



Climate Action  
**Accelerator**

# Guiding principles

for greenhouse gas emissions  
reduction in humanitarian  
organisations

MAY 2024







# Harmonisation leading to effective emissions reduction plans

Adopting and implementing a common set of principles allows emissions reduction strategies to be more consistent and effective. It means that organisations can:

- **Adopt standardised frameworks** for measuring and reducing GHG emissions.

- **Align their practices with international standards and best practices** (GHG protocol, IPCC, etc.).

- **Benefit from the related methodological guidance**, adapted to the specific challenges of the sector.

- **Assess the volume and nature of GHG emissions**, thereby providing solid grounds for emissions reduction plans.

- **Improve data quality**, and engage in coordinated data collection and monitoring efforts

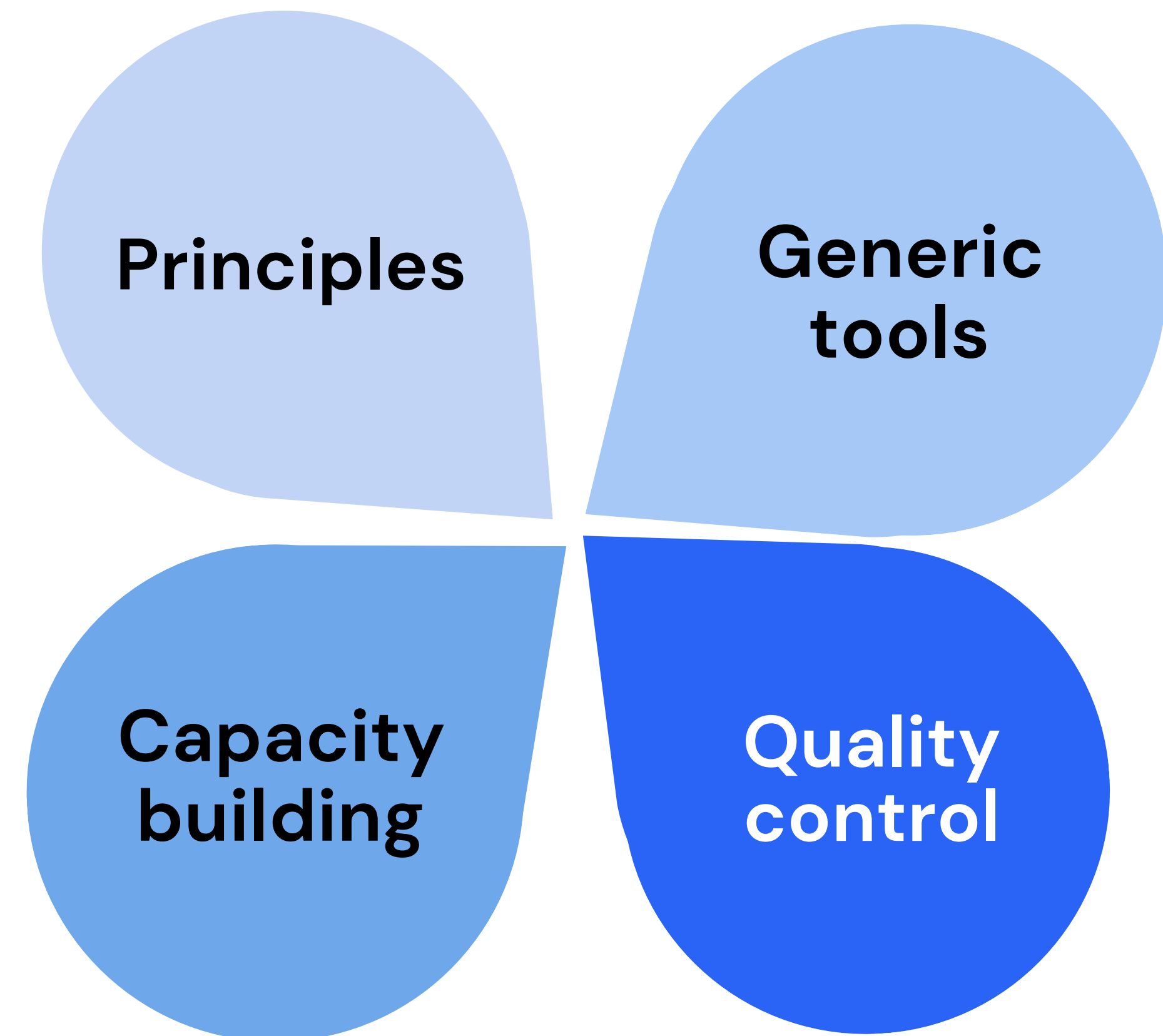
- **Operationalise the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations** (Commitment #2 on impact reduction and #5 on collaboration).



# A compass for acceleration

Effective emissions reduction requires a multi-pronged approach.

Promoting the use of guiding principles will help to spread best practice across humanitarian organisations. This will maximise the volume of emissions avoided and will pave the way for coordinated monitoring and reporting on emissions.







# Principles





# 1. Take responsibility on what you control and can influence

- Take immediate leadership and action wherever it is in the power of humanitarian organisations and donors to do so.
- Try to influence others within their networks and suppliers to do the same.





## 2. Engage in radical collaboration with others

Engage in radical collaboration to learn from others inside and beyond the humanitarian sector, in particular local, national and international actors, but also public institutions and private businesses engaged in a similar effort. This may include technical partnerships to access in-depth knowledge and experience on a given subject; operational partnerships to accelerate the deployment of solutions; or strategic alliances to create communities of action.

**Remain committed** as highlighted in the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organisations, to openly share the knowledge and insights that will contribute to the development of people-centred, climate-resilient and sustainable operations.





### 3. Reinforce or maintain social goals and humanitarian principles

Reducing GHG emissions by 50% **should not compromise organisations' ability to deliver** people-centred humanitarian assistance according to their goals and mandate:

- Maintaining their ability to **provide timely and principled** humanitarian assistance.

- Securing the **quantity and quality of their programmes**.

- Confirming their adherence to humanitarian principles, especially the '**Do No Harm**' principle.

- Reducing emissions brings **co-benefits** for more effective humanitarian assistance.

- Being aware of overlaps with the global humanitarian agenda (Localization, Grand Bargain, Triple Nexus).

**It's about changing how organisations do things – by operating within planetary boundaries, not what they do.**





## 4. Set quantified targets and milestones

Each organisation should commit to **halving GHG emissions by 2030 on a path to net zero and adopting specific quantified targets for each source of emissions**:

- Calculate and monitor the carbon footprint.

- Define reduction targets in absolute terms. Base targets on identified solutions and actions for the main sources of emissions.

- Formulate effective reduction plans.

- Set quantified intermediary milestones on the way to 2030 and beyond.

By adopting quantified, science-based targets and best practice from the private sector, such as the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi), they will contribute to bringing the humanitarian sector to operate within planetary limits, in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement and the recommendations of the IPCC.

Guiding principles for GHG emissions reduction in humanitarian organisations

## 5. Exercise integrity

- Comply with GHG Protocol standards.

- Include scopes 1, 2, and 3 in targets for GHG emissions reduction, which notably means that indirect emissions from the supply chain or use of distributed items are included.

- Take into consideration the full operational perimeter of their activities, including programmes delegated to or implemented by partners.

- Do not count carbon offsetting as a reduction in carbon accounting or claim to 'carbon neutrality' at the level of an organisation. If utilised, it should be viewed as a separate investment funding projects that may contribute to global carbon neutrality. Organisations who invest in carbon offsetting projects should ensure that these **are socially and environmentally responsible**, that they comply with the principle of 'Do No Harm' and that they meet the highest quality standards in terms of accountability.





## 6. Commit to transparency

Monitor and report on emissions annually, including progress made against target – data quality should improve with time and inform more precise mitigation and adaptation actions.

Share data publicly, especially with international and local partners, donors, and local communities.



## 7. Favour integrated approaches to climate and environment

Taking into account the various planetary boundaries:

Promote **integrated approaches** that have a positive impact on biodiversity and the local environment, notably air, water and soil quality.

Ensure that climate solutions and actions **do no harm to the environment or limit harm at a minimal level**.

Favour solutions that **simultaneously address adaptation, resilience and mitigation** challenges and bear multiple co-benefits for affected populations and organisations.





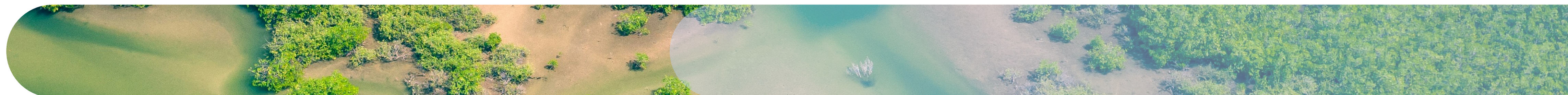
## 8. Make the best use of resources, limiting consumption as and when relevant

Considering the primacy of delivering qualitative, effective humanitarian assistance, but also the extreme tension on sustainable resources, organisations should embrace a mindset of moderation in their organisational model and consumption of goods and services to avoid emissions, where possible, or other negative environmental impacts. In particular, they should:

- Prioritise the reduction of transport needs, then shift to alternative transport means

- Prioritise measures that favour the efficient use of resources, and avoid waste in order to limit procurement to goods and services to those that are necessary to fulfil the mission, then shift to alternative products & services.

- Prioritise the reduction of energy consumption, then shift to renewable energy.





## 9. Embark your community

- Demonstrate, and actively encourage **peers, partner organisations and professional networks** to adopt a principles-based approach to reducing their carbon and environmental footprint.
- **Prioritise environmental awareness among staff** – provide them with opportunities to contribute to the cultural shift and foster a culture of learning and adaptation, building expertise, tools and methods collectively.
- Encourage, initiate, join, or contribute to **collective capacity-building efforts** to accelerate knowledge-sharing and achieve economies of scale.





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