



Towards Net Zero

Event for the NGO Partner Institutions, SDC - 18 June 2024
Key Messages

Presenters:

- Pia Hänni (SDC, Head of Swiss NGO section)
- Jacqueline Schmid (SDC, Senior Sector Policy Advisor, Climate, DRR and Environment section)
- Martin Hasler (SDC, Programme Manager Swiss NGO section)
- Bruno Jochum (Climate Action Accelerator, Executive Director)
- Dikolela Kalubi (MSF, Planetary Health Coordinator)
- Vincent Hug (VSF, Programme Director)
- Elizabeth Goodwin (Swisscontact, Advisor Sustainability Strategy)
- Maya Wolfensberger (Helvetas, Senior Advisor Climate Change)
- Corinne Sprecher (External facilitator)

Time	Description	Presenter	Further information
09:00-09:15	Opening remarks	SDC	Plenary
09:15-09:35	Warm-up: Collect expectations and entry points of participants to the topic of reducing CO2 and environmental footprint	Facilitator	Get to know each other!
09:35-10:15	Setting the scene: providing an overview on developed tools & roadmaps, ongoing processes	Climate Action Accelerator (CAA)	Plenary
10:15-10:45	Coffee break & Networking		Foyer
10:45-11:20	Experiences from 4 different NGOs on their path towards net zero Introduction to 4 specific cases (key experience and challenges) that will then be deepened and discussed in groups (4 x 7')	NGO representatives: - MSF Suisse - Helvetas - VSF-Suisse - Swisscontact	Plenary
11:25-11:55	Group Discussions (first round) Deep Dive into above NGOs' experiences	Facilitator and NGO representatives	Each participant can take part in two consecutive rounds of group discussions; rooms to be indicated
12:00-12:30	Group Discussions (second round) Deep Dive into above NGOs' experiences	Facilitator and NGO representatives	Four groups, rooms to be indicated
12:35-12:55	And now what ? Sharing insights and ideas in plenary	Facilitator	Plenary
12:55	Closing words from the Management	Pia Hänni, Head of Swiss NGO Section, SDC	Plenary
13:00-14:00	Vegetarian Lunch, Networking End of the Workshop	All	Foyer

Opening remarks

Pia Hänni, Head of the Swiss NGO section at SDC, welcomed the participants, and stressing the need to contribute by this very timely peer exchange to reduce the carbon footprint of our own organisations. Jacqueline Schmid presented the FDFA carbon footprint. Since 2001, the federal department has been regularly reporting its footprint. The main source of emissions is the air traffic, which is slowly decreasing thanks to the increase of online meetings and the reduction of delegations size. Please find the RUMBA – FDFA Environmental Report 2023 [here](#).

Key-Note Presentation – Climate Action Accelerator (CAA)

Bruno Jochum presented the work of the Climate Action Accelerator (CAA). The main challenge for NGOs is to understand how to face rising needs on the field, with fewer resources, integrating “towards net zero” in an intelligent way.

Solutions can be found and are made available; yet: solutions differ a lot from organization to organization and we should focus on the areas that make a difference in reducing big emissions rather than working on each area. See Presentation ‘Climate Action Accelerator’, and [here](#)

Plenary discussion:

- Organization’s growth needs to be taken into account. Growth requires more efforts, big operational changes and more creative solutions: it’s an internal challenge that an organization has to make, as business as usual would increase emissions.
- In the NGOs environment the attitude towards emissions reduction is positive and there are a lot of people who understands the issues and are willing to act. There are also many opportunities to reach the net-zero goal, as the renewal of projects is very high and, during the planning phase, new solutions can be implemented. The main challenge is the need of the general management to make decisions. We need to take emissions as existential threat
- The procurement sector is the most challenging and time consuming, but as all companies are working on this, there are more and more solutions and pathways identified.

Experience from 4 NGOs: key messages from the group discussions

MSF Suisse

Dikolela Kalubi presented the comprehensive approach of MSF “Planetary Health”.

(see presentation MSF, and here <https://www.msf.ch/nos-actualites/toutes-les-videos/4-questions-dikolela-kalubi-responsable-sante-planetaire-msf>)

Group discussions:

- MSF is reducing its footprint by using alternative medical materials in a more efficient way, eco-driving and switching to e-cars, and by better insulating warehouses.
- The problem of flight emissions is discussed (they represent 20% of MSF’s emissions): at the moment the only solution is to do more digital meetings, to better plan the field visits and to combine destinations.
- Regarding the financing of climate measures, MSF see it as an investment and they are already observing quick returns after just one year.
- The roadmap for implementation is an important process that needs internal alignment and priorities. For MSF it took 8 months for the roadmap, with many sessions with many people, and some solutions needed to be pushed a lot.
- The collaboration with CAA is very useful to get an external perspective and access into a network. During the roadmap they had meetings with CAA weekly, which guided MSF in a very structured way. A large benefit of this collaboration was the ‘convening power’ of having a large array of stakeholders involved in the process.
- About the procurement, MSF adopted the following points: 1. Assessment of key suppliers 2. Set criteria for key items 3. Use of maritime freight instead of air freight.

VSF Suisse

Vincent Hug explained the approach of VSF to use MyClimate to track and analyse their carbon footprint. See presentation 'VSF'.

Group Discussion:

- The major emissions sources for VSF in the field are mobility and generators, while at the head office are fundraising printed materials, electricity, and mobility.
- They are now shifting to paperless, less flights and solar power.
- MyClimate might not be the perfect tool as it doesn't differentiate a lot but it's good for an overview and to also measuring environmental impact of project activities like rangeland management, livestock and agroecological practices.

Swisscontact

Elizabeth Goodwin presented the Net Zero Road Map of swisscontact. See presentation 'Swisscontact'.

Group discussion:

- In order to create a roadmap to reduce CO2 emissions, targets, measures, and a monitoring system needs to be established. Swisscontact tested their measures in two pilot regions and collected data in all sectors and activities. They also awarded a Carbon Champion to motivate more the colleagues.
- The importance of having admin/finance specialists on board (rather than 'only' environmental experts) was stressed
- Cutting flights is effective not only in terms of reducing the CO2 footprint, but also cutting costs. Flights are replaced by TelCons, train journeys, cleaner means of transport
- HR policies are very important (e.g. R&R policy)

Helvetas

Maya Wolfensberger presented the very new internal carbon fund of HELVETAS. See presentation 'Helvetas'.

Group discussion:

- A carbon budget hasn't been set yet, but Helvetas realizes its importance. They should also reduce flights (35% of emissions) and set goals
- Coordination offices struggle with this additional burden and in order to find the right acceptance you have to find a champion who is very motivated
- Gray energy is not actively taken into consideration in CO₂ pricing, but it's often integrated in the products. For example, when installing solar panels, production is considered in their footprint
- Regarding the founding of the fund, they don't charge it to donors yet, but in the future, they might consider to distribute it among donors, as it's a shared responsibility
- Their carbon price is now in general way too low. 250/200 CHF/t should be aimed

The groups also identified the following benefits and challenges of the carbon fund approach:

Benefits:

- The money stays in the organization and there is therefore a higher motivation
- They can control where the money is allocated
- As everybody pays and the carbon prices increase, there is a high motivation to reduce the emissions
- Public relations are easier
- The data collection is easier and have higher quality
- Improved efficiency of programs
- Increased governance and transparency

Challenges:

- The budget source is difficult to identify
- Acceptance
- Fairness (differences in contexts)
- Transparency towards donors

Closing words and wrap up

Participants of the group discussions agreed that some good ideas and initiatives were presented, but NGOs should be the pioneer on “towards net zero” programs and be bolder. We need a stronger transformation, as private sector is catching up, and NGOs should be more innovative and advanced.

Participants also asked SDC to organize this event regularly, so that the motivation stays high.

Pia Hänni concluded the event thanking everybody and recognize the value of this exchange. We started late to address this topic in a systematic way. Every organization is different and the important thing is to do good assessments and be clear on where we can act and have an impact.