



Governance of the Réseau Environnement Humanitaire (REH)

1. Introduction and background

The Réseau Environnement Humanitaire (REH) was created in 2012 out of a shared need to discuss and progress on the integration of environmental considerations into humanitarian action. The network has been led by Groupe URD since its creation and initially brought together individuals working in the humanitarian sector who were keen to see their environmental concerns taken into account by their organisations and partners.

The first construction period (2012-2014) enabled the foundations to be laid through a diagnosis of the progress, needs and difficulties of each organisation, as well as the holding of thematic meetings followed by technical sheets and the writing of articles.

The second period of consolidation (2015-2020) saw the number of REH members increase and diversify, while the network's management was facilitated by dedicated Groupe URD staff. This dynamic has logically coincided with the growing importance of environmental issues, particularly climate change, on the international scene, and NGOs could not remain silent about this. Increasingly aware of environmental issues, a large number of NGOs have made commitments to reduce their environmental footprint and to take environmental issues into account in their programmes, notably through [the declaration of commitment by humanitarian organisations on climate](#) signed at the National Humanitarian Conference in December 2020.

2021 marked the start of a new period for the REH, which had to respond to requests for operational support from its NGO members. The latter want to have access to a network equipped to carry out operational projects to reduce their environmental footprint, starting with their carbon footprint. However, the experience of a consortium of REH member NGOs, organised to collectively reflect on a carbon footprint methodology, highlighted certain limitations in the REH's governance, making the expected operational support impossible.

An initial formal governance structure was therefore established in 2021-2022 to enable the REH to support its members' concrete initiatives while maintaining its primary missions of knowledge sharing and dissemination. This initial governance structure was the result of collaborative work between several REH members and was approved at the REH meeting on 10 February 2022, using a [method inspired by management by consent](#).

After more than two years of experimenting with this governance structure, REH members seem fairly satisfied with how it works. However, it has become necessary to readjust certain elements, in particular to simplify some processes. This document therefore sets out the new governance structure for the REH.

2. Mission and objectives

General mission

In view of 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.

Specific objectives:

- **SO 1:** Promote a spirit of collaboration and encourage the sharing of experience and knowledge on the links between the environment and humanitarian or development aid.
- **SO 2:** Support studies, tools and projects aimed at reducing the environmental footprint of humanitarian and development aid, disseminate them and promote action.
- **SO 3:** Advocate with the management and governance bodies of member organisations that are not yet committed to reducing their environmental footprint and with other actors, particularly donors, in order to promote the institutional integration of environmental concerns in the sector.

3. Participants

The REH is a network open to any individual or organisation interested in environmental issues in the humanitarian aid or international development sector and wishing to contribute to the REH's overall mission and specific objectives.

To become a member, an organisation must appoint one (and only one) official representative by signing and sending a letter of representation to the REH secretariat, along with the organisation's logo, which will then be added to the REH website. The person then registers with the REH on behalf of their organisation via the page [Join the REH - Réseau Environnement Humanitaire](#). If the designated official representative subsequently leaves the organisation, the latter must appoint a new official representative within three months. After this period, the organisation is no longer considered a member of the REH and its logo is removed from the website.

Any other person is invited to join the REH by registering as an individual, whether or not they belong to a member organisation. To do so, the person is invited to (i) complete the questionnaire; (ii) accept the terms and conditions of use of data in accordance with the GDPR policy; and (iii) read and accept the code of conduct via the page [Join the REH - Réseau Environnement Humanitaire](#). A person working for an REH member organisation but who is not an official representative of that organisation may be asked to represent their organisation in a thematic Working Group (WG). In this context, which is limited to the theme in question, they contribute to the WG on behalf of the NGO.

4. Functioning

The REH is made up of three types of interdependent bodies: the Forum, the Working Groups (WG) and the Steering Committee (COPIL).

The Forum:

The Forum serves as a platform for the exchange of ideas and debate, enabling the sharing of information and experiences between REH members and, more broadly, with all interested parties. As such, it actively contributes to collective reflection, particularly on strategy and advocacy. It is an open and public forum. The minutes and presentations are freely available on the REH website.

The Forum meets at least four times a year on specific themes, by videoconference or in a hybrid format, and its members can exchange information in parallel to contribute to the dynamics of the reflections. During the Forum meetings, individuals or organisations that are not members of the REH can also be invited to participate by the Forum Secretariat in order to feed the exchanges.

Groupe URD will be responsible for leading and coordinating the Forum. Forum meetings will alternate between videoconference and in person, on the premises of a member organisation, while also ensuring a system of remote participation for people who cannot or do not wish to travel.

Working Groups:

Each Working Group corresponds to a working space, the result of the crystallisation of exchanges around a specific theme. It is led by members wishing to make operational or strategic progress on a specific environmental issue with one or more specific objectives not yet covered by another WG. Thus, each WG carries out studies, tools or projects intended for this purpose. For this, it can seek ad hoc funding, provided that all the organisations involved are members of the REH.

A WG is created on the proposal of at least 3 members of the REH (including a member of the REH who volunteers to lead the WG called **LEAD**) and after validation by the COPIL. Each WG has the obligation to inform the COPIL of its progress and reflections at the appropriate times, when a decision of the COPIL is necessary.

As an additional channel of communication between the WG and the COPIL, a **focal point from the COPIL** is designated for each WG. The focal point is not necessarily a member of the WG or involved in its work. However, he or she is responsible for liaising between the relevant WG and the COPIL and therefore ensures that all relevant information and questions are forwarded to the COPIL in good time and that interim opinions are sought.

WGs are facilitated by the LEAD. The WG may be co-facilitated by other WG members. The WGs define their own operating rules and formalise them in order to clarify the chains of responsibility, particularly with regard to contacts and commitments made with external parties in their names. Whatever the operating rules defined by a WG, it should at least:

- Comply with the current REH governance framework;
- Specify the conditions for joining the WG;
- Keep an updated list of its members and transmit it regularly to the focal point;
- Draw up a report for each meeting and send it to the focal point;
- Share the results obtained with the focal point.
- Once its objectives have been achieved, a WG is closed by decision of the COPIL.

The COPIL:

The COPIL is the decision-making body of the REH. It ratifies and monitors the strategy of the REH, develops common positions, validates the creation/closure of WGs on the proposal of members, ensures the circulation of relevant information between members and between WGs, facilitates learning between members and between WGs, represents the REH in certain bodies and organises advocacy and the search for funding for the whole of the REH. The COPIL acts and decides in the general interest of the REH and of all its members. It is therefore accountable to them.

The COPIL is made up of six **operational NGOs**¹ and one elected **think tank**², all of whom are involved in reducing the environmental impact of aid and, more generally, in the links between humanitarian aid and the environment. This choice reflects the current level of involvement of actors within the REH.

The members of the COPIL are elected by the **REH member associations**³ by [a vote of approval](#)⁴, each association having only one vote whatever the number of representatives. Any NGO or think tank can be a candidate for the COPIL:

- Having at least two years' seniority within the REH;
- Expressing its candidacy in writing to all REH members at least one month before the elections, the date of which must be announced at least two months before by the COPIL;
- Having participated in at least half of the Forums over the last two years;
- Active participation in at least one WG, with the list of active members for the last two years being drawn up by each WG prior to the elections and forwarded to the secretariat;

¹ An operational NGO is a non-profit association (law 1901 or equivalent if non-French) which carries out emergency or development actions in the field.

² A think tank is also a non-profit association (law 1901 or equivalent if non-French). As opposed to operational NGOs, it does not carry out actions in the field, but its main objective is to produce knowledge and analysis. In this case, it is a think tank specialising in international emergency and development actions.

³ A member association of the REH is therefore defined as a non-profit association (law 1901 or equivalent if not French) having designated one or more representatives within the REH and duly registered with the latter as described in the paragraph "REH participants".

⁴ This means that each voter gives an assessment on each candidate (yes or no ballot).

- Having demonstrated an institutional ambition to take the environment into account (e.g. by having signed the [ICRC/IFRC climate charter](#) or the [declaration of commitment of humanitarian organisations for the climate](#), or having made equivalent commitments).

Please note that NGOs with different headquarters or operating in an international network can only submit one application to the COPIL for their entire international network. However, they will be registered as separate organisations within the REH and will therefore have one vote each.

The term of office for elected organisations is four years, renewable. In order to ensure the continuity of COPIL's actions, half of the operational NGOs will be replaced every two years⁵.

Once elected as a member of the COPIL, each organisation will mandate its environmental manager (or person in charge of this theme) to participate in the COPIL. Except in exceptional circumstances, the position assigned by the organisation may not be replaced by another during the term of office.

If a COPIL member resigns or is declared resigning, a new election is organised to replace him/her⁶.

If a COPIL place is not filled due to lack of candidates, the place shall be left vacant until one or more admissible candidates are notified in writing. If necessary, an election shall be held. In all cases, the new mandate will expire according to the original timetable.

Groupe URD is also responsible for running the COPIL and its secretariat.

The COPIL meets once a trimester, and more often if necessary. All COPIL members must attend meetings. After two consecutive absences, a member is declared to have resigned.

The COPIL takes decisions in [management by consent](#). If opposition persists despite the management by consent process, then the decision can be taken by a qualified majority of 5 out of 7 votes. The COPIL must then inform all members of the REH of the decisions taken through minutes of decision. For all decisions relating to governance, strategy, advocacy or the image of the REH, the COPIL is obliged to consult all members in advance, in their diversity. The COPIL also systematically drafts meeting minutes. These reports may be accessed upon specific request by a member and subject to the approval of the COPIL.

5. Funding

Groupe URD is responsible for obtaining funding to enable itself to fulfil its mission as facilitator and secretariat of the COPIL and of the Forum.

Furthermore, depending on needs and opportunities, the COPIL may seek other funding to achieve the mission and objectives of the REH.

Similarly, the WGs may seek funding in consortium (with all or some of their members) in order to carry out their activities, after validation by the COPIL.

When seeking funding for a collaborative project, each member of a consortium undertakes to respect the following principles:

The principle of coordination and transparency:

The member designated within the consortium as the leader of the future consortium will be responsible for coordinating the search for funding and approaching potential funders (validated according to the ethical principles described below) in order to present the collaborative project to them. It is strongly encouraged

⁵ The launch of this arrangement will involve renewing half of the COPIL's operational NGOs in 2026, on a voluntary basis and/or by random selection. The three other NGOs and the think tank elected in February 2024 will continue their mandate until 2028.

⁶ An organisation that has resigned or been declared as such is obviously not eligible to apply.

that he/she be accompanied by another member of the consortium in order to demonstrate the collaborative ambition.

If a funder publishes a call for proposals, or if contacts with this funder suggest that funding may be available for activities related to the collaborative project, the WG, after validation by the COPIL, will endorse the decision to submit a consortium project proposal by the member designated as lead partner.

The distribution of the overall budget between the different members involved in the project proposal will be decided within the consortium.

If a WG member does not wish to participate in a project set-up, or if a WG welcomes a new member when a funded project is already underway, the WG LEAD will have to ensure good coordination between project implementation and the more global implementation of the WG activities.

Ethical principles:

All decisions with ethical dimensions or related to humanitarian principles (this may concern potential consortium interventions, the nature of funding, the choice of partners, the purpose and objectives of the intervention) must be agreed unanimously by all consortium members as well as the COPIL.

The principle of non-competition and intellectual property:

The members of a consortium commit as far as possible not to compete with a competing project (same area, same sectoral scope, same funding window, etc.). As a minimum, members are required to inform each other.

The information gathered in the framework of a project set-up may be used after approval by the other members but may not be shared as such when seeking funding for an individual project.

6. Implementing a project in a consortium

When implementing a consortium project (via a WG or COPIL), the consortium member organisations must respect the following points:

- Members will carry out joint projects in a supportive and collaborative manner while respecting the specific identity of each member.
- The implementation of all collaborative actions will be carried out in a transparent and accountable manner towards all stakeholders (other REH members and institutional donors).
- The members owe each other mutual respect and trust. They commit to deploy all necessary means within the framework of their collaboration and within the limits of the contractual commitments of each member.

7. Communication

The REH has an independent, eco-designed website launched in 2022 to widely disseminate:

- Its news (REH newsletter, any communications from the Forum/WG/COPIL, any upcoming events)
- Its publications (technical data sheets, declaration of commitment)
- Links to partners and resources

The use of email by REH members must comply with the code of conduct. Furthermore, it has been decided that general communications addressed to the Forum will be channelled through the Groupe URD in order to limit and frame general exchanges.

8. Confidentiality

Information shared in the Forum is not confidential and can be shared. The **products** produced within the framework of the REH (including the WGs) will be developed for the general interest and therefore for wide distribution. They will be made available free of charge but under certain conditions of use in order to protect authors' rights, for example under a Creative Commons licence.

On the other hand, the **information** shared within the WGs is likely to be confidential and members must therefore respect the confidentiality rules defined by each WG.

9. Modalities of revision of the governance

The present governance may be revised according to two distinct processes:

A) If the rules of operation are internal to the COPIL, the members of the COPIL may decide on their revision alone, applying the decision-making procedure defined for this body.

B) In the case of the operating rules of the Forum, the WGs or the REH in general, the revision will be carried out according to the following process:

1. Decision notified in the COPIL minutes to launch a process of revision of the governance of the REH;
2. Establishment of an ad hoc working group: this will be a temporary working group (which must disappear once the revision is completed) and mixed, i.e. composed of COPIL members and Forum members outside the COPIL for a maximum number of 9 people. The choice of members will be made by consensus, on the basis of interested parties.
3. Elaboration of the new governance document by the ad hoc working group;
4. Discussion and approval by majority vote during a Forum.