

Environmental Policy



© TdH Suisse

Version: Version 14. June 2024

Author: terre des hommes schweiz and Terre des Hommes Suisse

Internal Reading Committee: General Directions of terre des hommes schweiz and Terre des Hommes Suisse

1. CONTEXT

1.1. Objective

As leaders in the promotion and protection of children's rights, the two organizations of the Terre des Hommes movement in Switzerland (Terre des Hommes Suisse and terre des hommes schweiz) want to ensure that their activities contribute to make the environment clean, healthy and sustainable.

In this common policy between the two organizations, we commit to advocate for the recognition of the inherent fundamental right of every child and young person to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and stress the absolute necessity of ensuring climate justice for all of them. We also strive to empower them as actors of change, making their own advocacy in favor of their right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; and support them to take their own actions in favor of this right.

Aware that the integration of these aspects implies a transformation of the model of operations for our two entities, this policy sets out the commitments and guiding principles with regard to climate change and the environment across our programmes and institutional functioning. It provides a clear framework for our organizations to mitigate their environmental and climate impact, to adapt their programmes to empower children, young people and their families and communities in the face of the climate and environmental crisis, and to engage in effective advocacy to ensure the promotion of children's rights at local, regional, national, and international levels, particularly the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. It also reflects the public commitment made by our two organizations in joining the Climate Action Accelerator initiative, which aims to halve emissions from the humanitarian and development sector by 2030.

This policy provides reference and orientation for specific strategies and concrete measures to be implemented at all levels of our organizations and promotes capacity building to achieve them.

1.2. Framework

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following institutional documents:

- Our respective climate and environmental roadmap, developed in partnership with the Climate Action Accelerator, which detail our decarbonization trajectories to achieve the goal of reducing our emissions by 50% by 2030;
- Specific sustainability guidelines attached to sectoral activities (procurement guidelines, travel policy, events policy, fundraising policy, etc.)

New references can be added to this list when available.

1.3. Scope and responsibilities

This policy applies to all levels of the organization, whether at headquarters or in field delegations/offices in programme countries. All staff, interns, volunteers and consultants regardless of their status, type of contract, or percentage of work are responsible for knowing its content and

applying the commitments as they relate to their work. It is valid for both development and humanitarian contexts.

1.4. Definitions

Environment: The physical, chemical and biological environment in which people live and which they influence in turn. It provides the natural resources that sustain people's livelihoods and quality of life.

Climate change: long-term changes in temperature and weather patterns.

Environmental degradation: deterioration of the environment through the depletion of resources such as air, water and soil, the destruction of ecosystems and the extinction of flora and fauna.

Sustainability: Meeting the needs of the present without compromising natural resources, ecosystems and the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Mitigation: efforts to reduce the impact of human activities on the environment. It can refer to measures that aim to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the atmosphere to make the impacts of climate change less severe, but also measures to prevent pollution or ecosystem destruction.

Adaptation: anticipated action taken to prevent or minimize the damage caused by the adverse effects of climate change. Adaptation actions range from large-scale infrastructure changes to individual behavioral shifts.

Right to a clean, health and sustainable environment: a human right first recognized in 2022 by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and taken up by the Committee of the Rights of the Child as part of its work on General Comment 26 on the rights of the child and the environment, with a special focus on climate change.

Climate justice: concept that addresses the just division, fair sharing, equitable distribution of the burdens of climate change and responsibilities for its mitigation. It starts with the recognition that climate change is having multiple impacts, particularly social, economic, and health-related, which are detrimental to vulnerable communities that have contributed the least to the climate crisis.



© tdh schweiz /Tulio Martins

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND COMMITMENTS

2.1. Guiding principles

RESPONSIBILITY, INTEGRITY, and DETERMINATION. We adhere to credible international standards for measuring our carbon footprint and exclude carbon offsets when calculating our own reduction efforts. We communicate transparently and regularly on the progress of our efforts, the successes and challenges we have encountered, and we are determined to encourage culture change at the organizational level to make a difference and adapt to a rapidly changing world.

LEADERSHIP and RESOURCE MOBILIZATION. Members of our management teams lead by example and actively contribute to raising awareness and ownership of projects among employees to support their implementation. Appropriate resources are leveraged to achieve the stated objectives, in the knowledge that an ambitious positioning on climate and environmental issues can also be a means of attracting more funding for our activities. Also, members of our management teams as well as all the employees are accountable to promote and respect this policy. They actively contribute to raise awareness towards a change of culture to support its implementation.

HUMILITY, LEARNING and INNOVATION. We listen to the people we work for and with, local communities and partners, and welcome their contributions to our climate and environmental efforts. We co-construct projects wherever possible and embrace the humility inherent in a process of continuous learning and experimentation. Where relevant, we encourage innovative approaches to support and facilitate our efforts.

PARTNERSHIPS and COLLABORATION. Climate and environmental changes are transnational phenomena, requiring a global response. In this context, the importance of partnerships and collaboration is more crucial than ever. Aware of this, we encourage collaboration with global and local actors, and work closely with our partners in the field, to promote good practice and learn from their direct experience to make our response more effective and mainstreamed.

PARTICIPATION and EMPOWERMENT. Aware that children and youth – and especially the most disadvantaged - are the first to be affected by the climate and environmental crisis, and that we have much to learn from their diverse perspectives on this issue, we integrate and bring the voice of children and young people into climate and environment-related activities wherever possible and relevant.

2.2. Commitments

Our commitments can be divided into three main pillars, to which certain transversal actions can be added.

Pillar 1: Mitigating our environmental and climate impact

- Reduce our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 50% by 2030 compared to our respective baseline and aim for “net zero” by 2050, in alignment with the 2015 Paris Climate Accords.
- Set up an integrated monitoring system to track our GHG emissions at regular intervals, as well as other aspects defined by key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Follow the decarbonization trajectory determined in our “climate and environmental roadmap”, particularly in terms of the following major emissions categories:
 - *Transportation:* reduce business travel by air and favor low-carbon transportation for field trips and commuting. Rationalize the use of vehicles to reduce emissions from our fleet. Develop and implement a new travel policy incorporating sustainability considerations.
 - *Freight:* reduce emission linked to air freight by rationalizing and pooling travels and selecting transport providers with lower emissions.
 - *Procurement:* reduce the carbon footprint of goods and services purchased for our programmes and office operations. Develop and implement a new “green procurement policy” incorporating environmental criteria.
 - *Energy and buildings:* reduce our energy consumption, improve the thermal efficiency of our buildings, and promote a decarbonized electricity supply. Best practice guidelines for energy and buildings are produced and applied.
 - *Digital:* Optimize IT hardware, services and numerical usage.
 - *Events:* reduce the environmental impacts of our events, like with prohibiting the use of non-recyclable plastic.
 - *Fundraising and communications:* reduce the carbon intensity of our fundraising strategies and processes.
- Mitigate the potential negative impact of our activities on the local environment and ecosystems we work in and prevent sources of pollution (water, land, atmosphere).
- Sensibilize each collaborator to take action in favor of the environment.

Pillar 2: Adapting our programmes to empower children and young people

- Include a chapter on “climate change and the environment” in our Global Strategy and specify the main lines of action at each level for the period considered.
- Integrate climate and environmental dimensions in all our programmes.
 - Include climate and environmental adaptation objectives and detail how our programmes to empower children, young people and their families and communities in the face of the climate and environmental crisis and promote climate justice.
 - Strengthen our programmatic objectives within a more sustainable, low-carbon and resilient institutional and operational model that will enable us to better manage the risks associated with the combined climate and environment crises.
 - Make sure that our commitment to reducing our carbon and environmental footprint does not come at the expense of our support for children and young people, but rather reinforces it.
 - Assess the environmental risks associated with our projects using appropriate tools , and adapt our projects accordingly.

Pillar 3: Advocating children’s right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

- Aware that the climate and environmental crisis is a children’s rights crisis, actively promote children’s right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment whenever possible, at both local and national levels.
- Through our advocacy activities, document and highlight cases of interest in the climate justice area – especially where already marginalized communities are affected by climate change and environmental degradation.
- Advocate for the active, inclusive, and effective participation of children and young people – especially the most exposed to environmental and climate threats (including girls and women, rural populations, and other disadvantaged groups) in environmental politics and public debates, and the recognition of their strong potential as agents of change.

Transversal

- *Raising awareness:* raise awareness internally and sensitize our staff to the impact of climate and environmental crises on children and young people. Our offices set an example by implementing eco-responsible practices.
- *Training:* integrate the necessary technical expertise into the organization and train staff to enable them to put the above commitments into practice. Provide training in climate and environmental issues for all staff, and more advanced training for certain position when necessary.
- *Job description:* include environmental responsibility into the job description / specifications of relevant positions in the field and at headquarters.

- *Planning process:* integrate climate and environmental action in our institutional annual planning process. Related objectives are included in country and department action plans, which set annual targets and incorporate the necessary resources into the budget.
- *Environmental guideline:* develop and share Global Environment Guidelines for good practices at the office level (headquarters and field offices).
- *Local and national partners:* listen to our local and national partners and learn from their experience and solutions to improve our approach. Encourage and support their efforts to develop a climate and environmental approach similar to our own.
- *Localisation:* make sure to integrate sustainability issues in our respective approaches to the localization of aid so that this contributes to mitigating our environmental impact
- *Participation & empowerment:* include and take into account the voice of children and young people in the projects, and co-construct with them when possible and relevant.

3. Preparation, validation and enforcement procedure

This policy was finalized by a working group composed of representants from three organizations in October 2023, and was validated by:

- For tdh schweiz: the Board on 21.05.2024.
- For TdH Suisse: the Committee and the Coordination Group on 21.05.2024.