Minutes
Waste Working Group
May 2nd, 2024
Watch the recording here: https://youtu.be/SDeKfOdB35k

The mission of this working group (WG), through its exchanges and sharing of experience, is to help member organisations take better account of waste and waste management in their projects. This issue requires cooperation between a wide range of players, in order to address the question from upstream (e.g. reducing packaging) to downstream (e.g. improving recycling channels). The aim of this WG is to coordinate users throughout the humanitarian sector so that waste can be taken into account in the best possible way.

This session presented the analysis of the WG on the different challenges that its members, and humanitarian actors in general might face with regards to waste management, as well as potential solutions.

1. The REH and the Working Group

The REH (Réseau Environnement Humanitaire) is a network of francophone humanitarian and development practitioners, working together to reduce the environmental footprint of aid. It exists since 2012, and formalised in 2021. There are over 250 members, including more than 30 organisations. The network has 4 working groups to operationalise its work:

- One on **waste management**
- One on **sustainable procurement**
- One on **environmental assessments**
- One on **carbon**

The WG exists since September 2022, and its main aim is to support member organisations in taking greater account of waste and waste management in their projects. The space offered in the WG allows for **exchanges of good practices/ways of working** between the members to inform and potentially harmonize.
The WG collaborates with other initiatives such as WREC and Joint Initiative (through mappings) and hulo. Overall, what we have found out is that there is a need for collaboration and mutualization on the field between different organisations and to work with whole sector: development NGOs, UN, private sector, governments

The current members of the WG are: Action Contre la Faim, ACTED, Handicap International/Humanity & Inclusion, Médecins sans Frontières, Electriciens sans Forntières, Oxfam, hulo and Groupe URD.

This session adopted an approach where we presented the main challenges identified by the WG, as well as possible solutions. The challenges identified are:

- Knowing the **waste framework** + respect and governmental monitoring
- **Knowing your waste** (type and quantity)
- Existence and **identifying** recyclers (and contractualising them)
- **Cost return** when small quantity
- Managing **dangerous waste** (medical, e-waste…)
- What to do when there are no local recyclers?
    - Working with the **informal sector**
    - Implementing **reverse logistics** to capital

- Managing **transboundary movements**

The participants also highlighted two other challenges, related to monitoring and reporting.

2. Knowing your waste

One of the first challenge organisations might face when wanting to start managing their waste is to know the type and quantity of waste they produce and need to be managed. It also needs to be put in a way that makes sense for recyclers – for example, if you have x amounts of laptops, you need to know how many y batteries that makes or z memory cards, as recyclers do not see the same value in the waste. There are many different types, as this table highlights – but it always depends on the local context!

type of waste	Detail of final waste(excluding donation of equipment in good condition to partners, etc.)
Plastic	Hard plastics: water bottles (1-PET), Jerrycan (2-HDPE), 3-PVC Others plastics: plastics film (4-LDPE), Yogurt cups (5-PP); hard packaging (6-PS) and 7-Others
Iron metals	Iron and derivative
Non-ferrous metals	Copper and its alloys such as bronze and brass; Nickel, Palladium and Platinum; Titanium; Aluminum, Tin and Lead. Zinc. Precious metals (silver, platinum and gold)
Cardboard	cardboard
Paper	printed paper etc.
Multilayer cardboard	juice brick
laminate paper	plastic banner
Wood	Wood pallet
other Furniture	Furniture, office chair, etc.
Textile	Old/obsolete t-shirt
WEEE (Electrical / Electronic Equipment Waste)	Computer hardware (e.g. servers, routers, external drives, processors) Telecommunications equipment (e.g. desk phones, radios, cell phones) Electrical and electronic equipment (e.g. cameras, smoke detectors) Computers (e.g. desktops, laptops, monitors, keyboards, others) Scanners, printers, copiers Lighting equipment : Light bulbs, LEDs, fluorescent lamps Lighting equipment : Others, ex switches, etc Photovoltaic solar equipment : Photovoltaic panels, etc.
Domestic engine equipment	Refrigerant gas appliances: air conditioners, refrigerators Other Appliances as Inverters, etc

type of waste	Detail of final waste(excluding donation of equipment in good condition to partners, etc.)
Batteries of different types	Lithium ion Lead-acid or gel batteries Battery (ex AAA)
Energy motor equipment	Vehicle, generators, motorcycle, etc.
vehicle spare parts	vehicle spare parts, GE, motorcycle
Used oil	Used engine oil, lubricants, brake fluid
Tires	all types
Ink cartridges	all types
Organic materials, composting	leftover food
Products containing starch	Building materials, false ceilings. cardboard-asbestos, fiber cement, composite, etc.
Solvent, paints	
Chlorinated products	Chlor, etc.
Water Testing Related Products	pool tester, etc.
Chemicals and Fertilizers	Phytosanitary products, pesticides, veterinary products
Glass	Bottle, crystal, etc.
Household waste	Other: toilet paper, tissues, ashtray, etc.
Others	Others, complete
Others	Others, complete
medical waste	Soiled medical items, used sharps, glass clothing, etc.
medical waste	Non-sharp waste, medicines
medical waste	Medication
medical waste	Used masks, latex office gloves without bodily fluids, etc.

Then Céline from ACF showed how they did a waste assessment in one of their missions, as is shown in the pictures. It can be a lengthy process – but a necessary step!

3. Identifying recyclers

Next step is to be able to identify if there any recyclers in the area in which your operations take place. There are a few ways one can find out:

- Meet the Ministry of the Environment and the department in charge of waste for getting advice and list of recyclers (which can also be a way to get to know the local regulations on waste management)
- Internet research
- Environmental NGOs
- Visit of recycling area (informal sector)

Another very good resource is the mapping developed by the Joint Initiative and the WREC Project, which provides a list of the identified recyclers/recycling facilities in a given country. It is a living document, which is developed by its users – so you can use it, and contribute to it!

4. Assessing recyclers

After having identified the recyclers, it is important to conduct an audit – and if you can, to pay them a visit. Indeed, we see some large differences between what might be said on a website and the reality when conducting a technical visit. To guide this visit, the WREC has developed a Waste Management and Recycling Assessment Guidance, which provides details on what kind of aspects need to be looked at, as well

as what questions should be asked when conducting an audit. You can integrate this resource into your own auditing forms and/or adapt it to your specific needs!

5. Contracting recyclers

Once you know your waste, have identified potential recyclers, and have conducted a technical visit, you might be ready to contractualise a recycler – congrats! Here are a few points you need to take into account when doing so, to insure a safe and controlled process, making sure that you consider:

- All **stages or one of them** (collection + r**ecycling + exportation ?**)
- Description of the **objects and mitigations**
- Undertakes the non recoverable waste (what happens to it – does it end up in a landfill ?)
- **Compliance with local regulations**
- Their source of funding/**business plan**
- A clause allowing them to terminate the contract if they are not competent

Especially, to be considered in the contract:

- Roles and **responsibilities**: from the picking to the recycling and treatment stage
- **Weighing process**
- Recycler and treatment **certificate**
- **Cost**

6. What happens when there are no recyclers?

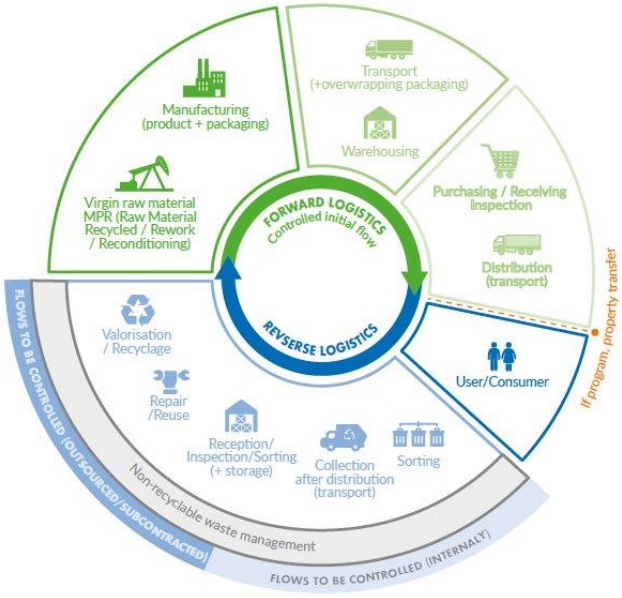
It can be the case that there are no recyclers in the area for your specific waste, or that the cost is too high for the amount of your waste. In this case, you could consider:

- Working with the informal sector
- Using reverse logistics to the capital
- Moving your waste to another country

Working with the informal sector*:* it might be the case that there are no formal structures to manage your waste, but that there are informal structures - it can even be an opportunity for further development. However, there is a minimum framework to be established, to ensure the quality of the process and adherence to your organisation's policies:

- do not work with children
- do not transfer hazardous waste (e-waste type) - unless a framework is provided (training, support, etc)
- ask for a minimum of return: recycled and non-recycled materials
- support formalization (if possible)

Using reverse logistics to the capital: Reverse logistics is a type of supply chain management that moves goods from customers back to the sellers or manufacturers.
Once a customer receives a product, processes such as returns or recycling require reverse logistics. This can be a solution if there are no local recycling solutions, but there might be in the capital.



The five stages of reverse logistics:

- Process the return
- Determine the return category
- Move products to reduce waste
- Execute the repair process
- Recycle items that cannot be repaired or resold.

Moving waste to another country: If there is no local solution, but you found one in a neighboring country, you could potentially transfer your waste across borders. However, this is a complicated, lengthy, and costly process with no guarantee! International waste transfers are regulated under the **Basel Convention**[1], and moving your waste across borders requires to follow several steps:

1. Data collection and verification – including completed inventories with waste items and quantities
2. Filling Basel documentation - including notification and movement documents, and describes information on waste types, disposal methods, and states of import, export and transit.
3. Receiving Basel approval from the importing country
4. Receiving Basel approval from the exporting and transit countries
5. Movement of hazardous waste (e-waste)

It is quite hard to receive approval from importing and transit countries, and if at any point in a time during the move a document is missing, that means you need to stock your waste and can pay high customs costs. Thus, it is quite complicated and can quickly become quite expensive.

It might be easier to go through countries that have bi-lateral agreements, such as Regional East African Agreement (EACO), as it can mean avoiding going through the whole Basel process.

The members of the WG have started an excel sheet to have a directory of all the crossings they are aware of from humanitarian organisations, such that if one wants to do the same process, they can contact the people who conducted it and find out the process and/or pool services!

7. Conclusions of the WG

The WG wanted to emphasise that:

- The main aspect for waste management is **reduction of risk** – so there are choices to be made in the whole process;
- There is the need to **build the capacity of recyclers**, so to work with the recyclers and provide feedback (especially when conducting the audits). Recycling could even become an income generating activity for an NGO if well done and in collaboration with recyclers;
- There are many opportunities for **pooling services** between the different NGOs! It is important to share and collaborate on this specific issue!

To achieve the points above, we need to make sure:

- to design humanitarian responses that **integrate waste management and circular economy from the design of the project;**
- to advocate to donors to finance the **real cost of environmentally sound waste management**.

Q: Do you know if the same process is applied for hazardous and non-hazardous waste for the Basel Convention? or is there another regulation applied for non-hazardous waste? **R**: Indeed, it can be easier with non-hazardous waste, but it still requires to go through a process. Potentially, you could send your waste as 'raw material' and this could ease up the process as well, if you have a company that could buy it.
R: In the hulo countries, they have a file to collect waste volumes and evaluate volumes / solutions (now in CAR, Burkina Faso and Lebanon) probably in Iraq, DRC in the coming months – so it can provide an overview, and highlight opportunities for pooling of services!

Thank you all for joining, and if you have any questions, you can reach out to déchets@environnementhumanitaire.org

[1] Want to know more and understand how the Basel Convention works ? Try this short e-learning module.