriers through initiatives such as the Energy Access Practitioner Network and the Mini-grids Partnership, which unify and coordinate the distributed clean energy sector, accelerate learning and action, and broker partnerships; and advocate for change. We do this by facilitating peer-to-peer learning and match-making; improving market intelligence and performance; and disseminating up-to-date information, opportunities, and resources thorough the world’s largest network of companies and stakeholders doing groundbreaking work in this space.

Recognizing the impact clean cooking can have on health and the environment, the United Nations Foundation also hosts the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, which is a public-private partnership to save lives, improve livelihoods, empower women, and combat climate change by creating a thriving global market for clean and efficient cooking solutions.

Ensuring Access to Energy for the Vulnerable and Hardest to Reach

While distributed clean energy technologies can provide new pathways to energy access, the technologies themselves are only a means to an end: improved lives and livelihoods. This is why we complement our work on distributed clean energy with an initiative on Powering Health Care and through our work promoting Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE), both of which help address the vital energy needs of vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations. We address these needs by increasing awareness of the importance of electrifying health care facilities and providing power in humanitarian settings; providing thought leadership and sharing best practices; promoting dialogue and coordination between the energy, health and humanitarian relief communities; and demonstrating new and innovative ways to deliver energy to the vulnerable and hardest to reach.