



VVOB Climate Change & Environmental Sustainability Policy

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Glossary

This glossary explains climate change and environmental sustainability terminology which is used further in this Policy. Acknowledging the complexity of the topic, it is important to have an aligned understanding and common language in VVOB and this glossary provides the framework for the concepts used.

- **Environmental sustainability:** Environmental sustainability is the responsible management of (natural) resources to fulfil current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. Environmental sustainability relates to a wide range of aspects such as wildlife conservation, habitat preservation, water and air quality, waste management, the interconnectedness of ecological systems and of course climate change.
- **Climate change:** Climate change describes a change in the average conditions — such as temperature and rainfall — in a region over a long period of time. Scientists have observed Earth's surface is warming, due to human activities, and many of the warmest years on record have happened in the past 20 years. The consequences of climate change include, among others, intense droughts, water scarcity, severe fires, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic storms and declining biodiversity (which is the rich variety of life on Earth).
- **Climate justice:** Climate justice means putting equity and human rights at the core of decision-making and action on climate change. It recognises the unequal historical responsibility that countries and communities bear in relation to the climate crisis. It suggests that the countries, industries, businesses, and people that have become wealthy from emitting large amounts of greenhouse gases have a responsibility to help those affected by climate change, particularly the most vulnerable countries and communities, who often are the ones that have contributed the least to the crisis. It also reflects the intergenerational injustice of climate change, burdening young people disproportionately with the effects of climate change.
- **Conference of the Parties (COP):** COP is the annual meeting of all countries that are parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It was founded in 1992 and has been the place for international climate negotiations since 1995. The purpose of the annual COP is to review and assess progress in dealing with climate change and to negotiate and adopt decisions and resolutions on how to address this global challenge. Education is one of the six priority areas of Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE).
- **Education for sustainable development (ESD):** ESD gives learners of all ages the knowledge, skills, values and agency to address interconnected global challenges including climate change, loss of biodiversity, unsustainable use of resources, and inequality. It empowers learners of all ages to make informed decisions and take individual and collective action to change society and care for the planet. ESD is a lifelong learning process and an integral part of quality education. It enhances the cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural dimensions of learning and encompasses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment itself.
- **Climate change education (CCE):** CCE is the process of learning about the causes, consequences and solutions to the problem of climate change. This involves increasing knowledge and awareness of the scientific, social and economic factors contributing to climate change and fostering attitudes and behaviours that promote a just transformation towards a sustainable future. UNESCO places climate change education within the broader framework of Education for Sustainable Development (see above).
- **Hardwiring approach:** The hardwiring approach ingrains the principles to tackle climate change and strive for environmental sustainability into the fabric of an organisation and society. In this Policy, we use this term to capture efforts to integrate the protection of the environment and natural resources, including the battle against climate change, drought and global deforestation into all our interventions (in line with the Belgian law requirements for Belgian Development Cooperation and our own ambitions).

Introduction and Key Principles

Ensuring provision of quality education is at the heart of VVOB's programmes. The ambition of providing quality education can however only exist in the context of just and peaceful societies, a healthy planet and shared progress that benefits all. Education plays a crucial role in bringing about the social transformation needed to tackle climate change as well as transforming humankind's relationship with nature to reverse environmental degradation.

Education is also disrupted by environmental threats, like weather-related disasters. The effects of climate change and ecosystems degradation disrupt 40 million children's education every year according to the World Economic Forum, posing fundamental and cross-cutting threats to equitable and sustainable development.

As an organisation committed to ensure the provision of quality education, having respect for people, policies and planet is a core value of VVOB. We see ourselves as a value-driven organisation and place significant emphasis on managing and improving our environmental performance both at the level of VVOB as an organisation and in VVOB's programmes.

VVOB's climate change and environmental sustainability policy represents VVOB's commitment to equitable and sustainable development and outlines the principles VVOB follows in tackling climate change and in striving for environmental sustainability in the workplace and in its programmes.

In its [Learning Unlimited. 2030 strategy](#) VVOB has put forward the clear ambition to champion the vital role of education to progress on gender, equity, inclusion and climate. Additionally, in VVOB's approach, we aim to be an efficient, cost-effective and ecological organisation. VVOB has already started its journey to reach this ambition and will continue to define and work on specific milestones and action in the coming years.

In 2015 the first version of VVOB's "environmental sustainability" policy was launched, which was accompanied by a charter in 2016 with 6 commitments. With this revised version (2024), as an ever learning and growing organisation, we want to bring this Policy in line with our 2030 strategy, lessons learned from our climate change and environmental sustainability programmes, an internal reflection trajectory with the working group on climate change and environmental sustainability (supported by a working paper and [technical brief](#)) and with societal evolutions, like the more pressing than ever urgency to tackle climate change. For this reason, the policy has been broadened to a "climate change and environmental sustainability" policy.

Building on its values of quality, integrity, respect, commitment, and innovation, VVOB recognises the following as fundamental principles in its commitment to tackle climate change and strive for environmental sustainability.





Climate change and environmental sustainability are an integral element of quality education.

Quality education is education that ensures learning that is relevant for today and tomorrow. Given the challenges faced by people and planet, climate change and environmental sustainability must be considered an integral element of quality education.

VVOB's commitment: We contribute to climate and environmental action by assuring at least one programme with a principal focus on climate change and environmental sustainability in the diversity of VVOB's portfolio, guaranteeing continued expertise within the organisation.



Quality climate change and environmental sustainability education foregrounds (1) science and knowledge, (2) agency and action, (3) ethics and justice.

While recognising the importance of accurate knowledge, quality climate change and environmental sustainability education should go beyond acquiring scientific knowledge about earth systems. Diverse forms of knowledge should be valued, recognising for example local, indigenous, authentic knowledge or the role arts can play.

To foster action, learners need continuous efforts in agency development, involving a broad spectrum of skills from critical thinking to technical abilities. This process should span from early childhood education to tertiary education, across subjects, creating a coherent learning trajectory. Central to this continuous learning are ethical and justice aspects, emphasising the importance of care in human-environment interaction and addressing climate justice concerns. This requires teachers and school leaders who are capable of shaping education as an important driver of societal transformation.

VVOB's commitment: We provide [*transformative professional development*](#) to teachers and school leaders which champions them as professionals who are capable of bringing about the change needed to tackle climate change and strive for environmental sustainability. This professional development is not limited to cognitive learning outcomes of students (science and knowledge), but encompasses a breadth of skills related to agency and action, ethics and justice.



Climate and environmental action need a contextualised approach, while recognising the global dimension.

While climate change and environmental degradation are challenges with a global dimension related to its causes (e.g. the unequal historical responsibility in relation to emissions) and effects (e.g. natural disasters do not stop at country borders), the unique concerns and challenges of a specific school, community, government partner require a locally-rooted and globally-connected approach. Likewise, each of VVOB's country office will need to contextualise this global policy to fit with their realities.

VVOB's commitment: Our teams and staff play a crucial role in successfully translating the concepts, principles and practices set out in the policy to their context, while creating opportunities to connect across countries about best practices, quality resources, promising opportunities, partnerships and cooperation... Country office consultations on the context-specific implementation of this Policy will be continued, as was initiated for the validation of this updated policy.



Climate and environmental action need a holistic approach.

Climate and environmental action need to adopt a whole-institution and whole-of-society approach. For learners to effectively undertake climate and environmental action, this requires a whole-school approach which incorporates teaching, learning, school facilities, school governance, school culture and community engagements for effective climate change education. In this regard, school leaders have a vital role to play. Similarly, climate action is not a matter of individual responsibility but requires connection and a call to action at the societal level through a whole-of-society approach, involving for example different policy levels, different ministries, companies, communities.

VVOB's commitment: Our programmes involve school leaders, government officials, civil society organisation, ministries of environment. Likewise, we implement this Policy through a whole-organisation approach.



Climate and environmental action, (gender) equity action and education are mutually reinforcing.

The most vulnerable members of society are more often faced with the effects of environmental degradation and of natural and human-created disasters, such as climate change. Climate vulnerability also reflects (gender) inequalities and exacerbates socially constructed power relations, norms and practices. In the education sector, this leads to educational access, attendance and learning outcomes being unequally at risk by climate change and environmental degradation.

Young people, and girls in particular, are taking up a leading role in putting climate action on the global agenda. There is growing evidence on the important role of education to reduce climate vulnerability, and the mutually reinforcing interlinkages between education, (gender) equity and positive climate outcomes. Education that transforms harmful (gender) norms and relations of power, has an enormous potential for reducing carbon emissions (e.g. for equitable participation in green decent work, for reduced population growth and for inclusive sustainable decision making).

VVOB's commitment: Gender equity is at the heart of what we do, also with regards to our climate and environmental action. Therefore, VVOB explicitly recognises the nexus between (gender) equity, climate change and environmental sustainability, and the necessary transformational approach for societal change in which education plays a crucial role.



Climate and environmental action are imperative for organisations working in international cooperation.

Multi-country office-based organisations whose core is international cooperation, need to recognise that they have a negative impact on climate and environment in terms of travel. To improve climate and environmental performance of an organisation, the negative environmental impact of operations needs to be minimised, next to contributing positively to climate change and environmental sustainability action.

Therefore, as taken up in the General Code of Conduct of our integrity policy and signed by all employees, VVOB strives to minimise the climate and environmental impact of our operations and to include climate and environment as important themes in our programmes. Most importantly, as international mobility is part and parcel of the DNA of VVOB, our negative impact in terms of flight emissions will be compensated for travel considered necessary for the functioning of our organisation, and reduced where possible.

VVOB's commitment: We will externally compensate for flight emissions at country office level, we will reduce flight emissions at the level of global office and we will allocate the balance of the travel budget to action for improving the internal climate and environmental care of our operations.



Climate change and environmental sustainability, being complex and constantly evolving issues, require continuous improvement of an organisation.

The global nature of climate and environmental challenges means that they are affected by diverse geographical, social, economic, and political considerations. The continuous emergence of new scientific findings and the dynamic nature of ecosystems contribute to the ongoing complexity and evolution of these issues.

VVOB's commitment: In line with our core competency of continuous improvement we will regularly review and update the policy document and implementation based on latest research, feedback moments, internal monitoring of key indicators, policy trends, and lessons learned, and in terms of continuously raising awareness and building the capacity of staff to implement this Policy and to improve our climate and environmental performance and programming.

Organisation-wide Culture of Climate and Environmental Action

This Policy is grounded in international climate change and environmental sustainability conventions such as [The Paris Agreement](#) of the UNFCCC; the [Rio Declaration on Environment and Development](#); the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) and the UN [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

The policy sets out the main concepts, principles and action that constitute **VVOB's commitment, ambitions and approach** to climate and environmental action, through minimising negative environmental impact of operations (section 4) and positively contributing to climate and environmental action through our programmes (section 5). This document itself is not a 'how-to' guide, but highlights the prime principles that underpin this ambition as well as the strategies to achieve it.

The **primary audience** for this Policy is VVOB staff. All concepts and principles mentioned in this Policy apply to all VVOB teams and all VVOB programmes. All VVOB staff sign our code of conduct, whereby the value of **respect for the planet** is put forward by striving to minimise the climate and environmental impact of our operations and to include climate and the environment as important themes in our programmes. Next to this, the yearly evaluation of all VVOB staff includes an assessment of staff attitudes being in line with VVOB core competences and values (of which respect for people, policies and planet is one).

Climate and environmental action need to be hardwired in all areas of the organisation. As an organisation working in international cooperation, we recognise a **two-pronged approach** for our strategies and action:

- Internal climate and environmental care of our operations
- Climate change and environmental sustainability in our programmes

An **organisation-wide culture** of climate and environmental action creates the foundation for the implementation of the two-pronged approach of this Policy. It focuses on 5 key areas of our organisation: (a) policy, (b) planning and monitoring and evaluation (M&E), (c) partnerships, (d) internal learning and awareness, and (e) communication. To conclude, organisation-wide roles and responsibilities related to the coordination and implementation of this Policy are presented.

VVOB policies

Policy coherence has been a guiding principle for updating the Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability policy.

As such, this Policy supports VVOB's ambitions of the [Learning Unlimited. 2030 strategy](#), with the overall ambition of ensuring provision of quality education, championing the role of education in relationship to gender, climate, equity and inclusion, while being an efficient, ecologic and cost-effective organisation. The policy complements and feeds into **VVOB's integrity policy, VVOB's gender policy, VVOB's communication policy, VVOB's travel and fleet policy, VVOB's HR handbooks** (national and international), **VVOB's competence framework, VVOB's procurement guidelines and templates and VVOB's financial handbook**.

In line with the aim of policy coherence, VVOB will adhere to the following practices:

- Any updates in these connected strategies, policies, handbooks and templates need to be coherent across the different documents.
- Likewise, any new policy which will be developed needs to explicitly take up the terminology, principles and action of this Policy in relationship to climate and environmental action.
- Green Teams have the mandate to recommend an update of the Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability policy to VVOB management when deemed relevant and necessary.



Planning, monitoring and evaluation

Further and continuous operationalisation and monitoring of the policy will take place primarily through existing structures like the annual VVOB **Global Priorities** and the global and country level **Balanced Score Card system**.

Green Teams play a crucial role in monitoring of VVOB's internal climate and environmental care of our operations. A dedicated meeting with (country) management and their green team will take place at the beginning of each year to follow up on evolutions and ambitions concerning consumption and usage related to water, lighting, heating/cooling, transport, printing and IT materials.

For this, VVOB:

- Uses designated indicators related to climate and environmental action as put forward in this Policy. Global indicators will be taken up in the Global Balanced Score Card, while country specific indicators will be taken up at the level of the Country Balanced Score card.
- Puts in place tracker tools to support the measurement of values of consumption and usage of resources, and for monitoring country specific reduction ambitions.
- Sets up yearly meetings to monitor and evaluate consumption and usage of resources by the organisation. This will be done at country level (green team with country management) and at global level, whereby monitoring the implementation of this Policy will be a yearly recurring agenda point for the global operations committee and the extended global leadership team.
- Reports on our internal climate and environmental care to Belgian development cooperation through the performance scores section on the transversal theme of environment and to other donors where required.
- **Programming focal persons** for climate and environmental action in education play a crucial role in strategically integrating these action in our portfolio of programmes. These programmes will follow the internal MandE processes in place for all VVOB programmes (e.g. quadrimester reporting, end-evaluations), next to designated indicators related to climate change and environmental programming in the Balanced Score Card.

Partnerships

The bulk of VVOB's work takes place in close partnerships with other organisations and institutions. Therefore, ensuring that VVOB's values regarding climate and environmental action are reflected in these partnerships is instrumental for the impact of VVOB's CCES policy. Due to the different nature of our partnerships, VVOB makes a distinction between government partners, funding partners, technical partners and suppliers.

Technical partners and suppliers

Respect for people, policies and planet is part of our General Code of Conduct in the integrity policy. Next to applying it internally, VVOB also asks third parties it cooperates with (subrecipients, co-applicants, service providers, consultants and interns) **to acknowledge and comply with VVOB's Codes of Conduct** as included in the integrity policy. Compliance with VVOB's Codes of Conduct is also a condition for public procurements.

For **suppliers/partners that perform services** that are related to VVOB processes **with a clear environmental impact** (e.g., travel agent, cleaning, car hire, printing services, IT services, etc.), this Policy shall be taken into consideration. For VVOB to ensure this, climate and environmental care is considered in the procurement process.

VVOB actively builds partnerships with **technical partners who share VVOB's values related to climate and environmental action**, with the aim of promoting global and local efforts for societal transformation. With these organisations, VVOB engages in:

- Joint implementation of education programmes which have a principal contribution to climate and environmental action.
- Global, cross-border and internal collaborative learning and sharing on climate and environmental action in education.
- Lobby and advocacy at global and country level on climate and environmental action in education.
- Knowledge sharing and evidence creation on climate and environmental action in education.



Government partners

The government is VVOB's primary partner. VVOB expects Ministries of Education (strategic partners) and government institutions (operational partners) to have **similar policies and codes of conduct in place** in line with the content and focus of VVOB's Codes of Conduct, and comply with these own policies.

Next to this, VVOB **actively supports government partners** efforts to working towards a more climate and environmental conscious society and supports them to improve their education policies, strategies and existing practices, through programmes which have a principal contribution to climate and environmental action.

Funding partners

Funding partners play a crucial role in enabling VVOB to achieve its desired impact, also related to climate and environmental action. For this:

- VVOB applies an **ethical check** whereby being currently involved in the production of, or trade in, fossil fuels is an exclusion criterion to engage with funding partners.
- VVOB invests **donor diversification** efforts into programmes with a principal contribution to climate change and environmental sustainability.

Internal learning and awareness

The continuous professional development of all VVOB staff is an essential task and responsibility of the organisation. Building expertise and competences of our staff in content, approaches and processes is our guarantee to deliver on VVOB's vision, mission and live up to our core values.

In order to ensure all VVOB staff and teams are aware of the principles and practices stipulated in this Policy and have the capacities to apply these, VVOB:

- Develops and implements internal awareness raising initiatives for **all staff** on the principles and practices stipulated in the VVOB Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Policy e.g., by integrating the policy into its onboarding system, by developing a self-study module about the policy, through green team awareness raising activities, by including a learning session on climate change and environmental sustainability in yearly team retreats.
- Provides training for **leadership and management** on climate and environmental action at VVOB, to support decision making related to emission reduction and compensation, to public procurement, to installing a green team, to appointing a programming focal person, to setting reduction ambitions for usage and consumption of resources.
- Ensures the development and implementation of an internal learning trajectory for climate change and environmental sustainability **programming focal persons** and for members of the different **Green Teams** monitoring on internal climate and environmental care. Such learning trajectories imply:
 - The integration into and alignment with the Global Internal Learning Programme, a formal and coordinated programme for which VVOB staff is expected to yearly invest five percent of their time in the overall programme.
 - Sharing of knowledge and experiences on climate and environmental action in the organisation.
- Provides clear **guidelines** to country **procurement single points of contact** on climate and environmental care in public procurement for service providers with a clear environmental impact, which feeds into learning trajectories of procurement single points of contact.



Communication

Both internal and external communication on VVOB as a climate and environmentally conscious organisation, will contribute to bolstering ecological sensitisation, awareness and related behaviour. Systematically using VVOB's terminology and communicating on the principles and action as stipulated in this Policy, will support VVOB's ambitions related to climate and environmental action.

VVOB puts forward to:

- Communicate internally and externally about the **achievements** of our programmes with a principal contribution to climate and environmental action in education. For example, inclusion in annual report.
- Communicate internally and externally about the **key role of education** programmes in tackling climate change and promoting environmental sustainability.
- Communicate internally for **climate and environmental behaviour change**. For example, climate and environmental care as a reoccurring topic in all staff meetings, posters in offices, exchange best practices in Teams channels, etc.
- Where relevant, capitalise on **international days** and events related to climate, the environment and education. For example, International Youth Skills Day, COP, etc., to connect our projects and ambitions to important international dialogues.
- Use a **critical reflection tool** (see age 13) for staff to take environmental considerations up in communication procurement and event organisation, in line with this Policy.

Roles and responsibilities

- In order to ensure action in the five key areas are implemented and to nurture and maintain an organisation wide culture of climate change and environmental sustainability action, the following roles and responsibilities are broadly identified throughout the organisation:
- **All staff members** have a responsibility to respect, uphold and implement the principles and commitments of this Policy. This responsibility needs to be communicated clearly to all staff members and needs to be enforced where necessary, including through the Development Circle Processes.
- Certain staff members have a **specific responsibility** related to their position and function:
 - **VVOB leadership/management** leads by example and promotes and, where necessary, enforces the values, principles and practices stipulated by the VVOB Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Policy, including through
 - ☑ The Development Circle Processes, Balanced Score Card monitoring, annual VVOB Priorities formulation and annual monitoring of the implementation of the policy.
 - ☑ The appointment of a programming focal person and installation of a Green Team.
 - ☑ The inclusion of climate and environmental action in our future strategies.
 - ☑ Explicitly questioning the rationale and outputs of staff travel to campaign against unnecessary travel.
 - ☑ Allocate the organisational compensation budget to internal climate and environmental action as suggested by green teams, in line with this Policy.
 - ☑ Ensuring an update of the Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability policy upon advice of the country Green Teams.

→ Within VVOB leadership, **Country**

Operation Managers are responsible for the internal climate and environmental care of our operations through:

- ✓ Supporting the functioning of a country green team related to consumption and usage of water, lighting, heating/cooling, transport, printing and IT materials.
- ✓ The formulation of yearly ambitions together with the country green team related to consumption and usage of water, lighting, heating/cooling, transport, printing and IT materials.
- ✓ Approving proposed action from the Green Team and follow up on the allocation of the balance of the travel budget.
- ✓ Manage external compensation of emissions for flight bookings done by the country office.

→ **Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Programming Focal Persons – (one staff per country office)**

- ✓ Participate in internal learning on climate change and environmental sustainability programming (e.g. community of practice).
- ✓ Develop and implement programmes with a principal contribution to climate and environmental action in education.
- ✓ Actively build partnerships with technical partners who share VVOB's values related to climate and environmental action.
- ✓ Build VVOB's expertise in climate and environmental action in education.
- ✓ Act as a resource, point of reference and sounding board on climate and environmental action in education for the rest of the programme team.

→ **Green Teams** (minimum three staff involved from a country office, from two different departments)

- ✓ Monitor internal climate and environmental care of operations in the office related to consumption and usage of water, lighting, heating/cooling, transport, printing and IT materials.
- ✓ Organise at least twice a year sensitisation and awareness raising initiatives for colleagues to minimise negative environmental impacts in the office.
- ✓ Meet yearly with (country) management team to follow up on evolutions and ambitions concerning the reduction of consumption and usage of resources.
- ✓ Propose internal climate and environmental action to allocate the balance of the travel budget (e.g. office improvements, incentives for environmental friendly commuting modalities, an external assessment...)
- ✓ Recommend an update of the Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability policy to VVOB management when deemed relevant and necessary.

- **Global Office** will support country teams and steer action related to public procurement, donor diversification, internal learning and policy development. Overall coordination of country green teams and country programming focal persons will also be assured by global office.



Internal Climate and Environmental Care of our Operations

Introduction

Internal climate and environmental care are crucial for organisations to **operate responsibly, engage staff, and contribute to a more climate and environmental conscious society**. As awareness of climate and environmental issues grows, organisations that prioritise these considerations are better positioned for long-term success.

In its Learning Unlimited. 2030 strategy, VVOB puts forward the ambition of being **an efficient, ecologic and cost-effective organisation**. However, as a multi-country offices-based organisation working in international cooperation, we recognise that we have a negative impact on the environment.

Therefore, VVOB is committed to diminish VVOB's negative environmental impact via two strategies:

- Improving the climate and environmental care of our **office operations** in the area of consumption and usage of resources.
- Improving the climate and environmental care when organising **large-scale events** in our programmes.

Green office

Green office practices are important because they reduce an organisation's environmental impact by minimising consumption and usage of resources, contributing to a more sustainable and eco-friendly workplace.

Our **overall green office objective** is to diminish VVOB's negative environmental impact through:

- **Installing a Green Team** in every office, which consists of VVOB staff who are not only passionate about environmental sustainability and green office management, but who are also mandated to encourage its staff to adopt and sustain green practices and eventually inspire colleagues by creating a shared sense of responsibility regarding climate and environmental action.
- The **monitoring of consumption and usage** in the area of water, energy (lighting, heating, cooling), transport (car use, train travel, domestic flights, international flights), printing (paper use, ink use) and IT materials (purchasing, repair and dismissal) by the country green team, supported by the operations manager. Together with their country management, they analyse evolutions, agree on reduction objectives and necessary action to reach these objectives.
- The **compensation of flight emissions** for travel at country office level, which is considered necessary for the functioning of our organisation. VVOB will compensate on a ticket-base using travel agent services.
- The **reduction of flight emissions** by explicitly questioning the rationale and outputs of staff travel at global office level to campaign against unnecessary travel, and by choosing for more environmentally friendly travel options. For this, the **flight selection tool** will be updated with a substantial green component, conducive for public transport alternatives and discouraging for high emission travels (e.g. multiple transfers, several lay-overs), while taking well-being of staff and organisational efficiency into account. VVOB's goal is to demonstrably reduce its emissions year by year. The balance of the travel budget will be allocated to internal action suggested by the country green team, which support the implementation of this Policy.
- An update of the **travel and fleet policy** which encourages reduction of (fossil fuel based) car use and flights, defines essential flights and explains the compensation mechanism.

- The consideration of climate and environmental care in the **procurement process** for suppliers/ partners that perform services with a clear environmental impact such as cleaning, printing, car hire, flight travel, IT services...

Event organisation

Events can have a negative impact on the environment through factors such as excessive energy consumption, waste generation (including the disposal of single-use items), carbon emissions associated with transportation, venue operations, accommodation for attendees and resource-intensive event materials.

For VVOB to **lead by example** towards our partners, we need to minimise the negative impact of our activities. When organising events such as trainings with partners, workshops with stakeholders, conferences and seminars, programme launches or closings... with external participants, VVOB will

- Use a country-specific **climate and environmental care checklist** for events (see example on the right), filled in by the staff member coordinating the activity, with support of a communication staff member (where applicable). The checklist will contain a motivation requirement for management approval when consistently choosing for less climate and environmental friendly options to organise the event.
- **Not include beef in the catering offer and provide plant-rich options**, while creating consciousness and raising awareness about this choice, since the climate impact of beef consumption accounts for a significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Collect and share best practices** for minimising negative impact across our different countries.



General Event & Communication Checklist

- ☐ **Venue selection:** Have you checked the venue's eco-friendly certifications or green practice?
- ☐ **Catering choices:** Are you avoiding serving beef or trying to provide plant-rich options?
- ☐ **Plastic water bottle reduction:** Are you arranging refillable water stations and providing reusable glasses or water bottles or encouraging participants to bring their own?
- ☐ **Transportation:** Are you checking public transportation or carpooling options?
- ☐ **Printed materials:** Are you using digital materials over printed handouts? If printing is necessary, are you using recycled paper and sustainable inks?
- ☐ **Green supplies:** Are you opting for sustainable, locally-sourced, and reusable or biodegradable materials for decorations, signage, or event kits?
- ☐ **Messaging:** Are there opportunities to communicate about the achievements of our programmes with a principal contribution to climate & environmental action in education?
- ☐ **Waste management:** Will there be clear guidelines for recycling and waste disposal at the event, ensuring minimal use of single-use plastics?
- ☐ **Monitoring and feedback:** Are you including an evaluation step to assess the environmental impact of the event and gather feedback for improvements?
- ☐ **Collaboration with Green Team:** Are you collaborating with the Green Team to ensure best practices?
- ☐ **Intersectional approach:** Are you checking our other policies such as Gender Policy, Communication Policy and Integrity Policy to ensure balanced alignment with VVOB's values and identity?
- ☐ **Collaboration with Green Team:** Are you documenting your environmental practices so they can be shared with colleagues later to build knowledge?

Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability in our Programmes

Introduction

There is a sense of urgency when it comes to fighting climate change and environmental degradation while striving to limit global warming to 1.5°C, a 2050 target which already seems to be beyond reach. Strategies aimed at addressing climate change often focus on technologies with relatively little discussion regarding the potential impact of education in terms of reducing carbon emissions, for example.

We consider **education programmes to be key in tackling climate change and promoting environmental sustainability**, in terms of its contributions to climate action, handling the risks and effects of climate change as well as transforming humankind's relationship with nature to reverse environmental degradation.

Therefore, VVOB is committed to strengthen the education sector as a strategic resource for a transition towards more climate resilient and environmentally sustainable societies. Within VVOB programmes, three strategies are deployed:

- Programmes with a **principal contribution** to climate and environmental action through focused initiatives, including Skilling For Sustainable Futures and Climate Change Education.
- Programmes with an **indirect contribution** to climate and environmental action through improving the quality of education.
- Creating **conducive circumstances** for climate and environmental action in education, through promoting collaborative learning and sharing, engaging in lobby and advocacy and promoting and building knowledge and evidence.

Programmes with a principal contribution

In line with the United Nations Brundtland Commission report on sustainability, humans must interact with the environment in a way that ensures there will be enough resources left for future generations. Education gives learners the knowledge, skills, values and agency to address interconnected global challenges including climate change, loss of biodiversity, unsustainable use of resources, and inequality. It empowers learners of all ages to make informed decisions and take individual and collective action to change society and care for the planet.

In line with Article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, education is integral in enabling citizens' contributions to local and global efforts to meet the climate change challenge. Increased knowledge and learning about the causes and impact of climate change affect everyday lives. People become more aware of their role as consumers and are empowered to make ethically informed decisions. Communities can contribute to a solution-oriented public dialogue, while engaging decision-makers in taking meaningful action and shaping climate policy.

The **Skilling for Sustainable Futures (SFSF)** Flagship is VVOB's main vehicle for the design and implementation of programmes that make a principal contribution to tackling climate change and promoting environmental sustainability with a focus on youth employment. **Climate Change Education** can boost the implementation of the flagship programme by developing knowledge, agency and ethics needed to tackle climate change, already as of early ages. Additional programmes with a principal contribution (e.g. education for sustainable development, global citizenship education, integration of environmental and climate education into curricula...) are also considered when they are deemed particularly relevant for certain contexts.

In VVOB's current and potential countries of operation, education is no quick or sure ticket to decent work, whether it be in the form of employment, self-employment or entrepreneurship. Climate change and environmental degradation further disrupt already difficult **school-to-work transitions**, especially for young women.

The challenge of **youth employment** is at the forefront of many governments' agendas. There are (at least) two key factors that education can shape to ensure young people are poised for success: youth aspirations

(appetite for certain occupations and sectors versus available opportunities) and skills (a mismatch between the skills possessed versus those needed to succeed in the world of work). Success requires an appropriate combination and level of transferable skills and technical skills – including entrepreneurial skills.

The goal of the flagship is to strengthen quality education which better prepares youth to move into a sustainable livelihood, contributing to the transition towards a green economy. The flagship focuses on **three signature pedagogical practices** with a proven impact on school-to-work transitions:

- Study and career guidance, also provided by role models from green(ing) sectors and occupations.
- Project-based learning for entrepreneurship, also focused on real-world issues related to greening the world of work.
- Work-based learning, also at host enterprises which have put climate and environmental action at the heart of their business.

Through professional development of teachers and school leaders, quality teaching of these three practices is introduced in schools.

Young people are eager to contribute to the urgent transition to a **green economy** where growth in income, employment, human well-being and social equity are driven by investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhance energy and resource efficiency, and prevent the loss of biodiversity. This transition to a green economy requires expanding the school-to-work transition pathways into green jobs and livelihoods, requiring in turn technical and transferable green skills.

Improving young peoples' climate change knowledge, action and ethics is a pathway to boost the supply of skills needed for a green transition, already as of early ages. As such, **quality climate change education** requires a coherent learning line from early childhood education up to secondary education. While STEM education is a solid entry point for climate change education, it needs and can be addressed through all subjects. It also requires a whole-school approach, encompassing teaching, learning, school facilities, school governance, school culture and community engagements for effective climate change education. Likewise, climate action is not a matter of individual responsibility, but needs to connect with and call for action at societal level, through a whole-of-society approach (e.g., politicians,

companies, communities...). Again, VVOB's entry point for this is the professional development of teachers and school leaders, whereby the change project model is a crucial element. Change projects are context-based, coherent with the curriculum, link with teaching and learning in classrooms and involve students and their community.

VVOB's commits to implementing programmes with a principal contribution:

- Through hardwiring the signature pedagogical practices of the Skilling For Sustainable Futures Flagship programme for environmental sustainability.
- Through boosting climate change knowledge, action and ethics of learners as of early ages with quality Climate Change Education programmes.
- In various countries and education subsectors, involving various actors (teachers, school leaders, government officials, communities, researchers) and sectors (world of work, ministries of environment, civil society organisations).
- Whereby climate change and environmental sustainability programming focal persons play a crucial role in strategically integrating these actions in our portfolio of programmes.

Programmes with an indirect contribution

While currently the education sector contributes relatively little to global emissions, research highlights the potential effect of increased educational attainment on increased economic activity and emissions in the long run. However, the **benefits of increased quality education** outweigh this largely, both in terms of being a way to build resilience in the face of negative impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, and in terms of education as a good in itself for human development.

Ensuring provision of quality education is at the heart of VVOB's programmes from early childhood to primary education, general secondary education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET). VVOB supports ministries of education and national education authorities to strengthen teacher and school leader professional development systems to create safe and supportive, equitable and effective school environments.

As VVOB, our programmes focusing on improving the quality of education have the following potential **indirect contributions** to climate and environmental action:

- Quality education not only imparts knowledge but also cultivates a **wide range of skills** required for meaningful climate and environmental action. Quality education develops social, emotional and cognitive skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, strategising, understanding complex systems, coping with uncertainty, imagining future scenarios, understanding alternative worldviews, making decisions in a participatory and collaborative way, resolving conflicts and dealing with frustrations.
- Well-educated individuals are more likely to advocate for policy changes, technological innovations, and behavioural shifts that align with **environmentally sustainable practices**, leading to more effective climate action. They also tend to be more receptive to scientific evidence and consensus on climate change, influencing their attitudes and action.
- Investing in quality education is a key strategy for building a **resilient and adaptive society**, as it equips people with the tools needed to address the multifaceted challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation, in an informed and proactive manner. People with higher levels of education suffer fewer damages from the consequences of climate change.

As such, VVOB commits to quality education

- Based on a holistic vision on education which provides people with capabilities to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and just societies, and enhance their individual well-being.
- Promoting a breadth of skills, including foundational literacy and numeracy skills, transferable skills, digital skills, technical skills and entrepreneurial skills.
- In the context of a healthy planet and shared progress that benefits all where equity is ensured.
- Through a balanced and diverse set of initiatives in our current and future portfolio in line with this definition of quality education.
- Monitored via the country strategy maps of each country, which is at least once a year reviewed.

Creating conducive circumstances

For programmes to be effective in promoting climate change and environmental sustainability action, it requires embracing the complexity of these issues. To successfully implement programmes which focus on teachers and school leaders, it requires a system's approach which moves beyond a specific programme in a given country.

VVOB supports programmes which promote **global, cross-border and internal collaborative learning and sharing**. Related to teachers and school leaders who involve in climate and environmental action, it induces a sense of belonging which is crucial to support collective action. These teachers and school leaders are often lone pioneers in their contexts who can greatly benefit from building communities and sharing experiences or information with fellows. It also allows being informed by best practices, quality resources and examples from other contexts of 'what's possible'.

VVOB actively engages in **lobby and advocacy** to put education on the agenda of climate change and environmental sustainability fora and policies. Effective lobbying can influence policymakers and funders to allocate resources and support initiatives that prioritise climate change and environmental sustainability education. At global level, VVOB strives to put education continuously on the agenda of the Conference Of the Parties (COP) and actively participates in networks like the Greening Education Partnership from UNESCO. At country level, where we have programmes with a principal contribution, VVOB actively participates in policy dialogue to strengthen regulatory frameworks related to climate change and environmental sustainability education.

VVOB invests in research to facilitate scaling and to increase the credibility of our programmes, by systematically building this into the design. Next to **evidence creation, knowledge is shared** through developing technical briefs and open access resources specifically focusing on climate change and environmental sustainability education, which supports staff (as well as other organisations) to implement these programmes.

As such, VVOB commits to promote climate and environmental action through

- Global, cross-border and internal collaborative learning and sharing.
- Lobby and advocacy at global and country level.
- Knowledge sharing and evidence creation.



VVOB - education for development

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