



## Minutes

### Carbon Working Group

March 20th, 2025

Watch the recording here: <https://youtu.be/-S--lyuhkaw?si=Sqn4WahijZ1HcQ12>

In recent years, humanitarian actors have become increasingly aware of the potential negative impact of their operations, and even of the crises themselves, on the natural environment. These impacts can result from the implementation of programmes in the countries where they are deployed, as well as from the logistics deployed, both at headquarters and internationally. Based on the results of their initial carbon assessment, NGOs are implementing targeted measures to reduce the impact of their activities, design dedicated action plans to reduce GHG emissions and support innovative low-carbon projects.

This type of experience-sharing and the design of tools for the collective is at the heart of the mandate of this working group, which is making progress on specific operational issues.

#### 1. The REH and the Working Group

The REH ([Réseau Environnement Humanitaire](#)) is a network of francophone humanitarian and development practitioners, working together to reduce the environmental footprint of aid. It exists since 2012 and formalised in 2021. There are over 300 members, including more than 30 organisations. The network has 4 working groups to operationalise its work:

- One on **waste management**
- One on **sustainable procurement**
- One on **environmental assessments**
- One on **carbon**

The WG has been around since 2021, growing out of a consortium of organisations aiming to assess their carbon footprint (consortium CHANGE). These organisations have signed [the statement of commitments of the humanitarian organisations for the climate](#) and aim to reduce their carbon footprint by 50% by 2030. Since its creation, they have been collaborating with other groups and networks ([HCC development](#), [WREC scope3 coordination group](#), ...).

The current members of the WG are: Action Contre la Faim, Alima, Climate Action Accelerator, CARE France, Électriciens Sans Frontières, Handicap International/Humanity & Inclusion, Médecins du Monde, Médecins sans Frontières, Oxfam, Première Urgence Internationale, Solidarités International, Terre des Hommes and Groupe URD.

#### 2. Achievements and challenges

We first had a little recap on what happened in the WG since 2024. The WG made a governance revision to adopt new objectives. A lot of the work and support was staying within the WG which was struggling to formalised and spread the knowledge built into it. Based on this analysis, a new governance was drafted and adopted to:

- Make the working group **more dynamic**, and focus on formalising and sharing their work

- Re-examine their **purpose** and **priorities** for 2025 and beyond

To work on the new topics, the WG has been divided into 3 subgroups each one focused on one of the following:

- **Action guides:** building and sharing best practices and practical tips on specific decarbonising actions.
  - There were challenges with this sub-group, as it was actually quite difficult to choose which kind of actions to reduce. Moreover, the group is aware of other ongoing similar initiatives (such as the [Climate Action Accelerator's](#)).
- **Specialized Workshop:** developing a **tailored workshop for aid sector**<sup>1</sup> to help raise awareness and build action plans in our countries of operation:
  - Based on the analysis that most tools that exist to this date to help with carbon footprint reduction are based on the Global North, there was a need to develop a workshop to correspond to their activities.



- This workshop enables the representation of emissions of a field, in a visual way and turns it into a role play where you have project managers, offices, technical expert which are trying to reduce the carbon emissions. In the end, it shows a graphic with the evolution of carbon footprint before and after the actions. Based on that, it's

possible to build an action plan!

- There are two main issues:
  - The time to customise the workshop
  - The technical knowledge needed to share and work on it
- With this tool, the WG targets the commitment of the field staff. They aim for the tool to be **widely used** (and want to develop supporting materials for facilitation).
- **Carbon footprint:** calculation and monitoring – technical internal information sharing and peer to peer technical support

The WG meetings enabled members to **share their internal progress and strategies** regarding these topics. They also provided opportunities to **hear from external actors**.

### 3. Objectives for 2025

The Carbon Working Group continued the presentation with the objectives for 2025, highlighting its main purpose: **to share the built knowledge from the WG to the global aid sector**. To this end, they will:

<sup>1</sup> Still in its development phase, the tool is based on the French workshop [Ma terre en 180 minutes](#)

- **Summarise and publish guidance** based on what the organisations have learned on the basics at the start of an organisation's carbon journey. It will include aspects such as the differences in the nature of the emission target (absolute or relative), which is an important aspect due to the consequences on the reduction strategy of such a choice.
- **Build a Carbon Toolkit.** The goal of this toolkit is to structure the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by equipping the members of any NGO. Considering the important number of tools made to calculate the emissions, it seems important to guide the NGOs towards the adapted tools for their needs. It's a very complex topic, and the NGOs don't have preexisting guidelines. It would include:
  - A clear **methodological framework** to guide organisations on their carbon accounting journey
  - **Lessons learned** from the NGOs engaged in the process since 2020 in this WG
  - **Tools and guidance** developed by members of the WG
- **Work on our reduction trajectories and targets.** The WG is currently questioning the commitment and objectives described into the [Statement of commitments of the humanitarian organisations for the climate](#). They are indeed hard to reach because of structural constraints and current economic troubles in the sector. They can also be seen as unfair<sup>2</sup>. As such, the WG is currently working on a revision of those targets. For more information, you can refer to the [REH webinar on the topic](#).
- **Keep peer-to-peer support and external guests.** Maintaining peer-to-peer support is crucial. The group will continue to share knowledge and collaborate with external guests to enhance their efforts and spread their findings.

#### 4. Audience participation on the working group's objectives

The audience has been asked about what else they would like to see from the working group. The main answers were:

- A guidance notes on how to apply PPP to spend data when using EF from particular country (e.g. Spend bases EF in the [Humanitarian Carbon Calculator](#) - are based on the macroeconomy of France)
- EF development or identification
- Defining a fair objective, taking climate justice into account
- How to choose a carbon accounting tool

#### 5. Challenges ahead

The WG has seen challenges in terms of reducing our carbon footprint into their own work and in the wider sector:

- **Funding needs** to finance NGO transition and initiatives both investment for organisations in low carbon solutions and for the various initiatives that the working group is planning (i.e. carbon toolkit)
- **HR needs:** impact of institutional aid cuts on dedicated staffs.
- **Carbon footprint calculation:** there are issues related to uncertainties, data quality, lack of specific EF and methodologies, particularly for countries in the Global South. There are efforts to address this issue: the ICRC and the Climate Action Accelerator (CAA) have [a life cycle assessment project](#) ongoing to better define emissions for specific humanitarian goods.
- **Resistance to change across the sector** to effectively reduce the carbon emissions – cultural changes are difficult and particularly on practices like flights for deployments. There are opportunities with the huge changes in our sector knowing that reducing our environmental footprint can potentially reduce costs.
- **Choice and prioritisation** of carbon reduction measures to focus the biggest impact.

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<sup>2</sup> More information in the ["A fair and equitable decarbonisation target for an international NGO"](#) report.

- **Availability and cost of low-carbon goods and equipment** can be limited depending on the context, the local suppliers rather the infrastructures to support that.

As we have seen, these challenges are coming from inside the global aid sector, meaning it process, habits and frameworks, as well as from outside of the sector, meaning the fundings, and the existence of eco-friendly goods and equipment.

**Q:** How do you see you work in relation to the HCC? Furthermore, the Climate Action Accelerator is already working on guideline on carbon calculation for humanitarian sector. They are trying to do what the Greenhouse Gas Protocol has done broadly but specifically for the humanitarian community. It's going to take a moment, but they're already conducting interviews.

**A:** There is probably a bias in the WG, as we began to work before the HCC, then we mostly don't use it, and it's difficult to switch from a tool to another. Some organisations don't have dedicated time or resources to the carbon computation, so they are using companies' pro bono services, who are often coming with their own tool.

But the point is not only about which tool to use, but also to understand the methodology and making a choice on it. The most difficult part after this choice is to effectively compute all the data. Moreover, organisations can follow different strategies, for example how to compute cash transfers. Different strategies mean different results. Then there are issues when comparing the carbon accounting results between organisations or within an organisation<sup>3</sup>.

Choosing a tool is just one of these questions, there are a lot of others. Even if some have been answered somewhere, gathering our observations in one place would be good for the sector. Having these conversations within the group is what lead us to the goal of developing a carbon toolkit!

**Q:** The HCC has a certain number of emission factors and it's difficult to find the emissions for a given product or service. Then it would really help to provide a database of many more emissions factors.

**A:** Indeed, it is something that may of us struggle with. There are some databases, but a lot of them you have to pay for, such as [climatig.io](https://climatig.io). It is definitely something that needs to be worked on!

**Q:** Carbon calculating is already a challenge. The second challenge we face is the use of these numbers. How to use it as data to drive a new strategy, rather than being completely nonplussed?

**A:** The challenge is indeed to define a way to monitor the carbon footprint with limited time and budget dedicated for it. Should we update the carbon footprint and do carbon accounting every year? Should we have a carbon accounting every 3 years? Then how to monitor our carbon emissions? Another idea could be to have a different methodology to do a small carbon accounting every year to have the main emission sources. Further, knowing that the percentage of carbon footprint we can influence is very low, it can be decided to focus on the easiest elements to reduce.

**Thank you all for joining, and if you have any questions, you can reach out to [carbone@environnementhumanitaire.org](mailto:carbone@environnementhumanitaire.org)**

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<sup>3</sup> More information is available on this topic in the [Follow-up report on the Statement of Commitment at year +3](#).