

Environmental Policy

November 2023

Originally developed	Last update	Adopted (and by whom)
2023	-	November 2023 (Executive Committee)

1. Purpose, commitment and scope

Purpose and commitment

Child Rights Connect (CRCnct) recognises the right of all persons to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.¹ It further recognises that the extent of the ‘triple planetary crisis’ (the climate emergency; the collapse of biodiversity; and pervasive pollution) presents an urgent threat to children’s rights globally.² CRCnct values and heeds children’s repeated calls for all actors to behave responsibly as stewards of the environment.

This policy reflects CRCnct’s commitment to minimise the negative impact of its programmes and operations on the environment and to align itself with sustainable practices. CRCnct commits to:

1. **Uphold the highest environmental standards**, by striving to exceed compliance with relevant environmental regulations and standards, and to continuously improve its performance.
2. Proactively seek environmentally responsible alternatives and promote **sustainable practices**, including through reducing waste, conserving resources, and actively seeking eco-friendly solutions.
3. Report on its environmental efforts, **fostering accountability and inspiring others** to adopt policies and practices that support a more sustainable future.

Scope of application

This policy applies to: CRCnct staff, consultants, interns and volunteers; Members of the CRCnct Executive Committee when acting in the course of their duties; Network members and other partners when engaging in activities with CRCnct.

This policy has been adopted by the CRCnct Executive Committee (ExCo) and operationalized by the Executive Director. It should be reviewed every year by the ExCo with a view to ensuring that CRCnct continues to uphold the highest environmental standards and is aligned with sustainable practices.

2. Sustainable practices

The following practical measures will be taken in the design and implementation of CRCnct programmes and activities and in the management and operation of the organisation.

2.1 A paperless working environment

- To the greatest extent possible, CRCnct commits to have a paperless working environment.
- CRCnct uses a cloud-based storage and collaboration platform, accessible remotely, and encourages the use of digital communications and note-taking.

¹ As recognised by the UN General Assembly in its resolution 76/300 (2022), para 1.

² As recognised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its General Comment No 26 on *Children’s rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change*, UN Doc CRC/C/GC/26 (2023), para 1.

- Unless official documents require an original signature and/or office stamp, electronic signatures are used.
- CRCnct publications and reports are produced in digital formats, with QR codes and website hyperlinks generated for these whenever relevant.
- Business 'vCards', using QR codes, are used instead of printed business cards.
- Staff, interns and volunteers are encouraged not to print documents unless necessary (e.g. where a document is needed for sharing in an in-person advocacy meeting; where materials are required for in-person capacity-building activities; or where inequalities in access to technology calls for this).
- Where the printing of documents is necessary:
 - Documents should be printed double-sided on recycled or sustainably sourced paper;
 - Summaries or extracts of longer documents should be used whenever practicable, making use of hyperlinks or QR codes to link to full documents;
 - The number of copies printed should be minimised to relevant needs.
- Wherever available, CRCnct opts to receive digital invoices and correspondence.

2.2 Reducing waste and conserving resources

- All those to whom this policy applies are encouraged to:
 - Reduce, reuse and recycle materials;
 - Make use of recycling bins for paper, glass, plastic and aluminium at the CRCnct office;
 - Compost used ground coffee beans;
 - Where devices use batteries, make us of rechargeable batteries;
 - Refrain from using air conditioning unless absolutely necessary;
 - Ensure that digital devices are on 'energy-saving' mode wherever this option is available;
 - Turn off lights, computers and other equipment when they are not in use.
- Unless the cost of doing so is prohibitive:
 - Alternatives to single-use products should be used whenever available (e.g. re-usable cups, glasses and bottles);
 - When purchasing office supplies and equipment, preference will be given to sustainably sourced, recycled, reusable and/or durable materials.

2.3 Mitigating the impact of travel

Noting that CRCnct is a rights-based organisation driven by human values that are important to the organisation and how it operates,³ it recognises the importance of human connection and the significance of face-to-face interaction. CRCnct also acknowledges the limitations that apply to the online working environment, including inequalities in access to reliable internet connection. Having due regard to this, CRCnct strives to mitigate the negative impact of travel on the environment through the following practices:

- All those to whom this policy applies are encouraged to:
 - Make use of public transport and/or car-pooling when commuting;
 - Work remotely whenever practicable to reduce commuting needs.⁴
- In attending or convening an in-person event or meeting that would involve travel (beyond normal commuting), it should be considered whether there are important advantages to *attending* the event/meeting in person, or *convening* the event/meeting as one that is held in person (in compliance with any applicable donor commitments).
 - E.g. to facilitate networking; to increase the impact/effectiveness of the event/meeting; or to deliver training where an in-person environment would be significantly more effective.

³ As recognised in the Child Rights Connect Code of Conduct.

⁴ CRCnct staff and interns are otherwise asked to work from the CRCnct office each Tuesday. Frontaliers (those living in France but working in Geneva) must adhere with French-Swiss agreements concerning the work location for such individuals.

- If no such advantage applies, online participation should be preferred.
- Where travel to/for an event is called for, consideration should be given to reducing the need for multiple instances for travel.
 - When convening an event/meeting, preference should be given to scheduling this at a time when participants can take advantage of attending other meetings at the event location (e.g. back-to-back with sessions of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child);
 - When attending an event/meeting, efforts should be made to attend or schedule other meetings/events in the country or region in respect of which there would be advantages to face-to-face interactions (e.g. multiple city/country events held back-to-back).
- Travel by train or car should be preferred when relatively short distances are involved (e.g. distances under 500km), where this is practical (e.g. it does not involve multiple in-journey changes or long periods of travel) and so long as the cost of this is not prohibitive. To enhance the use of train travel as an affordable alternative, advanced bookings should be planned for wherever possible.
- The environmental impact of any air travel should be mitigated as far as possible, e.g. by:
 - Choosing non-stop or direct flights, which are typically more fuel-efficient;
 - Opting for fuel-efficient airlines;⁵
 - Offsetting carbon emissions.⁶

2.4 Convening events

- When convening events/meetings, the following measures should be recalled:
 - Avoiding the printing of documents (see 2.1 above);
 - Using alternatives to single-use products (see 2.2 above);⁷
 - Avoiding travel or mitigating its environmental impact (see 2.3 above).
- When convening events outside Geneva, calling on local partners to adhere with the standards in this policy to the extent possible.
- When arranging catering for an event/meeting, and unless no alternative is possible:
 - Use ethically/socially-based catering services;
 - Red meat products will not be included;
 - Organic and locally-produced food products will be preferred;
 - Vegetarian and plant-based menu options will be preferred;
 - Consideration will be given to reducing any food waste, e.g. through portion control and possible donation of excess food to local charities.

2.5 Green procurement

- CRCnct prioritises the purchase of environmentally responsible products and of contracting with environmentally responsible goods and service providers.
- In the context of information and communication technologies (ICT), CRCnct prioritises the purchase and use of low energy technologies and of goods/services that are produced/provided through low carbon emissions and other environmentally responsible practices.⁸

⁵ For global rankings at 2014, see: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Rankings-of-airlines-by-fuel-efficiencies_tbl2_273289353.

⁶ Where online booking systems do not allow for carbon offsetting contributions to be made when booking flights, other platforms can be used, such as myclimate (https://co2.myclimate.org/en/flight_calculators/new).

⁷ E.g. by encouraging participants to bring their own reusable water bottles where conference facilities provide water fountains.

⁸ E.g. by considering the origin and process of ICT product manufacturing, the carbon impact of websites and web hosting (e.g. see <https://www.thegreenwebfoundation.org/> and <https://greenhost.net/>).

- In the context of contracting with providers of goods and services, CRCnct’s procurement procedures (applicable under the CRCnct Finance Manual) include an assessment of whether tendering suppliers of good or services uphold environmental standards and sustainable practices.⁹

3. Monitoring and review

On an annual basis, the Executive Director will review this policy and its implementation, and suggest any modifications to the ExCo that would improve CRCnct’s compliance with environmental standards and its alignment with sustainable practices. The ExCo is responsible for approval of any modification(s) to the policy.

Staff, consultants, interns and volunteers will be required to sign that they understand and will comply with this policy – including as part of an induction programme, where applicable – and will be briefed on revisions to the policy, additional to annual staff training on the policy.

⁹ See 3.5.1(b) of the CRCnct Operations Manual – Part 3: Financial Management – and its Annex 10 Invitation to Tender. Invited tenderers are required to respond to a values-based partnership questionnaire, which includes the following questions: In what ways do you operate so as to minimise the environmental impact (e.g. carbon footprint) of your business; Do you have an environmental policy? If so, please provide a copy when submitting your tender; Is your business owned by (or a subsidiary of) any company/business involved in the extractive industry (processes that lead to the extraction of raw materials from the earth (such as oil, metals, mineral and aggregates), and their processing) or in nuclear energy? If so, please provide details; and Does your business generate more than 5% of its revenue (including through shareholding or investments) from the extractive industry or from nuclear energy? If so, please provide details.