

Tool: Greening of organizations and projects



What is 'greening'?

In the context of international development, greening means to integrate considerations and goals about the climate, nature/biodiversity, and the environment in development activities and organizations. As a minimum, greening means that international projects must be 'proofed' against having negative impacts on climate, nature, and the environment. This may involve adapting practices that reduce carbon emissions, conserve natural resources, reduce pollution and enhance waste management.

Why?

This tool offers practical suggestions on how to green your organization or project. It gives ideas for how to *avoid*, *reduce* and *compensate* your carbon footprint in the areas of transport and energy use, as well as tips and inspiration on how to buy climate-friendly and manage resources and waste sustainably.



You can use [Carbon Footprint](#) to calculate your CO2 emissions. [Climaider](#) is a Danish start-up that provides relatively simple carbon accounting services.

Who?

This tool is for staff, leadership and volunteers in an organization. It can be used within partnerships, projects, or by individual organizations. Some actions can be implemented immediately, while others may require a mandate. Before starting, it's helpful for your group whether staff, management or volunteers to discuss your mandate and scope of action. If you are far from the decision-making, you can use the exercise to collect ideas that you can take forward to push the green transition in your organization.

When?

Use this tool to get some simple ideas on how to kick-start your greening journey, or use it as part of a structured process to analyse the areas you want to focus on and develop your greening action plan around. If you are starting a new project, the tool is useful in the project planning phase, for example during a preparatory study, to assess the climate and environmental impact of your project.

Calculate your carbon footprint

Before you start, it is good to have an idea of where your emissions are coming from so that you know where to focus your greening efforts. So, start by analysing the carbon footprint your project or your organization has.

When calculating your carbon footprint, it is important to include all emissions coming from your activities and actions. This includes the **direct** emissions you emit when you drive a car to visit a local village where

you run activities, as well as the **indirect** emissions you produce when, for example, you heat your offices and use energy to cook a meal for your volunteers. You should also count the indirect emissions stemming from all the other actions and choices you make in your project, such as the materials you buy or the waste you dispose of, as you contribute to the release of CO2 through the value chain of all these products.

How?

When talking about greening of organizations and projects, the principle of 'avoid-reduce-compensate' is often employed. This principle represents a hierarchy of actions that individuals, organizations, and even governments can take to mitigate their impact on the climate and environment:

1

Avoid: The first and most ambitious step is to avoid activities or practices that are harmful to the environment whenever possible. This could for example be avoiding taking the plane to meet with partners in Europe or avoid serving meat dishes. By avoiding we can prevent the harmful damage in the first place.

2

Reduce: When avoidance is not possible, the next step is to reduce the negative impact as much as possible. This might involve reducing energy consumption, cutting emissions, or using resources more efficiently. The goal is to minimize the environmental footprint of an activity or practice.

3

Compensate: The last option is to compensate for your negative impact on the environment by for example offset emissions through tree-planting activities, investing in renewable energy initiatives or increasing energy efficiency. The idea is to compensate for the environmental damage caused by an activity by taking positive actions elsewhere. Often the term *offset* is also used to describe this act.

In this tool you'll find inspiration for actions you can take to *avoid*, *reduce* and *compensate* for your projects' or organizations' CO2 emissions.

The tool consists of two steps:

1. A **Greening Checklist** with inspiration for greening actions and specific recommendations for *avoiding*, *reducing* and *compensating*.

2. A **Greening Action Plan** which you fill in with actions from the list, timeframe, resources, and people responsible for implementation.

You can go through the tool without facilitation. The time it takes will depend on how thoroughly you will go through it.

STEP 1 Greening Checklist

Green transportation	
Bike over car	<input type="checkbox"/> Choose the bike over the car for shorter distances. <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange common biking trips for social and fun transits.
Public transport	<input type="checkbox"/> Take public transport, especially for longer distances. <input type="checkbox"/> Reimburse for public transportation costs for staff or volunteers that take public transport to go to the office/meetings.
Green vehicles	<input type="checkbox"/> Choose low-emission vehicles such as hybrid or electric cars. <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure to keep your organization's vehicles well maintained, as a poorly maintained car uses more fuel, breaks down more often and needs more spare parts, thus generating more waste. <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge the norm of driving and owning a car being associated with a certain social status. Instead acquire a car for reliability and sustainability reasons.
Sharing transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Use car-sharing and ride-sharing services. Look for car-pooling apps like for example GoMore. <input type="checkbox"/> Rent buses for larger events.

Reduce air travel	<input type="checkbox"/> Set a travel carbon budget for your volunteers/employees to reduce flying and track your CO2 emissions from air travel (use Atmosfair to calculate flight emissions). <input type="checkbox"/> Favor direct connections instead of flights with many stops, as CO2 emissions are higher during take-off and landing. <input type="checkbox"/> Choose an eco-friendly airline, i.e. airlines with carbon reduction plans, eco-friendly fuel, newer aircrafts (Boeing 787 Dreamliner and Airbus A350 are frontrunners), a food waste policy etc. <input type="checkbox"/> When flying is unavoidable, travel eco-friendly: pack light, go for in-cabin luggage, chose vegan or vegetarian in-flight meals, pack a plastic-free toiletry kit, don't print your boarding pass, buy climate compensation with your ticket (see more tips here).
Save energy (These actions may require a high initial investment but can have a significant long-term impact on your carbon footprint and you can even save money)	
Sustainable energy sources	<input type="checkbox"/> Invest in solar panels for electricity and hot water. <input type="checkbox"/> Install a heat pump or biofuel boiler. <input type="checkbox"/> Check if your electricity provider is powered by renewable energy sources (wind, solar or biofuels, geothermal) or switch providers if not.
Heating/cooling systems	<input type="checkbox"/> Upgrade to energy-saving heating and cooling systems to prepare for extreme temperatures. <input type="checkbox"/> Proper seal windows and close window ventilation to reduce heat loss or save energy on electric fans – it's better to air out regularly instead. <input type="checkbox"/> Lower indoor temperature.
Invest in clean cooking energy	<input type="checkbox"/> Switch your cooking energy to electricity, solar panels, LPG (gas), biogas or similar. <input type="checkbox"/> Invest in energy-efficient stoves that does not use charcoal or firewood as energy source. <input type="checkbox"/> Use a biogas digester if you have access to raw materials.
Energy-efficient appliances and electronics	<input type="checkbox"/> Choose energy-efficient home appliances (in Europe, you can look for European products with an A-G rating). <input type="checkbox"/> Install smart thermostats, occupancy sensors and the like. <input type="checkbox"/> Replace 'old-fashioned' light bulbs with energy-efficient LED bulbs. <input type="checkbox"/> Set the computer to go into energy-saving mode after 10 minutes of inaction.
Buy Green	
Go plant-based	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduce a plant-based food policy and buy/cook vegetarian for meetings and events. <input type="checkbox"/> If you're not ready to take the full leap, start by introducing meat-free days. <input type="checkbox"/> You can also slowly implement by reducing the amount of meat in dishes, i.e. replacing parts of the meat with vegetables, for example adding vegetables to meatballs or replacing meat with lentils in a meat sauce. <input type="checkbox"/> Eat seasonal food such as vegetables and fruits that are naturally harvested during their growing season.

Buy locally	<input type="checkbox"/> Buy locally or nationally produced goods and products - where their environmental sustainability and quality can be ensured. <input type="checkbox"/> Go after brands that are environmentally and socially certified, i.e. FSC, Fairtrade, Svanemærket and Cradle to Cradle.
Eco-friendly venue	<input type="checkbox"/> Look for a venue with certifications, i.e. the Green Key label, Green Globe or the EU Ecolabel. <input type="checkbox"/> Make an eco-scan of the venue (see Ecorasmus' check-list). <input type="checkbox"/> Choose a venue that is easy to reach by public transportation. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider Ecovillages or family-run businesses.
Switch to a climate-friendly bank	<input type="checkbox"/> Switch to a climate-friendly bank that, for example, invests in renewable energy and not the fossil fuel industry (check your bank on ShareAction's list of 25 European banks).
Green services	<input type="checkbox"/> Select a cleaning company and maintenance and repair services that use chemicals, materials, and resources responsibly and environmentally friendly.
Sustainable use of resources and products	
Reduce plastic	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimise the use of single-use plastics by switching to reusable alternatives such as cloth bags, reusable containers, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Choose recyclable plastics such as PE, PP and PET, products made from 'clean' and recycled plastic, or biodegradable plastic.
Reduce the use of paper	<input type="checkbox"/> Go digital or print when only really necessary. <input type="checkbox"/> If printing is unavoidable, print only the page you need, print on both sides and choose sustainable printing paper.
Reduce food waste	<input type="checkbox"/> Plan meals to reduce food waste. <input type="checkbox"/> Use apps like <i>Too Good To Go</i> , <i>Olio</i> and <i>Karma</i> to buy leftover food from restaurants and supermarkets at a discounted price. <input type="checkbox"/> Bring reusable plastic boxes to save surplus food and bring home or give away. <input type="checkbox"/> Buy food from <i>WeFood</i> or stores that sell food that has passed the 'best before' and 'use-by' dates.
Sustainable water management	<input type="checkbox"/> Install water-saving taps and flush toilets. <input type="checkbox"/> Collect water from rooftops and ground collection and use for watering of plants or in toilets. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish run-off opportunities in case of heavy rainfalls to the surrounding offices or other houses. <input type="checkbox"/> Prioritise filtering / treating water over using bottled water.
Sustainable merchandise	<input type="checkbox"/> Print your organization's logo on a recycled t-shirts instead of having new t-shirts made. <input type="checkbox"/> Sew tote bags from recycled fabric and have them printed. <input type="checkbox"/> If you buy textiles, support sustainable brands that prioritise environmentally friendly production and working conditions. <input type="checkbox"/> Buy second-hand from thrift shops or online second-hand platforms. <input type="checkbox"/> Buy second-hand inventory for the office.

Having a sustainable consumption pattern is part of going green. Think of **The Triple R - Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.**

Repair and upcycle	<input type="checkbox"/> Repair clothes, electronics and other items instead of buying new. <input type="checkbox"/> Organize repair-café, upcycling stations and exchange fairs where people can bring their old stuff and get help to repair it, upcycle it or exchange to another item.
Waste management	
Reduce, recycle and safely dispose waste	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduce the amount of waste where possible. <input type="checkbox"/> Sort waste into fractions, e.g. paper, metal, plastic, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Compost food waste - if not disposed of in a public waste sorting system. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider using waste for income generation, such as collecting plastic bottles for money, upcycling old tires as garden boxes to grow vegetables, or upcycling worn out clothes to bags. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure safe collection and disposal of human waste from toilets and latrines, and safely collect and dispose used menstrual products and other hygiene items.
Green planting activities	
Plant away	<input type="checkbox"/> Plant trees or crops around offices, schools, where it is possible. <input type="checkbox"/> Plant a wild bed with flowers and plants to encourage biodiversity. If you have outdoor spaces, create your own mini vegetable/herb garden and plant fruit trees.

STEP 2 Greening Action Plan

Download the [Greening Action Plan](#), and as you go through the Greening Checklist, fill in the first column of the table with the actions you want to implement. Make sure that they are realistic and achievable for you and modify them if necessary to suit your project and organization. Once you have added your actions to the table, go through the following parameters:

- **Priority:** How high do you want to prioritize the action? If it's an important area for you, give it a 3 - if it's not relevant, give it a 1.
- **Barriers:** What barriers, if any, do you need to overcome to implement your action? This could be a knowledge gap among the target group about the importance of climate action, or a lack of sorting bins in the office.
- **How:** Describe how you will carry out the action.

- **Who/Where:** Is the action something you will do in your own organization, in your project and/or in the partner organization? Who will be responsible for carrying out the action.
- **Resources and timeframe:** What resources do you need to implement the action? Within what timeframe would you expect to have fully implemented the action?

Finally, when you have made your action plan and set your greening action targets, think about how you will monitor your progress to ensure you reach your goal. Keep an eye on how you anchor change in your organization and create lasting impact.

Below is an example of a Greening Action Plan, you can draw inspiration from.

Greening action	Priority	Barriers	How	Who/Where	Resources and timeframe
Get secondhand t-shirts for volunteers	2	Volunteers think secondhand T-shirts are cheap, dirty and of poor quality.	We will do a training on the role of the textile industry in the climate crisis and capacity-build volunteers with knowledge on the importance of the circular economy.	Volunteers in Danish and partner organization	We will have the training in two months. Time to research, plan a training and invite an expert.
Save energy on cooling system	3		We will reduce the use of electric fans, and instead air out regularly to ensure a comfortable indoor temperature.	Partner organization	Immediately.
<p>How do we monitor progress? We will follow up during monthly volunteer meetings. The management team will monitor progress and discuss regularly at management meetings.</p> <p>How do we ensure our efforts have a lasting impact? We will create a sustainability charter for our organization which will be signed-off by the management level, and a greening guide for our volunteers to adopt green practices in their activities.</p>					

More inspiration

See [DUFs climate toolbox](#) for organizations and volunteers. more tools on climate action and going green.

CARE International offers a free [1 hour online course](#) on becoming a climate-smart organization. The course introduces you to the need for cutting emissions and takes you through which areas to focus your greening efforts on as an organization.

[Ecorasmus](#) has developed a greening guide for international youth projects on 7 topics to green your projects and organization. The topics cover venue, food, materials etc., and you'll also find best practices from youth projects across Europe.

The organization, Danish ICYE, has trained volunteers through a [Green Ambassador Programme](#) where young volunteers have developed a handbook for sustainable travelling to send their volunteers abroad with a consciousness about the climate.

Get inspiration from [ChangemakerxChange's Regenerative Manifesto](#). Among other things, it contains a sustainability checklist for different ambition levels, so you can tailor your climate initiatives to fit your motivation in your organization.