



CARE INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY

I. CONTEXT

CARE recognises that to achieve our global vision we must prevent, reduce, and mitigate our own impact on climate change and environmental crises. We highlight the importance of environmental sustainability and combatting climate change in our Programming Principles,¹ as defined in the [CARE International Code](#) “We work to influence changes that are environmentally... sustainable”, and [Vision 2030](#), where we commit “to become a more environmentally just and climate responsible organisation”.²

[CARE’s Environmental Guidance](#), endorsed in March 2020 by European CARE Members, and the [Climate Justice Strategy](#), developed by the CARE Climate Justice Center as part of the 2030 Vision in broad consultation with many parts of CARE, identify key pathways for CARE towards fulfilling its commitments.

In 2015, governments agreed through [the UNFCCC Paris Agreement](#) to limit global warming to well below 2°C compared to pre-industrial levels, while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C. Evidence confirms that temperature increase above 1.5°C will already lead to catastrophic impacts.

Protection of the wider natural environment, including tackling climate change, is consistent with, and embedded in, a large number of global commitments, such as the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), the [Sendai Framework](#) on Disaster Risk Reduction, the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) and [the Convention to Combat Desertification](#).

Donors are increasingly engaged in addressing climate change and environmental crises through their work as stated in the [Humanitarian aid donors’ declaration on climate and environment](#), expecting organisations receiving funds to comply with climate and environmental standards. In addition, non-governmental organisations are progressively collaborating to develop criteria and standards for the sector such as the [Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability](#), the [NGO Climate Compact](#) and the [Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations](#), to all of which CARE is signatory.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is: “To define CARE’s commitments for reducing greenhouse gases, minimising its impact on the environment and integrating climate and environmental considerations into all levels of its work, and to provide the guiding principles and minimum targets for how CARE will fulfil its commitments.”

¹ See CARE’s Programming Principle #5 Seek sustainable results.

² See CARE 2030 Vision, CARE International Council, July 2020, page 8.

III. **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all of CARE's work, and must be upheld by all of CARE International, including the CARE International Secretariat, CARE Members, CARE Candidates, CARE Affiliates, all registered offices under the responsibility of any such CARE entities (i.e. regional/sub-regional offices, Country Offices, fundraising/advocacy offices), and wherever CARE has any form of engagement or activity.

All CARE entities are responsible for limiting climate change and halting environmental degradation, taking in consideration the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities."³

All CARE staff are required to act in line with this policy to be aware and conscious in their day-to-day work to prevent and mitigate CARE's negative impact on our climate and the environment.

While this policy does not apply to external partners of CARE (e.g. consultants, donors, private sector partners, suppliers, service providers), it is however expected that they are aware of this policy and that they align to it during any activities that fall under CARE's responsibility.

All partners, including the communities that we work in, will be informed of CARE's climate and environment policy and our commitment to prevent, reduce, and mitigate our negative impacts on climate and the environment.

IV. **POLICY STATEMENT**

CARE International, with a vision to contribute to "*... a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and all people live in dignity and security*" commits to 1. **Prevent, reduce, and mitigate its negative impacts on our climate and environment** in the spirit of international standards and agreements, 2. Support, where feasible and appropriate, the **protection, management, and restoration of the environment**, and 3. **Promote good environmental practices, raising awareness** on the importance of minimising greenhouse gas emissions, and **being accountable**.

V. **POLICY DETAILS**

1. **Guiding Principles**

The implementation of this policy requires that each CARE International entity follows a set of guiding principles when translating the policy into CARE entity specific strategies, policies, and procedures.

1.1 Guiding principles for CARE's commitment to prevent, reduce, and mitigate negative impacts on our climate and environment.

We will avoid, minimise, and manage the damage we cause to our climate and environment, while maintaining our ability to deliver timely and appropriate humanitarian, nexus, and development programmes in line with our mandate.

³ See UNFCCC Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 1992 Article 3 paragraph 1 <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>

- a) We ensure responsible travel and transport by travelling less by car and plane where feasible, and using alternative travel options that minimise environmental impact when travel is unavoidable.
- b) We use natural resources in a sustainable manner and eliminate where feasible the use of harmful and hazardous materials that may cause environmental damage by minimising the creation of waste (eliminate the use of single-use plastics, purchasing circular products, reuse, repair and recycle materials, avoid use of chemicals and pesticides), and proper disposal of residual waste.
- c) We reduce our use of unsustainable energy sources through energy efficiency measures, introduce clean technology solutions and innovations, and where available and appropriate, use environmentally sustainable renewable energy sources.
- d) Where possible, we purchase sustainable products and services that have minimal negative impact on climate and the environment. We aim to purchase products and services that have a positive impact on our climate and/or environment.
- e) We will develop and make use of sustainable, inclusive supply chains by prioritising, where feasible, local partners, suppliers and service providers that have environmental and social standards compatible to our own.
- f) We only cooperate with or receive funding from donors, private sector actors, foundations, that pass our due diligence protocols.
- g) We track and measure our carbon emissions and set reduction targets as high as possible in a specific context and in line with the Paris agreement, where possible.
- h) We aim to compensate for harm done to our climate and/or environment, in situations where there is no reasonable alternative, including investment in emission reduction projects to offset our unavoidable emissions. [CARE's Carbon Offsetting Principles](#) and [CARE's Carbon Offsetting Checklist](#) provide the necessary guidance for all programmes that engage in offsetting activities. We only pursue environmentally and socially high-quality offsets, including through programmes that focus on emission avoidance/reduction activities or emission removal/sequestration activities, always embedded within wider strategies to constantly reduce actual emissions.

1.2 Guiding principles for CARE's commitment to support where feasible the protection, management, and restoration of the environment.

At CARE we recognise the importance of protecting, managing, and restoring the ecosystems and ecosystem services that sustain the territories where people live and on which they depend for their livelihoods. CARE, through its programmes, and in collaboration with local civil society organisations, strives to combat climate change and improve the natural environment with respect for the voice of women and girls, and the rights and beliefs of indigenous and local populations.

- a) Our programmes are screened on their environmental impact and based on environmental impact assessments, informed by the best available short, medium, and longer-term climate and environmental science and data, and building on local and indigenous knowledge.
- b) Our programmes are informed by a risk analysis of potential environmental and climate related shocks and stresses and take reasonable steps to consider and address as

appropriate. This includes an analysis of the possible threats from climate change and degraded environment to our programmes using the Climate and Resilience Marker.⁴

- c) Our programmes aim to create win-win outcomes that benefit people, the environment, and the climate they depend upon.
- We promote local solutions that protect, manage, and restore the natural environment.
 - We promote activities that focus on adaptation to the changing climate and environment.
 - We promote activities to increase carbon removal.
 - We support fairer and more equitable access and distribution of natural resources.
 - We promote the use of sustainable renewable energy and energy efficient measures.
 - We promote climate and environmentally responsible citizenship for all.
- d) [CARE's Carbon Offsetting Principles](#) and [CARE's Carbon Offsetting Checklist](#) provide the necessary guidance for all programmes that engage in offsetting activities.

1.3 Guiding principles for CARE's commitment to promote good environmental practices, raise awareness on the importance of minimising greenhouse gas emissions, and being accountable.

When addressing climate change and environmental degradation, CARE sees the importance of awareness, expertise, adequate resourcing, and accountability, both within CARE and in collaboration with partners and communities.

- a) We raise awareness on the importance of minimising greenhouse gas emissions and promote good environmental practices with all staff, partners, and local communities.
- b) We engage in dialogue with donors and seek collaboration to uphold the highest climate and environmental standards in our work.
- c) Across the confederation we collaborate to learn, share experiences, and seek resources to realise the ambition of this policy.
- d) We ensure capacity and expertise is available within CARE and through partnerships with environmental and conservation organisations and external specialists.
- e) We systematically assess and transparently report on the immediate and longer-term climate and environmental impact of all our work, where possible.
- f) CARE is transparent with staff, the communities where CARE works, and the public, in case of any specific operational incidents related to its work that cause material harm to the climate and/or environment.
- g) We advocate globally for climate smart adaptation funding and mitigation strategies.

⁴ The CARE Climate Justice Center is currently working on a Climate Marker that will replace the resilience marker.

2. Minimum targets

All CARE International entities including the CARE International Secretariat, CARE Members, CARE Candidates, CARE Affiliates and CARE International Country Offices are responsible for limiting climate change, taking in consideration the principle of “*common but differentiated responsibilities*”.^{5 6}

Target 1. Reduction in absolute CO₂ emissions:

All CARE entities must develop a baseline for their current CO₂ emissions and designate a reduction target by the start of FY26 utilizing contextualized strategies that include offsetting air travel. CARE International is committed to have realised actual reductions by 2030 of at least 50% CO₂-equivalent achieved from flights, vehicle, and office energy use (excluding offsetting) in line with the Paris agreement.

Target 2. Waste management:

Each CARE International entity will establish a country specific integrated waste management strategy (covering reuse, reduce, recycle and proper disposal), and ensure, where feasible, that by the start of FY26 all new programmes align with this strategy.

Target 3. Responsible programming:

All CARE International entities will ensure that by the start of FY26 all of CARE’s new programmes will conduct an environmental screening and when needed an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Targets may need to be revised on a regular basis, as our ambitions and/or global ambitions are likely to increase, and our knowledge and capacity develops. Shifting our ways of working will entail changes in mindsets and approaches of leadership, management, and staff, as well as start-up, transition, and maintenance costs.

VI. RESPONSIBILITIES

Overall responsibility for this policy, including its implementation, performance reporting, and accountability, belongs to CARE Members, CARE Candidates, CARE Affiliates, and the CARE International Secretariat.

- a) **All staff of CARE International are required to act in line with this policy to** be aware and conscious in their day-to-day work to prevent and mitigate CARE's negative impact on our climate and the environment.
- b) **All CARE entities are responsible to:**
 - Develop entity-specific strategies, action plans and targets in line with this CI policy.
 - Ensure sufficient budget is available to realise targets in the action plans.

⁵ See UNFCCC Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 1992, Article 3 paragraph 1 <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>

⁶ CARE believes that reducing CO₂ emissions is a joint responsibility which should take place in a fair and equitable manner, recognizing differentiated challenges to respond to humanitarian need and working in “hard-to-reach” areas.

- Ensure staff has basic awareness of this policy and sufficient expertise is available to ensure the policy is enforced and adequate reporting takes place.
- Ensure partners are aware and acting in line with this policy when implementing activities under CARE's responsibility.
- Ensure procurement policies and practices are in line with this policy.
- Ensure programmes, events and activities are in line with this policy.
- Ensure reporting mechanism(s) are in place to report in line with this policy through PIIRS.
- Ensure travel procedures are in line with this policy.
- Conduct regular assessment and measurement of office and programme-related CO₂ emissions and environmental impact.
- Implement guidance and tools with support from the CARE Climate Justice Center.
- Support the formation of a Focal Point Network (FPN) to lead the roll out and facilitate implementation of the policy (including costing).

c) **CI Secretariat is responsible to:**

- Report on progress on an annual basis based on PIIRS data with support from the CARE Climate Justice Center.
- Ensure accountability by CARE International entities for upholding this policy.

VII. **REFERENCES AND ASSOCIATED POLICIES**

This policy is complementary to the set of standards of behaviour that all CARE employees are required to adhere to in the CARE International Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics and any further codes or related policies defined by CARE Members, Affiliates, Candidates and Country Offices. This policy is also a response to CARE's accountability to the communities it works with and is therefore to be operationalised as part of the broader CARE International Accountability Framework.

External standards related to climate and environment: CARE is signatory to the following standards: [Core Humanitarian Standard for Quality and Accountability](#), the [NGO Climate Compact](#) and the [Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations](#).

Existing CARE policies and strategies in line with this policy: [CARE Vision 2030](#); CARE [Climate Justice 2030 strategy](#); the CARE International Global Programme Quality Guidelines; [CARE Climate smart flight travel policy 2016](#); [CARE Environmental Guidance](#) (developed for the European CARE Members); Climate smart CARE procedures/policies/training pack; CARE carbon offsetting principles.

Existing tools within CARE for integrating climate and environment in programming: Due diligence template for (corporate) partners (CARE France); CARE PIIRS 2030 global indicators [28](#) and [29](#), CARE Resilience Marker; Environmental Impact Assessment toolkit ([NEAT+](#)).

For all key definitions, see Annex A.

Annex A: Definitions

Carbon offsetting: The action or process of compensating for carbon dioxide emissions arising from industrial or other human activity, by participating in schemes designed to make equivalent reductions of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The mechanism for claiming a reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with a process or product through the removal of, or preventing the release of, GHG emissions in a process unrelated to the life cycle of the product being assessed.⁷

Circularity: Circularity refers to a system of closed loops in which raw materials, components and products lose their value as little as possible, renewable energy sources are used and looking at the life cycle of materials is at the core. Aiming for circularity in procurement will enhance the sustainability of the supply chain.⁸

Climate Change: Climate change refers to a change in the state of the climate that can be identified (e.g. using statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties that persist for an extended period, typically decades or longer.⁹

Environment: The physical, chemical, and biological surroundings in which people live and work and which, in turn, they influence. It provides life-supporting natural resources and determines the quality of the surroundings in which people live. The environment needs to be protected and managed if these essential functions are to be maintained. A healthy environment contributes to disaster response.¹⁰

Greenhouse gases: Greenhouse gases are gases that trap heat in the atmosphere and warm the planet. This greenhouse effect means that emissions of greenhouse gases due to human activity cause global warming. The main gases responsible for the greenhouse effect include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and water vapour (which all occur naturally), and fluorinated gases (which are synthetic). Greenhouse gases have different chemical properties and are removed from the atmosphere, over time, by different processes. Carbon dioxide, for example, is absorbed by so-called carbon sinks such as plants, soil, and the ocean.¹¹

Renewable energy: Renewable energy is energy from sources that are constantly replenished, such as those derived organically or that are naturally recycled. Solar, wind, geothermal, hydropower and biomass are all renewable, as opposed to fossil fuels or uranium that take much longer to create.¹²

Residual waste: Non-hazardous waste material that cannot be re-used or recycled and needs to be sent to energy recovery (incineration/biogas) or disposal (landfill).¹³

Sustainability: Sustainability is the practice of using natural resources responsibly, that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.¹⁴

⁷ CARE (2022). CARE's carbon offsetting principles.

⁸ Adapted from <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/topics/circular-economy-introduction/overview>

⁹ IPCC (2021). Glossary of terms.

¹⁰ From: sphere thematic sheet 1 Reducing environmental impact in humanitarian response

¹¹ Adapted from <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/greenhouse-effect-101#gases>

¹² Definition from the 28.5 climate justice indicator.

¹³ <https://www.edie.net/definition/Residual-waste/97>

¹⁴ Adapted from <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/sustainability>