Climate Action Accelerator

ROADMAP FOR HALVING EMISSIONS IN THE HUMANITARIAN SECTOR BY 2030

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

JUNE 2024

VERSION 1.0 FOR STAKEHOLDERS' REVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A PRESSING NEED TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION

The climate emergency is one of the greatest challenges of our time and is recognised as an 'existential threat'[1] to human society.[2] More frequent extreme weather events, such as droughts, flooding, tropical storms, and heatwaves are a threat multiplier that can lead to displacements, migration, damage to essential infrastructure, disruption of food and water supplies, public health emergencies and favour the development of new conflicts.[3] Unfortunately, recent research shows that the situation is deteriorating much faster than initially thought, with cascading consequences at the global level.[4]

As stated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) earlier this year:

Climate change is a threat to human well-being and planetary health. There is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all. The choices and actions implemented in this decade will have impacts now and for thousands of years.[5]

The situation is extreme, but there is still a window of opportunity for all stakeholders in society to act within their sphere of responsibility on the triggers of this accelerating global warming.

Every day, in their work, humanitarian actors witness the mass suffering and intensifying inequalities caused by the combination of conflict, climate change and environmental degradation. Increasingly faced with the unprecedented challenges posed by climate-related disasters, **humanitarian organisations have committed to doing their part**. Indeed, alleviating and preventing human suffering is at the core of humanitarian action.

In recent years, major commitments have been made towards improving the way climate and environment are integrated into humanitarian action. Over 400 organisations have already signed the Climate and Environmental Charter for Humanitarian Organizations,[6] a foundational document that is also supported by 13 governments and funding agencies. For its part, the donor community has come together with a Humanitarian Aid Donor Declaration on Climate and Environment.[7] And, most recently, the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) produced a guidance document on Environmental Responsibility in Humanitarian Operations,[8] one of the first sector-wide policy frameworks for climate and environmental commitments. Taken together, this sends a strong signal that the humanitarian community is looking at climate as an emerging priority.

However, the humanitarian community is still unclear about the steps it needs to take to halve greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 on the way to Net Zero, in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement, and the IPCC's recommendations.[9]

IN OTHER WORDS: HOW DO WE GET FROM WHERE WE ARE TO WHERE WE NEED TO BE?

To intensify efforts, Climate Action Accelerator has developed a **Roadmap for Halving GHG Emissions in the Humanitarian Sector by 2030** to guide humanitarian actors towards meeting their own climate commitments while addressing both populations' needs and organisational risks in a world increasingly under pressure. Decarbonisation roadmaps have already been developed in many sectors of society. They represent a building block for rapid change and amplification by enabling organisations to take a strategic, principles-based and operational approach to emissions reduction.

This Sectoral Roadmap identifies decarbonisation pillars that have an impact on emissions from both humanitarian operations and programmes. By no means is it suggested that life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable populations across the world should be reduced for decarbonisation purposes.

Effective emissions reduction should not result in any reduction in the quality, quantity or timeliness of assistance, but rather explore ways to reinforce or maintain aid, while identifying low-carbon, sustainable, and resilient alternative options. By transforming themselves to operate within planetary boundaries, humanitarian actors will certainly face dilemmas but effectively strengthen their ability to meet greater assistance needs as energy and commodity costs continue to rise significantly in the future.

The Roadmap has three main sections: the 'sectoral analysis', which includes an analysis of the sector's emissions profile and trajectory, the 'operational playbook' for effective emissions reduction, and an analysis of how systemic actors, such as donors and the UN, can show leadership and enable change.

1. SECTORAL ANALYSIS

In collaboration with Arup, Climate Action Accelerator has conducted an initial analysis of GHG emissions in the humanitarian sector, identified decarbonisation levers, and formulated pillars for effective emissions reduction by 2030.

The initial estimate uses extrapolations from financial expenditure data from both OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS) and 'proxy organisations' who were selected based on their relevance and representativeness for different clusters. 2022 was chosen as the base year, as this hadmost updated data available). In order to shape a 2030 trajectory, growth projections for the period 2022-2030 were defined using a combination of methodologies, with the purpose of identifying trends for effective (or real activity) budget growth. Finally, decarbonisation levers were established to address the main sources of emissions. Given the significant data gaps, this analysis should be seen as a first iteration that will be improved as data availability and quality increases. The full methodology and its limitations are described in the 'Sectoral Analysis' chapter and invite future improvements.

HUMANITARIAN SECTOR EMISSIONS PROFILE, BASE YEAR 2022

In 2022, GHG emissions in the humanitarian sector amounted to ~ 35.3 MtCO2e (Mega tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent).

By comparison, **the carbon footprint of the National Health Service (NHS) in England** - the largest employer in the country, responsible for all public health services including hospitals and emergency services - was estimated to be **25 MtCo2e in 2019**.[10]

Although the humanitarian sector is relatively small as an economic sector, its emissions are **similar to a city of 4.6 million inhabitants in the European Union**[11] **when the consumption of all imported goods and services is included.** Therefore, they are significant. The emissions of large humanitarian organisations are in many ways comparable to those of major nation-wide public institutions or private multinational service companies.

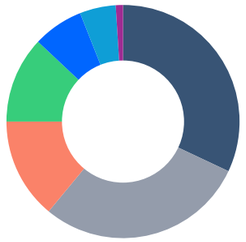


Figure 1: Sector emissions by nature, base year 2022

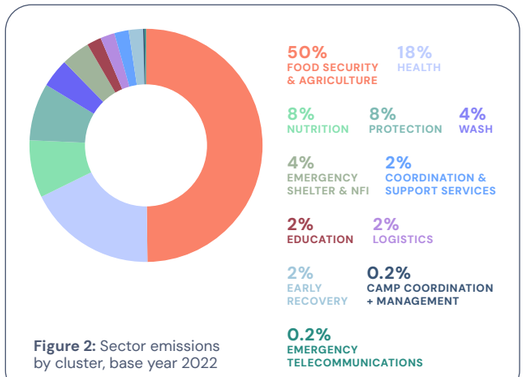


Figure 2: Sector emissions by cluster, base year 2022

Emissions from business travel, freight, and energy represent respectively to 7%, 12% and 5%, i.e. a quarter of the sector's emissions.

The vast majority of emissions (75%) came from procurement, including purchased goods, purchased services, and cash and voucher assistance (CVA). According to initial estimates, food items (cash and in-kind) represent 46% of total sector-wide emissions. **Emissions intensity was estimated at 0.90 kg CO2e/ EUR.**

Taken together, the Food Security and Agriculture, Health, Nutrition, Protection, WASH and Emergency Shelter and NFI clusters represented 80% of emissions in 2022.

In 2022, the Food Security and Agriculture (FSA) cluster contributed the largest proportion of emissions (50%), followed by Health (18%), Nutrition (8%), Protection (8%), WASH (4%), and Emergency Shelter and NFI (4%).

DECARBONISATION LEVERS APPLIED

To bend the emissions curve and achieve a 50% reduction by 2030 compared to the baseline year, a list of decarbonisation interventions may be applied to the established emissions baseline and BasU trajectory. Based on the Climate Action Accelerators' experience with its partners, the table below summarises the decarbonisation levers used in this analysis for trajectory modelling. Alternative combinations are possible and could be modellised, taking into account that reducing the ambition for one lever usually implies intensifying the target elsewhere to achieve the goal.

	Decarbonisation lever	Applied to	Emissions Category
1	Reduce energy consumption by 40%	All emissions sources captured in the "Energy" category	ENERGY
2	Replace 20% of electricity purchased from the grid with solar photovoltaic (PV) panels	"Electricity" sub-category within the "Energy" emissions categorisation	
3	Replace 80% of non-electricity and natural gas energy purchased (e.g., generator fuel) with solar PV	"Other" sub-category within the "Energy" emissions categorisation	
4	Reduce number of passenger-km travelled by 45%	All travel modes	TRAVEL
5	60% of travel flights to be booked on less carbon intensive flights (i.e., flights with 20% lower CO2e emissions than current flights)	Air travel	
6	Reduce energy consumption used in land travel (excluding rail travel) by 40%	Land travel (including rail travel and vehicle travel)	
7	Reallocate 35% of air freight to sea freight	Air freight and sea freight	TRANSPORT
8	Transition 60% of freight services to greener providers reducing emissions intensity of all freight services by 20%	All freight sub-categories	
9	Transition to greener procurement of goods and services, reducing the emissions intensity of all goods and services by 40%	Purchased goods; purchased services and capital goods	PROCUREMENT
10	Reduce indirect emissions associated with cash-based interventions/ disbursements by 30%.	Cash-based interventions/ disbursements	
11	Reduce excess goods purchased by 80%. (Excess goods are unnecessary orders that represent 10% of total expenditure.)	Purchased Goods	

Table 1: Decarbonisation levers

2030 TRAJECTORY

After decarbonisation levers and structural effects[12] are applied, the estimated amount of emissions in 2030 is **~ 20.3 MtCO2e**. This represents a 43% emissions reduction effort compared to 2022, meeting the sector's reduction goal in line with IPCC recommendations and the Paris Agreement. Emissions intensity would decrease to **0.46 kg CO2e/EUR in 2030** if the projected decarbonisation trajectory is applied.

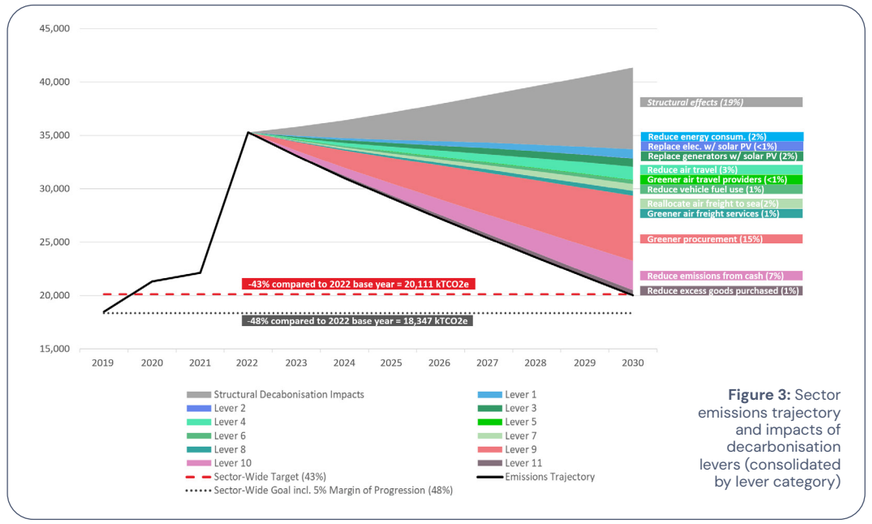


Figure 3: Sector emissions trajectory and impacts of decarbonisation levers (consolidated by lever category)

Like other sectors, the international humanitarian assistance sector faces a steep curve when it comes to halving emissions by 2030. **Meeting the -50% target will require timely, significant, decisive, and sustained transformation efforts across the sector.**

Firstly, the aim should be to act on emissions from energy, freight and travel as much as possible. Organisations control these sources of emissions directly and significant reductions can be achieved, with a fair degree of certainty, based on previous experience from across the humanitarian sector and beyond.

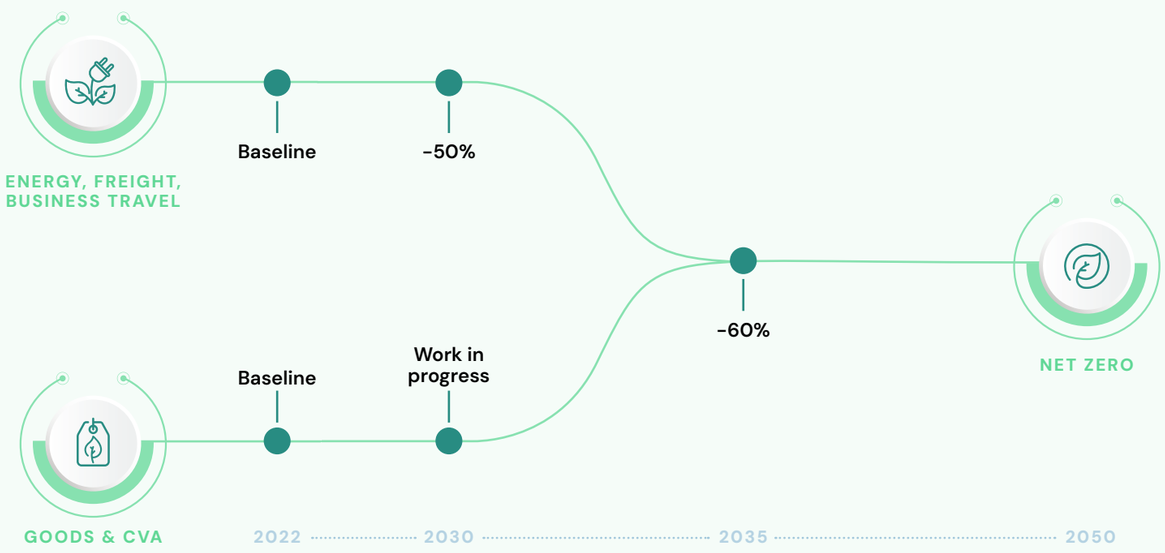
Then, considering that the procurement of goods and services represents the largest share of emissions (with emissions associated with food items representing over 50% of these), **urgent action is needed to reduce emissions from procurement, especially from food items**. There are significant opportunities to reduce these emissions, but the fact that organisations only have indirect control over them is an additional challenge. Several avenues should be explored: identifying low-carbon, resilient, sustainable alternative options to current items and suppliers, promoting local markets, privileging improved agricultural practices (e.g. agroecology, regenerative agriculture, etc.), and moving towards structural approaches working with the whole supply chain (e.g. producers, distributors, wholesalers, etc.). The composition of food rations may also evolve in certain cases, and products substituted when and where relevant, taking cultural habits into account as well as nutritional quality requirements (within the current WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP guidelines)[13].

Emissions associated with CVA consistently represent approximately a third of the sector's emissions, both in 2022 and 2030. These activities therefore need to be carefully taken into consideration to optimise the sector's decarbonisation potential. Further research involving both humanitarian actors and experts from outside the humanitarian sector are necessary to clarify the impact of CVA on the sector's emissions profile, and better articulate levers of action and possible trajectories going forward.

In the near future, **alternative modelling options** may also be developed, such as **dual-timeline trajectories** with a -50% reduction goal by 2030 for energy, freight and travel, and a -60% reduction goal by 2035 for emissions associated with the procurement of goods and services. This is to be further explored by Climate Action Accelerator.

- Decarbonisation levers directly under the control of organisations **(energy, travel, freight)** where increased efforts should be focused on to maximise their potential for emissions reduction over the next few years, strictly adhering to the target of -50% by 2030.
- **The procurement of goods and services** plus CVA will require longer-term preparation and effort as well as interaction with suppliers, beyond quick wins. In these areas, targets at sector level may have to be pushed further to 2035, but with a higher level of effort, potentially aiming for -60% by 2035 in order to stay within the required net zero trajectory.
- **Clear identification of emissions and methodology associated with CVA** to avoid possible bias in footprint reduction & operational decision-making.

DUAL TIMELINE MODELLING OPTION FOR HUMANITARIAN SECTOR EMISSIONS TRAJECTORY



2. OPERATIONAL PLAYBOOK FOR ORGANISATIONS

To reach the -50% goal by 2030, international humanitarian organisations need to significantly accelerate their emissions reduction efforts. They are looking for climate solutions and approaches that are relevant to their realities as humanitarians.

Based on its experience working with its partner organisations in the humanitarian sector since 2020, Climate Action Accelerator has developed a consistent, systematic, quantified, principles-based approach to effective emissions reduction. The operational 'Playbook', developed as part of the Roadmap, summarises concrete steps towards building a roadmap, identifies key solutions (actions with an impact on sources of emissions, such as litres of fuel, number of flights, etc.), and lists methodological tips, the co-benefits of climate solutions, and findings from financial impact assessments. It also includes good practices from across the sector and beyond.

PILLARS

Organisations are invited to follow four pillars to develop an effective emissions reduction strategy:

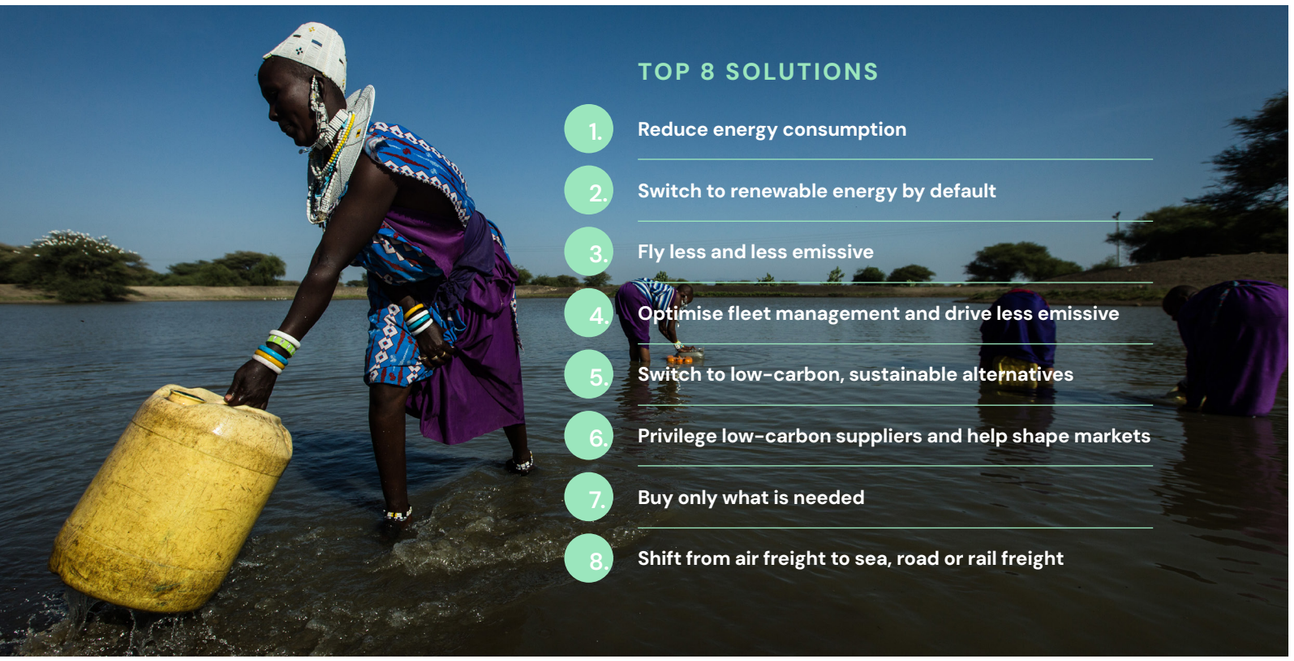
- **PILLAR 1: Adopting a principles-based approach to effective emissions reduction**
- **PILLAR 2: Focusing on the 'Top 8 solutions'**
- **PILLAR 3: Being a driver of change (transformation levers)**
- **PILLAR 4: Assessing the financial impact**

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE EMISSIONS REDUCTION

The Playbook includes a set of 'Guiding principles for effective emissions reduction', based on emerging best practice. Effective emissions reduction requires a multi-pronged approach. Promoting the use of guiding principles will help to spread best practice among humanitarian organisations. This will maximise the volume of emissions avoided and will pave the way for coordinated monitoring and reporting on emissions.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

1. **Take responsibility on what you control and can influence.**
2. **Engage in radical collaboration with others**.
3. **Reinforce or maintain humanitarian goals and principles,** i.e. restate the primacy of the humanitarian mission, maintaining the ability to provide timely and principled humanitarian assistance and to secure the quantity and quality of programmes delivered to the most vulnerable populations.
4. **Set quantified targets and milestones** for key sources of emissions, with the overall objective of reducing emissions by 50% by 2030.
5. **Exercise integrity,** e.g. GHG footprints should include all emissions (including scope 3), offsets should not be counted in carbon accounting, and the perimeter of activities should be as broad as possible.
6. **Commit to transparency,** e.g. monitor progress and publicly report on it.
7. **Favour integrated approaches to climate and environment**.
8. **Make the best use of resources, limiting consumption as and when relevant**.
9. **Embark your community**.



ROADMAP IMPLEMENTATION

Rapid change is part of the DNA of the humanitarian sector. The average duration of a project is often between 4 to 7 years based on our experience with partners. This means that an organisation's entire portfolio of activities can be renewed within a relatively short period of time. Though the curve for halving emissions by 2030 is particularly steep, this **potential for rapid transformation** is good news.

With this in mind, **operational humanitarian organisations are encouraged to adopt 'implementation principles'**, such as:

- **Optimising each investment opportunity,** especially in new projects, new infrastructure, planned rehabilitations, and exploiting opportunities linked to the renewal of goods and services contracts.
- **Identifying and prioritising 'hotspots',** meaning countries/projects where GHG emissions are the highest, and where the organisation's presence is due to continue for 3 to 5 years. In these 'hotspots', energy, fleet, procurement, and freight significantly impact the carbon footprint.
- **Systematically integrating climate and environmental strategies into programme design,** planning, and financing cycles.

FINANCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The final section of the Playbook provides an approach to assessing **the financial implications of climate and environmental roadmaps**, so that organisations can put the resources needed to succeed in place.

The approach is based on the same methodology used by Climate Action Accelerator with its partner organisations. It provides a high-level estimate of the cost of implementing measures over seven years. This should not be seen as a budget, but rather as a financial viability estimate designed to inform decisions by executives and boards committing their organisation to ambitious plans.

According to consolidated data from Climate Action Accelerator's partners,[15] the cost of implementing decarbonisation roadmaps can be estimated as follows (exclusive of staff costs and local environmental degradation solutions; averages, in percentage of an organisation's yearly budget):

- **Net financial impact** of implementing a decarbonisation roadmap: 0.09%
- **Running costs:** 1.02%, mainly driven by greener purchasing solutions (freight, general purchases)
- **Investments:** 0.58%, mainly driven by energy saving measures, solar energy and environmental solutions
- **Savings:** 1.52%, mainly from transport solutions (air travel and freight), and energy solutions.

Though it is not insignificant, the cost of implementing decarbonisation strategies, spread over a seven-year period, is relatively limited. In any case, it is not higher than the budgets allocated to various organisational initiatives over the past decades (IT, human resource policies, etc.). The inclusion of complementary solutions addressing local environmental degradation beyond the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions leads to additional costs that are naturally integrated in the development of comprehensive roadmaps with ambitions beyond strict decarbonisation efforts.

ABATEMENT CURVE

The abatement curve captures the GHG impact of the main decarbonation levers (blue line), as well as the cumulated financial impact of implementing them (green line).

- Solutions related to **travel, freight, and fleet** generate 0.38%, 0.22% and 0.07% of savings while representing 33% of emissions reduction efforts.
- **Energy solutions** represent an average net cost of 0.06% (energy savings) and 0.13% (renewable energy), and, on average, represent 22% of the internal GHG reduction effort. These solutions ultimately generate savings, sometimes as early as in year 5. Early investments will provide early savings and increased GHG emission reductions.
- Solutions related to the **'procurement of goods'** are the costliest at 0.53% of the yearly budget, but also have the largest GHG reduction impact, averaging 36% of the internal effort.

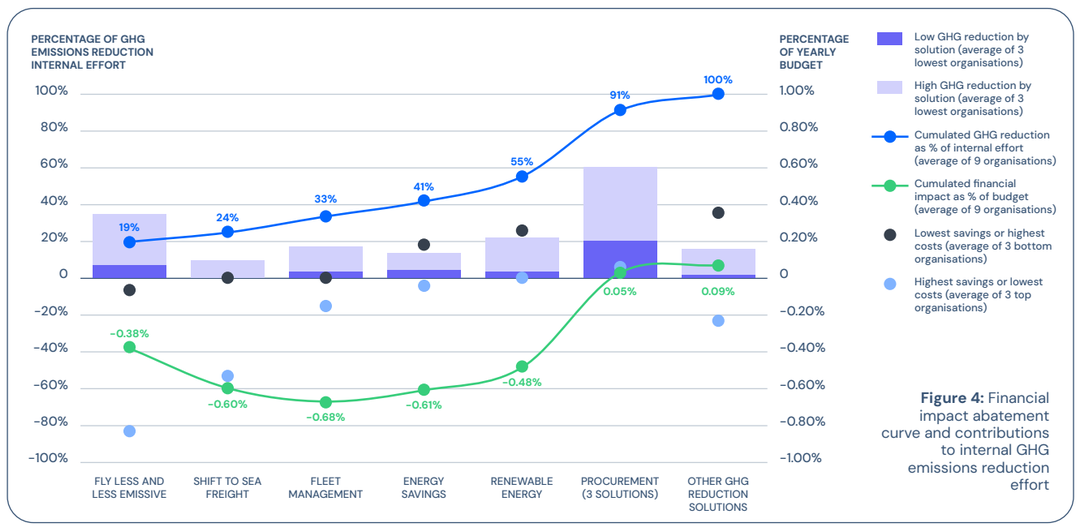


Figure 4: Financial impact abatement curve and contributions to internal GHG emissions reduction effort

3. ENABLING CHANGE

Beyond the efforts that each humanitarian organisation should make at their own level, sector-wide transformation levers should also be looked at. Actors with a systemic reach or influence on the humanitarian sector, such as donors, UN entities, and large humanitarian organisations, could play a crucial role in enabling the sector to transform at the necessary pace and scale to address climate challenges. They could 'lead the way' by engaging in emissions reduction efforts for their own operations and programme portfolios, while helping to shape ambitious policy, coordination, and funding frameworks.

HUMANITARIAN DONORS

The humanitarian donor community has shown how important it considers climate change to be through the commitments it has made in the Humanitarian Aid Donors' Declaration on Climate and Environment[16] (2022). This declaration paved the way for greater integration of climate and environment in donors' partnerships frameworks. Two years later, the momentum is still growing, and several funding agencies have reported significant progress.[17] For instance, in 2023, DG ECHO released Minimum Environmental Requirements and Recommendations for EU-Funded Humanitarian Aid Operations (MERR).[18] Moreover, donors increasingly allow climate- and environment-related costs to be integrated into current funding frameworks. Increased coordination within the donor community also means that expectations placed on partner organisations will hopefully become more streamlined, leading to greater consistency within the sector.

These are important steps, but donors still need to increase their efforts. In particular, they could adopt a **three-tiered approach combining a mixture of requirements/incentives, funding, and capacity building**. This would increase opportunities for partner organisations to fund climate measures through project-based funds. Donors should also help their partners more to gain **access to alternative funding streams** either from the private sector (private banks, social investors), development agencies or banks. They should also help to increase the availability of climate funds for humanitarian action (e.g. from the Green Climate Fund). Finally, donors and organisations should explore the possibility of creating a Multipartner trust fund (MPTF) to increase the funding available for organisations' climate transformation, with a focus on smaller and local organisations.

UNITED NATIONS (UN) ENTITIES

Other systemic actors in the humanitarian sector include UN entities (UN humanitarian agencies and the UN Secretariat), who have consistently channelled 50% of international humanitarian assistance in recent years. UN entities are among the largest humanitarian operators (in food aid, CVA, displacement, etc.), and play a central role in policymaking, coordination, and funding.

It is therefore clear that there will be no profound, radical and steady climate transformation in the humanitarian sector without the UN being on board and steering the way.

Despite the encouraging recent efforts by a few UN humanitarian agencies, such as the WFP, the UNHCR or UNICEF, UN-wide frameworks urgently need to be improved in order to match emerging best practice and standards in line with IPCC recommendations and the GHG Protocol. Although this is gradually changing, the fact that emissions from procurement and funded programmes are not yet systematically accounted for or monitored across the UN system is highly problematic. Likewise, UN practices based on the abundant use of carbon offsets to claim carbon neutrality performance are detrimental to maximising emissions reduction and achieving the 50% reduction goal by 2030, in line with the Paris Agreement.

Donors need to encourage their UN partners more forcefully to develop ambitious emissions reduction approaches in accordance with established, science-based frameworks. These issues should be systematically integrated into their strategic dialogue, including practical milestones, monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

4. GOING FORWARD

In the context of a deteriorating climate emergency, humanitarian actors have a window of opportunity to do their part to contain global warming well below 2°C. However, this window is getting narrower, and **humanitarians are faced with two challenges:**

How do they increase support to communities without contributing further to the climate crisis due to their emissions-intensive operational model? And how do they strengthen the resilience of their organisations and their ability to operate while mitigating the risks related to rising fossil fuel and commodity costs?

RECONNECTING DECARBONISATION STRATEGIES TO HUMANITARIAN ACTION

In a context of rising fossil fuel prices and staggering inflation, effective emissions reduction plans can significantly increase organisational resilience and adaptation. This should be seen as part of a **comprehensive transformation effort, and a condition of being able to operate successfully in the future,** in the interests of people, the planet and humanitarian organisations. In an increasingly constrained world, implementing climate solutions helps to improve the quality of humanitarian activities, while upholding the 'Do No Harm' principle. It also increases organisations' ability to prepare for and respond to current and future humanitarian needs.

Though **climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience** are often simplified as separate silos, in practice the solutions proposed in the Roadmap generally converge in strengthening all of them simultaneously. Several measures introduced also overlap directly with the humanitarian sector's global agenda and the Grand Bargain, notably accelerating greater localisation, and reinforcing national capacities and the nexus with development, which, along with the climate emergency, are major policy drivers in the field of international assistance.

ENGAGING IN RADICAL COLLABORATION EFFORTS

Effective emissions reduction will require radical collaboration between all actors, both within the sector and beyond. **Areas of collaboration should include** (but are not limited to):

- **Developing a 'Strategic Supply Alliance' or coalitions** that would help to speak with one voice to key markets and suppliers, sending consistent market signals, clarifying expectations and principles, and building a constructive engagement strategy going forward in greater synergy with advanced industry and manufacturers' efforts to decarbonise.
- **Supporting innovative, pilot and/or research projects** to identify low-carbon, sustainable alternative options in construction, food aid, health, etc.
- **Setting-up a sector-wide data collection, consolidation and monitoring mechanism/ framework.** This could take the form of a 'data observatory' and would build on progress made through the creation and expansion of the Humanitarian Carbon Calculator (HCC). Collaboration and partnerships should be sought with relevant agencies and stakeholders (e.g. the IASC, the Climate Charter Secretariat and OCHA), and with existing mechanisms.
- **Establishing a method to estimate the emissions associated with CVA,** and levers for indirect emissions reduction, using a collaborative approach and consulting experts from outside the humanitarian sector.

Radical transformation has started. Let us join efforts now to make it happen in the humanitarian sector!

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

TO ALL HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

SHAPE, UTILISE AND PROMOTE A MORE STRATEGIC NARRATIVE ON CLIMATE ACTION IN THE HUMANITARIAN SECTOR,

acknowledging the extreme urgency of the climate crisis, highlighting the co-benefits of climate strategies for organisations and local communities, emphasising climate action as a programmatic priority for frontline responders and promoting integrated approaches combining mitigation, adaptation and resilience. Such a narrative should systematically be used to frame sector-wide strategic and policy frameworks, while galvanising the operationalisation of climate commitments by individual humanitarian organisations.

TAKE URGENT ACTION TOWARDS REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG) EMISSIONS

from both organisations' own operations and programmes and those of implementing partners, using the Paris Agreement goal and IPCC call for action to halve emissions by 2030 as a target. To that end, all humanitarian organisations should develop carbon footprint reports, set quantitative targets and milestones for emissions reduction, define implementation plans, and monitor and report on progress.[19]

ADOPT, IMPLEMENT AND PROMOTE A PRINCIPLES-BASED APPROACH TO EMISSIONS REDUCTION

in line with international standards from the GHG Protocol[20], recommendations from the latest IPCC report (2023)[21], as well as Climate Action Accelerator's 'Guiding principles for effective emissions reduction in the humanitarian sector'. All direct and indirect emissions from programme activities should be accounted for, and offsets should not be included in the emissions reduction calculation.

URGENTLY SCALE-UP CLIMATE SOLUTIONS,

focusing your action on the "Top 8 solutions" for effective emissions reduction identified by Climate Action Accelerator:

1. Reduce energy consumption
2. Switch to renewable energy by default
3. Fly less and less emissive
4. Optimise fleet management and drive less emissive
5. Switch to low-carbon, sustainable alternatives
6. Privilege low-carbon suppliers and contribute to shape markets
7. Buy only what is needed
8. Shift from air freight to maritime, road and train freight

Donors and grant-making organisations should adjust their financial and technical support accordingly.

PRIORITISE DECARBONISATION LEVERS WHICH HAVE THE GREATEST CAPACITY TO HELP ACHIEVE THE -50% TARGET

- **Deploy at pace and scale decarbonisation levers** under the direct control of organisations, e.g. those related to energy, business travel, fleet, and freight.
- **Invest decisively in solutions for emissions reduction from the 'Procurement of Goods and Services',** focusing on highly emissive items, including food and non-food items, and integrating environmental and climate criteria into procurement policies, making the most climate-friendly choices possible. Given that food items represent 59% of the total emissions from the procurement of goods and services, identifying less emissive food procurement options should be a top priority for organisations individually and an area of collaboration and transformation for the whole sector.

INVEST IN AREAS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION, AND DEVELOP THE COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES NEEDED TO OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES OR GAPS.

- **Collaborate towards the creation of a 'Strategic Supply Alliance'** or coalitions that will help to speak with one voice to key markets and suppliers, sending consistent market signals, clarifying expectations and principles, and building a constructive engagement strategy going forward.
- **Define acceptable methodological avenues for estimating emissions associated with Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA),** and identify levers for indirect emissions reduction, for instance through adjusting programme design and privileging when possible purchases towards low-carbon, sustainable suppliers and items.
- **Foster the identification of low-carbon and sustainable alternative options** by supporting innovative, pilot and/or research projects exploring technical and programmatic alternatives relevant to the humanitarian sector (e.g. in construction, food aid, health, etc.).
- **Set up a sectoral data collection, consolidation and monitoring mechanism/framework.** This could take the form of a 'data observatory' and would build on progress made through the creation and expansion of the Humanitarian Carbon Calculator (HCC). Collaboration and partnerships should be sought with relevant agencies and stakeholders (e.g. the IASC, the Climate Charter Secretariat, and OCHA), and with existing mechanisms.

ENHANCE INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE STEWARDSHIP STEERING EMISSIONS REDUCTION IN THE HUMANITARIAN SECTOR.

- **Leadership is critical to establishing climate and environment as a priority.** At the sectoral level, a dedicated leadership group/community of senior managers could be established to foster unity of vision and send a signal to galvanise climate action among humanitarian actors.

PROVIDE BETTER FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO ALLOW LOCAL AND NATIONAL ACTORS (LNAs) TO MAKE THE TRANSITION TO MORE RESILIENT, SUSTAINABLE AND LOW-CARBON MODUS OPERANDI.

LNAs are on the frontline in terms of responding to the consequences of climate change and supporting communities, and, as such, have developed innovative ways to integrate climate and environment into their operations and programming in recent decades. While the emphasis of decarbonisation efforts should mainly be on international humanitarian actors (UN, INGOs, donors) who are responsible for the majority of the footprint, local actors need support to continue to operate and grow in a low-carbon, sustainable and resilient way. This is even more crucial as the role of local actors in the delivery of humanitarian assistance is due to increase in the coming years, in line with the sector's localisation commitments.[23]

- **Increase access and availability of funding opportunities** for LNAs by simplifying administrative and technical requirements. Local NGOs should be able to mainstream climate and environmental measures into project budgets.
- When funds are channelled through international partners who are not directly implementing programmes, **ensure that the overhead costs are transferred to LNAs.**
- Enable the transition of LNAs towards more resilient, sustainable and low-carbon models through **capacity building, technical support and adequate training** (both in terms of technical-operational issues and raising awareness about climate change).
- **Include more environmental stewardship in the partnerships and sub-grants** that international organisations develop with local responders, including by facilitating access to local/regional platforms that provide support and solutions, jointly exploring innovations, developing awareness-raising tools with communities, etc.
- **Support initiatives to share lessons, best practice and knowledge** among humanitarian organisations, including local organisations, who have been developing innovative approaches to climate and the environment for decades as a matter of immediate necessity.
- Make sure that **the links between the 'greening' and 'localisation' agendas** are highlighted in key strategic and decision-making platforms (e.g. Grand Bargain, IASC, etc.), along with the central role of local actors in accelerating the humanitarian sector's climate transformation.

TO UNITED NATIONS ENTITIES

Given UN entities consistently channel around 50% of international humanitarian assistance funding, there can be no radical climate transformation of the humanitarian sector and no achievement of the 50% reduction target without UN humanitarian entities and the UN Secretariat steering the way:

1. **ALIGN UN SYSTEM CLIMATE FRAMEWORKS WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND PRACTICES,**
   in particular, upgrade the "Greening the Blue" reporting and monitoring framework so that it integrates emissions from all three scopes, e.g. direct and indirect emissions, covering the full perimeter of activities. This means that the 'boundaries' established in the context of the UN's Climate Neutral Strategy in 2007 will need to be updated and expanded.

2. **UPDATE AND CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS WITH REGARDS TO THE USE OF CARBON OFFSETTING**
   and establish that carbon offsetting should not be included in carbon accounting and in claims to organisational carbon neutrality. Entities in the UN system should be able to use a common quality standard (e.g. giving priority to high integrity offsets alongside ISO net zero guidelines.[24,25]

3. **EXERT LEADERSHIP AT THE SECTORAL LEVEL AND INFLUENCE IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS' PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION,**
   ensuring that UN entities apply ambitious climate and environmental impact reduction plans for themselves, while supporting, enabling, and incentivising their sub-grantees to do the same.

4. **LEAD THE WAY TO REDUCE EMISSIONS FROM HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING,**
   especially emissions associated with (but not limited to) food aid and CVA.

5. **INCLUDE STRONGER ENVIRONMENT- AND CLIMATE-RELATED EXPECTATIONS IN UN-MANAGED POOLED FUNDS,**
   in particular within Country-based Pool Funds (CBPF), the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and Flash Appeals.

TO DONORS

Donors have a central role to play to enable and incentivise their implementing partners' transformation. A growing number of funding agencies are (individually and collectively) moving towards clarifying their expectations in terms of climate and the environment. However, this is only the beginning of the journey, as donors could further develop their capacity to financially and technically support and guide their partners. **Donors should:**

FIRST AND FOREMOST, INVEST IN OPERATIONALISING THEIR OWN CLIMATE COMMITMENTS,

taking action towards reducing the climate and environmental impact of their own operations and portfolios, while building their internal capacity in terms of climate and environmental matters.

ADOPT A PHASED, THREE-TIERED APPROACH THAT COMBINES REQUIREMENTS/INCENTIVES, FINANCIAL SUPPORT, AND CAPACITY BUILDING

for their implementing partners. Establishing upfront climate and environmental requirements while allowing a fair and gradual transition phase before they are fully applied could be used as an incentive to encourage organisations to initiate or deepen their climate and environmental efforts.

ADJUST CURRENT HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FRAMEWORKS

to integrate climate and environmental measures into project grants (mainstreaming), recognising that these measures ultimately contribute to developing more efficient and qualitative project execution and delivery.

CONSIDER EMISSIONS REDUCTION FROM HUMANITARIAN SUPPLY CHAINS AS A TOP PRIORITY

for financial and technical support - there is an urgent need to adapt donor procurement technical guidelines to clarify purchasing criteria and priorities for partner organisations.

ENSURE THAT THE EXPECTATIONS OF UN AGENCIES ARE CONSISTENT

with those of international NGOs, and are based on the same guiding principles.

ENABLE PARTNERS' ACCESS TO ALTERNATIVE FUNDING STREAMS,

including development banks, private banking and social investors (e.g. the possibility to charge interest and repayments from private loans as recurring costs within humanitarian grants).

EXPLORE THE FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING A MULTI-PARTNER TRUST FUND (MPTF)

to support a variety of NGO partners, especially smaller and local NGOs, in their climate transformation efforts. Consider using the administrative framework of an existing entity or fund to host this MTPF. The administrative operations of the fund should be both robust and easily accessible, with relatively short timeframes for funding allocation.

ACTIVELY ADVOCATE FOR THE INTEGRATION OF A PRINCIPLES-BASED APPROACH TO IMPACT REDUCTION INTO KEY INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN FRAMEWORKS

guiding donors' funding priorities and grant-making models such as the annual Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs), the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) the Sphere Standards, the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative, the Grand Bargain priorities, and IASC guidance on the climate and the environment in humanitarian response.

TO HUMANITARIAN ORGANISATIONS

Humanitarian organisations have several key advantages in terms of advancing ambitious emissions reduction strategies. In particular, the frequent renewal of humanitarian projects in the field provides a crucial opportunity to introduce adapted, sustainable practices. Managers may mobilise internal resources, define and implement roadmaps and deploy climate solutions at scale in their different programmes and offices. They should also strategically engage staff, partners, policy- and decision-makers, suppliers, and public and private donors to accelerate their climate transformation.

TAKE URGENT ACTION TOWARDS REDUCING GHG EMISSIONS FROM OWN OPERATIONS AND PROGRAMMATIC PORTFOLIO WITH THE AIM OF REACHING THE PARIS AGREEMENT GOAL OF HALVING EMISSIONS BY 2030.

- As much as possible, **mobilise internal resources for impact reduction strategies to complement support from institutional donors.** In a context of increasing humanitarian needs and pressure on available funding, investing in emissions reduction measures in certain areas could lead to savings within a relatively short timeframe (3 to 5 years), and make systems and processes more efficient. These are therefore to be prioritised for both climate specific and financial/efficiency reasons.
- **Assess the financial impact of the key impact reduction measures identified,** including running costs, staffing, and investments, as well as potential savings generated. This will inform planning and decision-making.
- **Develop key performance indicators on climate and environment** to allow transparent and accountable monitoring of progress towards the implementation of climate strategies.
- Large operational and grant-making organisations should **provide technical guidance and dedicated financial support** directly to partners.

SYSTEMATICALLY INTEGRATE CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT INTO FUNDING STRATEGIES AND DONOR DIALOGUE.

- Mainstream climate and environmental action in grant requests for new projects and investments.
- Systematically integrate climate and environmental strategies into high-level dialogue with institutional donors, making transformation needs explicit, as well as emphasising the added value (programmatically, financially, strategically) of such a transformation.
- Make sure that climate and environmental actions are mainstreamed into grant requests for new projects and investments and make sure to engage donors on climate and environmental long term needs and strategies.

HELP LOCAL AND NATIONAL ACTORS TO ACCESS TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT,

allowing them to develop resilient, low-carbon, sustainable operating models. This will require a combination of climate and environmental stewardship, greater localisation, support to better accessing funding opportunities, redistribution overhead costs equitably, and increasing their capacity to administer project grants.

ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE PEERS, NETWORK AND PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

to adopt a principles-based approach to reducing their carbon and environmental footprint, and to mobilise their networks, staff, and partners.

BE READY TO ENGAGE IN RADICAL COLLABORATION EFFORTS WITHIN THE HUMANITARIAN SECTOR AND ACROSS SECTORS,

for example, in relation to carbon data and footprint measurement, technical-operational innovation, and supplier engagement. Remain committed to sharing knowledge and insights to help shape people-centred, climate-resilient and sustainable operations, in keeping with the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations.

END NOTES

1. In recent years, not only climate scientists but also world leaders including the UN Secretary General and the US Secretary of Defense, qualified climate change as "an existential threat to humanity".
2. W.J. Ripple et al., "World Scientists' Warning of a Climate Emergency," BioScience, Oxford University Press, 2020, pp. 8-12, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26891410, (Accessed 28 May 2024).
3. Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change, "Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability,"2022, p. 9, https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FullReport.pdf, (Accessed 28 May 2024).
4. C. Cookson, "Antarctica's staggering exposure to climate change worsens global threat," Financial Times, 2023, https://www.ft.com/content/5e76a2ec-f610-4772-9df9-c68530c1429e, (Accessed 28 May 2024).
5. IPCC, "AR6 Synthesis Report 2023," 2023, https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/, (Accessed 28 May 2024).
6. "The Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations," 2024, https://www.climate-charter.org/, (Accessed 28 May 2024).
7. "Humanitarian Aid Donor's Declaration on Climate and Environment," 2022, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/climate-change-and-environment/humanitarian-aid-donors-declaration-climate-and-environment_en, (Accessed 28 May 2024).
8. IASC, "Guidance on Environmental Responsibility in Humanitarian Operations," IASC OPAG, 2023, https://www.icvanetwork.org/uploads/2023/11/IASC-Guidance-Environmental-Responsibility-in-Humanitarian-Operations-20231005.pdf, (Accessed 28 May 2024).
9. IPCC, " AR6 2023 report", 2023, https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-cycle/, (Accessed 29 May 2024).
10. I. Tennison, S. Roschnik, B. Ashby, et al., "Health Care's response to Climate Change: a carbon footprint assessment of the NHS in England," The Lancet, 2021, https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(20)30271-0/fulltext, (Accessed 28 May 2024).
11. In the EU, the average intensity per capital amounts to 7.6 tCO2eq as per 'Our World in Data' https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/co-emissions-per-capita, (Accessed 28 May 2024).
12. The model integrates structural effects that reduce emission intensity over time, such as environmental improvements expected to take place because of the underlying decarbonisation of the world market and energy systems. Various factors, such as technological progress, infrastructure improvements, and legislative changes influence the composition of countries' energy mix towards less carbon-intensive sources. The approach chosen by Climate Action Accelerator leverages International Energy Agency (IEA) data for historical, projected and required emissions reduction for different levels.
13. "Food and Nutrition Needs and Emergencies", UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/68660/a83743.pdf?sequence=1, (Accessed 5 June 2024).
14. 'Effective emissions reduction' refers to targeted approaches that aim to minimise the GHG emissions produced by an organisation or a sector with a view to reaching the Paris Agreement goal of halving GHG emissions by 2030. A 'quantified approach' uses quantitative targets, implementation plans, and monitoring and reporting frameworks. It ensures that all emissions – whether direct or indirect – are accounted for and does not include offsetting in carbon accounting.
15. For the purpose of this analysis, Climate Action Accelerator used data from nine humanitarian organisations which have developed Climate and Environmental roadmaps, including financial impact assessments, using Climate Action Accelerator's approach and support.
16. "Humanitarian Aid Donors' Declaration on Climate and Environment", 2022, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/humanitarian-aid/climate-change-and-environment/humanitarian-aid-donors-declaration-climate-and-environment_en, (Accessed 5 June 2024).
17. "Operationalizing and scaling-up Donors' Climate and Environmental Commitments : an analysis of progress, gaps and opportunities", Joint Initiative & Climate Action Accelerator, 2022, https://climateactionaccelerator.org/donors-climate-and-environmental-commitments/, (Accessed 5 June 2024).
18. DG ECHO, "Guidance on the operationalization of Minimum Environmental Requirements and recommendations for EU-funded humanitarian aid operations," https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f6d2240b-2d94-11ed-975d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en, (Accessed 28 May 2024).
19. IASC, "Guidance on environmental responsibility in humanitarian operations", 2023, https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/IASC%20Guidance%20on%20Environmental%20Responsibility%20in%20Humanitarian%20Operations.pdf, (Accessed 5 June 2024).
20. "Greenhouse Gas emissions protocol", https://ghgprotocol.org, (Accessed 5 June 2024).
21. IPPC, "AR6 Synthesis Report : Climate Change 2023, 2023, https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-cycle/, (Accessed 5 June 2024).
22. "Guiding Principles for Effective Emissions Reduction", Climate Action Accelerator, 2024 https://climateactionaccelerator.org/humanitarian-decarbonisation-roadmap, (Accessed 5 June 2024).
23. Achieve by 2020 a global, aggregated target of at least 25% of humanitarian funding to local and national responders as directly as possible to improve outcomes for affected people and reduce transaction costs. IFRC, "GB Localisation," https://gblocalisation.ifrc.org, (Accessed 28 May 2024).
24. ISO, "Zet zero guideline" 2022, https://www.iso.org/netzero, (Accessed 5 June 2024).
25. "Synthesis paper: The illusion of carbon offsets in achieving our goals", Climate Action Accelerator, https://climateactionaccelerator.org/carbon-offsetting/, (Accessed 5 June 2024).

Climate Action
Accelerator

ROADMAP FOR HALVING EMISSIONS IN THE HUMANITARIAN SECTOR BY 2030

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

climateactionaccelerator.org

linkedin.com/company/theclimateactionaccelerator

instagram.com/climateactionaccelerator

twitter.com/TheCAA_Geneva

CONTACT US :

2 Chemin des mines, 1202 Genève
contact@climateactionaccelerator.org