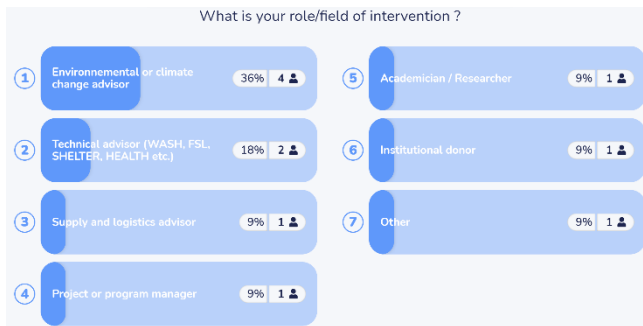




**Minutes**  
**Waste Working Group session at the HNPW**  
**18 April 2023**  
**Location : online**

The Working Group on Waste of the REH normally meets every two months. This meeting was held during the HNPW and was open to all to join. We were 40 to attend this meeting. Thank you all!

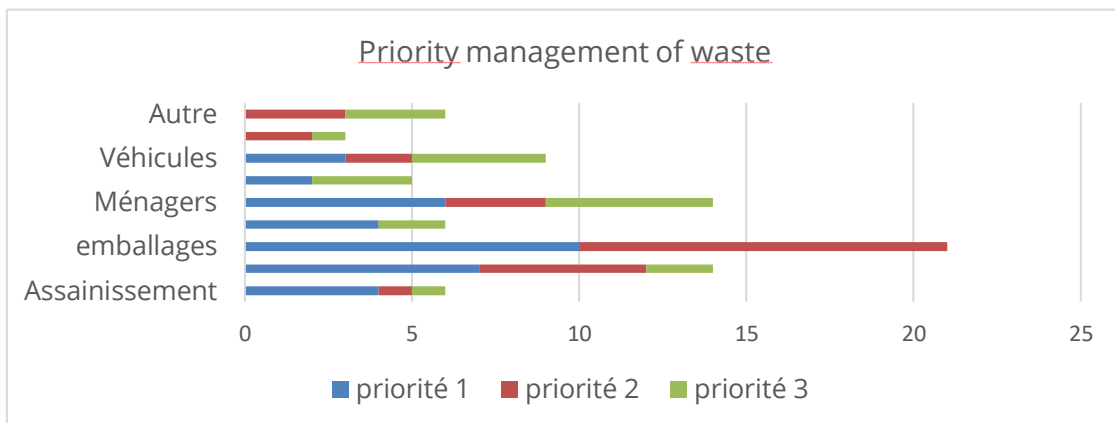
**1. Participative Exercise**



We started the meeting with a participative exercise to get to know the attendants. We wanted to know especially what field they work in, and what types of waste concerns them the most. We found that **most participants are concerned with medical, packaging and household waste the most.**



We then compared these results to those of a **survey carried out in May 2022 by Groupe URD** which asked the respondents a similar question "what waste is of priority concern for you" and obtain these results, such



**that packaging, WEEE and household waste were of the biggest concern.** As such, we found similar results albeit the issue of electrical waste was not underlined during the HNPW session. In the survey, it was also found that:

- Waste management raises (growing) **environmental and health issues**
- There was little mention of reduction issues/**innovations**
- There was no mention of **reverse logistic** (a myth?)
- The **cost of management** was a recurrent problem for all type of waste

The results of the survey established the grounds for the creation of the new waste working group, by underlining what seemed to be the most pressing issues at hand with regards to waste management in providing aid.

## 2. Introduction to the REH and the Working Group

We then briefly introduced the Réseau Environnement Humanitaire ([REH](#)) which is a network of French-speaking NGOs working together to reduce the environmental footprint of aid, with over 200 members including 20 organisations. Its mission is that, given the urgency and seriousness of climate and environmental issues, the REH works to improve understanding and awareness of these issues among French-speaking humanitarian and development actors, and supports them in adopting more environmentally friendly practices.

The REH developed the [Statement](#) of commitment on Climate by Humanitarian Organisations, which is signed by 13 organisations<sup>1</sup> and sets out targeted goals around:

1. Measuring our impact
2. Reducing our carbon footprint (-50% by 2030)
3. Adapting our humanitarian action to climate risks
4. Communicating on our progress
5. Encouraging others to raise the ambition

If you want to sign on the Declaration, you can contact the Secretariat of the REH at: [secretariat@environnementhumanitaire.org](mailto:secretariat@environnementhumanitaire.org).

The **different working groups** of the REH were then presented which are:

1. **Carbon** Working Group, which aims to support member organisations to carry out their carbon footprints evaluations and then implement targeted measures to reduce the impact of their activities. It was the first WG created in 2021 (Consortium CHANGE).
  - a. Members: ACF, HI, ESF, CRF, MDM, PUI, Oxfam, SIF, SI, CARE
  - b. If you want to join you can contact: [carbone@environnementhumanitaire.org](mailto:carbone@environnementhumanitaire.org)
2. **Environmental Assessment** Working Group, which aims to support member organisations to better integrate the environment into projects through the use of environmental assessment tools (NEAT+, CEDRIG, EST, OIE, etc.).
  - a. Members: SI, ACF, HI, Oxfam, Netherlands Red Cross, CRF, PUI, SIF, GAC, CARE
  - b. If you want to join, you can contact: [evalenv@environnementhumanitaire.org](mailto:evalenv@environnementhumanitaire.org)
3. **Waste** Working Group, which aims to support member organisations to better integrate waste and its management into projects. It was created back in September 2022.
  - a. Members: ESF, Oxfam, ACF, JI, CRF, HI, SI, MDM, ACTED, SIF, PUI
  - b. If you want to join contact: [dechets@environnementhumanitaire.org](mailto:dechets@environnementhumanitaire.org)

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<sup>1</sup> Groupe URD, ACTED, Alima, Gret, ACF, CARE, SI, MDM, ESF PUI, SIF, TdH and HI

4. **Sustainable and Responsible Procurement** Working Group, which aims to support member organisations to integrate sustainable procurement concepts into the supply chain. It just recently joined the network.
  - a. Members: ACF, PUI, MDM, Oxfam, Bioforce, HI, ALIMA, MSF Belgique, SI
  - b. If you want to join contact: [achats@environnementhumanitaire.org](mailto:achats@environnementhumanitaire.org)

### 3. Presentation of the WG

The WG just recently adopted its new governance which established the following strategic objectives:

- SO1: Capitalise on members' waste management **experiences**.  
→ Through the sharing of experiences at meetings (ACF, MSF...)
- SO2: Contribute to **existing initiatives, without duplicating efforts**.
- SO3: Establish **common methodologies** and tools at programmatic and support level.
- SO4: Cooperate with **suppliers** to optimise purchasing/reduce packaging and/or integrate or develop *reverse logistics services*.
- SO5: Advocate **with donors** to better take into account waste in proposals/projects (accept "real" cost).

The WG also wants to be a platform to share **innovative solutions in the field**. We have as such received presentations from [Waste for Warmth](#), and today Precious Plastic.

### 4. Presentation of the Precious Plastic Initiative

**Yann Chauvin of the Precious Plastic** initiative then presented their work. [Precious Plastic](#) is an initiative that develops **small recycling machines that can allow small scale artisanal recycling**. It started in 2013 as a part of a school project, and several versions were released until the actual one (semi-industrial machines) was released in 2020. It is **an open-source project that allows to set up small scale recycling in remote areas**.

In 2019, the initiative allowed for **380+ tons of plastic to be recycled**, with 2 million euros in annual global revenue from all Precious Plastic workspaces (500+ in 100+ countries!) and over 7k users on their community platform.

Their machines and the initiative can be used in humanitarian contexts, to help set up recycling centers in remote areas, such as the **Tindouf Sahrawi Camp in Algeria**. There, they set up a recycling center in partnership with UNHCR, as well as the Sahrawi Ministry in charge of the Environment. They set up 30 machines and provided trainings such that the center could be run by people living in the camp. After a year, the center allowed for **around 10 tons of plastics to be recycled** (even though it has a larger capacity) and all machines were found to still be operational – impressive when taking into account the fact that they are in a desert!

They found a few challenges however:

- Issues with management being unclear
- The center is **not yet 100% profitable**
- The **plastic quality that is being recycling (not the product) is very low**

To address these challenges, they have decided to limit the production to that of recycled benches that they can then sell on the market in the closest city. They also sell barrels of plastic bottles to the market as raw material, as their already exists recycling for PET there and there are buyers for them. They also want to increase the capacity of the center for it to be financially sustainable in the long term. If you want more information on this project, **you can watch their video [here](#)**.

<p><b>Q</b> : You mentioned that you have tried to reduce the volume of water that you need to wash up the plastics as water is a scarce resource in the camp. How did you manage to do so?</p>
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<p><b>A</b> : We reuse the water necessary to wash the plastics. This has a limit, as after a certain point the water is too dirty to be used. We change the water every month or less, and we use around 500L of water.</p>
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<p><b>Q</b>: How much energy do the machines need?</p>
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<p><b>A</b>: 15kW for the biggest machines. They have tried to put a few machines on solar power.</p>
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<p><b>Q</b>: How was the project accepted in the camp?</p>
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**A:** The project is made for people living in the camp (to be used and ran by them), in a context where there are very few work opportunities. Additionally, there is a large issue with an open dumping fill in the camp. Thus, the project was welcomed as it is a solution to a problem that they were already sensitized to.

**Q:** How do you collect the plastic?

**A:** There are already collecting services in the camp, so they just asked them to provide for the center.

**Q:** What kind of plastic can be recycled?

**A:** We work with thermoplastics, so it works best with PVC and PET.

**Q:** To make it mor profitable, was there any possibility of considering producing items that UNHCR would be distributing in any case? Realizing that of course a dialogue needs to be had with UNHCR in the first place on whether they can procure such locally produced items.

**A:** The objective is for both the locals and the local NGOs to work together, the first year they had issue with quality of the plastic which was not acceptable. So this year they focused on the benches and they sold them to the local NGO putting them in their offices and schools.

**Q:** Was the knowledge for machine maintenance passed on to the workers?

**A:** When we install the machines, we provide training for general maintenance and also provide replacement parts for those that are most likely to need change. When we came back for a follow up visit, we also did some larger maintenance, for which the workers were there (assembly and disassembly of the machines) – they should thus be able to do the maintenance of the center.

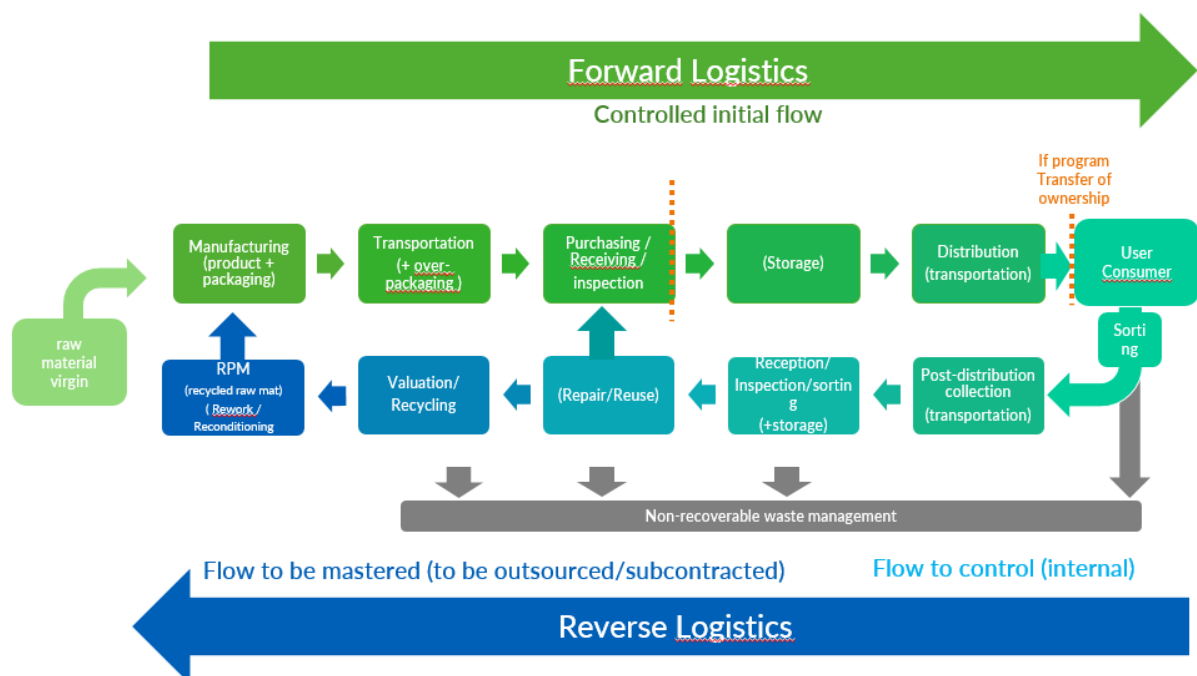
**Q:** How much do the machines costs? Can the machines be financially sustainable?

**A:** Depending on the size of the project, from 50 000 to 100 000€. So the initial set up costs are quite high. However, in the case of the Tindouf camp, UNHCR paid these initial costs such that it should not depend on funding after the initial set up, especially if you plug into existing markets.

## 5. Open discussion on reverse logistics

The topic of reverse logistics was identified as missing in the response of the initial survey realized. Indeed, it is a topic that might not be well known but that could be a solution to the issue that humanitarians cannot capture the waste that is produced after a collection. **Céline Heim, of ACF who is co-lead of this WG**, thus presented the basic principles of reverse logistics, before opening up the floor for discussions.

### Process program



Reverse logistics in the sector of supply chains, are processes of anything returning inwards through the supply chain or **traveling 'backward' through the supply chain**. Hence the name reverse logistics.

Some reverse logistics examples are:

- Return of goods by customers
- Return of unsold goods by distribution partners due to contract terms
- Re-use of packaging
- Refurbishment of goods
- Repairs and maintenance as per guarantee agreements
- Re-manufacturing of goods from returned or defective items
- Selling of goods to a secondary market in response to returns or overstocking
- Recycling and disposal of end-of-life goods
- Existing and growing market dynamics, such as higher customer return rates and a need for recycling and re-use, are increasing the occurrence of these instances of reverse logistics.

She mentioned a pilot that ACF is trying out with the distribution of plumpynut, asking beneficiaries to bring back the packaging in exchange for a new one. This is because the packaging of plumpynut is particularly difficult to recycle and is quite damaging left in the environment.

The process of **consignment**, where you return the container where you received the product, was mentioned as a way reverse logistics could be implemented within humanitarian distributions, when you know that you will return to the same area with the same populations.

One participant also mentioned that **repurposing** can also be introduced in the supply chain. Another participant mentioned that one must be careful with **composting and biodegradable packaging** options as these might only be available at the industrial level and not at a small scale (see [this resource](#) for more information). A participant asked if reverse logistics implies **extra cost** (for storing and so on) which launched into the following section of the discussion.

## 6. Extra cost of waste management

Céline then presented an issue that many actors in the sector face: the issue of the extra cost of management. The issue is double:

- We often **do not know what the costs will be**, so that we cannot include it in a proposal.
- We do not know **if it will be funded/it might cost too much**.

For dealing with the waste that is produced by NGOs on the field (program activities and facilities), the challenges they face are multiple:

- Waste collection is handled by private actors who transport, incinerate or landfill it.
- Small volumes are not attractive → potential for collaboration between NGOs
- The costs of treatment, sorting at source, and lack of space
- The lack of time when acting in an emergency and the imperative of a timely delivery
- There exists different levels of maturity of waste sectors

With regards to the last challenge, they have actually identified 4 levels:

### 1 – Developed and accessible sectors

- EU cases etc

### 2 – Sectors developed but not accessible

- opportunity for pooling (collection)

### 3 – Underdeveloped sectors

- opportunity for pooling (collection) + strengthening (support project) on value creation

### 4 – Non-developed sectors

- Global project reinforcement (municipality support) + specialist partners pooling opportunities: collection management + hazardous waste export and monitoring

**Because of this, the costs of waste management will vary across settings.** She illustrated this with the experience of ACF in Erbil in Iraq with that of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso. In one case, there are quite developed sectors and in the other it is less formal. **However, in Erbil they averaged the cost of one pick to 230USD as opposed to 22USD in Ouagadougou.**

They have also conducted a costs analysis for **reverse logistics** back to the capital in Burkina Faso, and found that it would cost up to **63 200USD per year.**

As such, these analyses underline that for now it is out of scope for many NGOs to integrate waste management into their projects due to budgeting. **This WG thus advocates for donors to accept the true cost of waste management.** NGOs also need to work with local structures to increase their capacities and can work together to gather enough waste to be financially sustainable.

Reverse log collection process Bases -> capital

Estimate to 6.5 %

activities	Monthly cost	Annually cost
Transport : Collect from remote delivery point to sub office	3000	18000
Sorting area	600	7200
Transport sub office to capitale - 1/month	900	10800
Sorting area	600	7200
Treatment Hazardous waste non recycled		20000
<b>Total</b>		<b>63200</b>

## 7. Perspectives for the WG

Looking forward, the WG will:

- Look to the creation of a **common Standard Operating Procedure** for waste management, similar to what the ICRC [developed](#) for medical waste
- **Map recycling companies** for the Ukraine response
  - Do not hesitate to send us who in your organisations is working on this response/has access to this information, so that we can make the links
- **Cooperate with other initiatives**, such as Joint Initiative, and other WG such as Sustainable Procurement
  - An example of that is the review of the NEAT+ waste module

## 8. Join the WG

Do not hesitate to join the REH ([here](#)) and then contact [evalenv@environnementhumanitaire.org](mailto:evalenv@environnementhumanitaire.org) to join the WG!