The WREC LinkedIn audio series: Episode 1

What role do humanitarian organizations have to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions?

Speakers

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Summary and main discussion points

Questions for Juan: Q1 ***Can you give us an example of what we mean when we talk about humanitarian supply chain? and one concrete example of how we can reduce our carbon footprint?***

The services and projects offered by humanitarian organisations to reduce the negative impact crises on the population, require the supply of products and services, like for example now in Turkey and Syria, to cover the basic needs of people who have suffered the consequences of the devastating earthquake. Food, water treatment plants (to produce drinkable water), emergency clinics or hospitals, household items like blankets, tents, water containers, heaters... All that has to be purchased and transported, imported (if national markets cannot offer enough quantities in a short time), stored for a period of time and distributed. All those steps make a supply chain, and two of the key differences and challenges about humanitarian supply chains are that are **very difficult to be predicted** (when and which country and part of a country the next earthquake will hit?) and **the need to be fast** (fast to supply the goods, but fast to set-up a supply chain in areas where infrastructure has been affected/destroyed, how to make assistance to arrive).

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Humanitarian supply chain generates emissions when products are produced in the factories (energy used), when goods are transported (fuel used), when goods are stored (electricity in the building and equipment used), and also not to forget the end-of-life of those products (including packaging) when they are disposed as waste.
Some ways of **reducing the carbon footprint include, reducing packaging or designing it in a way it could be reused by population receiving it, looking for suppliers that minimise the use of energy in factories, optimise transportation and avoid airfreight. One concrete example would be** a **warehouse used by the ICRC in Niger.** The isolation of the building using local materials and natural ventilation techniques managed to reduce the need to keep running a big generator almost 24h during the hot months to use ventilators and an electrical cooling system. It required an important amount of diesel for the generator. The new design required much less electricity, that could be provided with a smaller generator, working less hours. Or as an alternative, to install solar panels with a battery accumulator, what avoided completely the need to use fossil-based fuel at all.

Q2 ***IFRC has developed the carbon footprint calculator - can you talk us through that?***
Let's clarify that it has been a collaborative project between different humanitarian organisations, the IFRC one of them.
The New Humanitarian issued an article in Oct 2021 titled "***What's the aid sector's carbon footprint?"***, and highlighted that many organisations did not start yet measuring its carbon footprint, and among those that started '*Everyone is measuring different things, so we are comparing apples and pears.*' For example, some organisations only measured electricity and energy consumption at their offices. Other included the fuel used in their vehicles. Others also included the travel of their staff. And only few included the biggest categories which usually are the more intensive footprint related to the goods and services purchased … And what happens after the humanitarian goods and services are distributed to people in need, the so called 'end-of-life', how they are reused, recycled or just disposed.
On the other hand, one of the reasons why many organisations didn't yet start to measure emissions was the need to hire a consultancy firm to provide that type of expertise. So additional costs could be one of the barriers.

That's **what triggered this project a 'carbon calculator for the humanitarian sector'** that a) would be offered for free to humanitarian organisations and b) and more importantly that help setting a default methodology (what to measure and how to measure it).
For the methodology it was decided to adopt the widest international standard used by multiple multinational companies, and public entities: **the GHG Greenhouse Gas protocol**.
For the scope it was decided to include all offices and business units of an organisation, for all categories in the GHG protocol. It is up to each organisation, but the idea is to monitor progress and to do the measurement once a year.

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There are some calculators available online. What makes this one interesting for humanitarian organisations is that it includes a free database of emission factors curated for this type of sector, like for example some core relief items or the cash transfer component (something kind of unique in this sector).
The tool, methodological guidance document and videos are available FREE TO USE in the website of the Climate Charter https://www.climate-charter.org/ It can be accessed searching for 'humanitarian carbon calculator' in Google. This package aims to help any organisation who would like to adopt this type of measurement, with guidance and tips on how to start the journey (like for example start with a reduced scoped the first time and expand once the organisation understand more the type of data needed and how to collect it internally).

Questions for Katherine: Q1 Can you please tell us more about the WREC?
The Global Logistics Cluster, with the support of a coalition of humanitarian partner organizations - Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Save the Children International (SCI), and the World Food Programme (WFP), have come together to develop the **Waste Management Measuring, Reverse Logistics, Environmentally Sustainable Procurement and Transport, and Circular Economy (WREC) Project** to produce harmonized guidance on waste management and greenhouse gas emissions, increase knowledge and awareness in the humanitarian community about green logistics, and support practitioners in environmental impact reduction, with a special focus on sustained field-based solutions.

The WREC Project is bringing together humanitarian partners, private sector stakeholders, and academia to make sure that today's life-saving activities don't have unintended environmental impacts that need cleaning up tomorrow. As part of this, the Global Logistics Cluster plays an active role in coordinating and collaborating with those leading complementary initiatives to ensure that this information is both available and contextualized for field-level practitioners' use.

Q2 Can you give us one concrete example of how we can reduce our carbon footprint at WFP?
There are so many examples of practical ways in which organizations are tackling and addressing carbon emission reductions. At UNHRD for example, they are working on **solarizing humanitarian warehouses,** which we know tend to be in remote locations and often with direct sun exposure. They do this by conducting energy audits, building a business case to review the costs of equipment and equipment vs long term running costs, and then moving forward with installation and commissioning of the solar systems. Often times solar installation can have not only a positive impact on the environment, but the cost of transporting and storing non-renewable energy sources like diesel are higher than the investment and running of solar energy – so it's a win-win.