

## CCIVS Sustainability/Living Earth Guidelines

### REGENERATE RECONCILE RESPECT

The Living Earth campaign (LIVE), is the culmination of CCIVS work on Peace and the Environment, it seeks to focus on what it means to live a peaceful and harmonious existence on Earth and respect towards the Earth as a living being.

The guidelines provided below are designed to encourage CCIVS members to reflect on their approaches to project implementation and the organisation of CCIVS activities, including meetings, seminars, trainings, and conferences. We recognise that not all organisations may be able to fully implement these guidelines due to varying financial capacities and access to resources. Nonetheless, these principles serve as a foundation for fostering sustainable practices within the constraints of each organisation's capabilities.

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

In advocating for the reduction of waste as much as possible, it's imperative to emphasise the principles of reduce, reuse, and repair. You may wonder why recycling is not a primary focus here. Recycling is considered the 'last' option because it's often the case that only a small percentage of items destined for recycling are actually recycled. Additionally, recycling requires energy for product transformation. Therefore, prioritising waste reduction, reuse, and repair, along with exploring composting options, are vital steps in minimising our ecological footprint.

#### Check-list:

- **Avoid Plastics:** Strive to eliminate the use of plastics whenever possible.
- **Encourage Reusables:** Promote the use of reusable items such as glasses and cups.
- **Recycling Protocols:** If recycling is necessary, ensure there are facilities available to separate waste according to the recycling systems in place in the country where the activity is conducted (aluminium, plastic, paper, glass, general waste).
- **Food Waste Management:** Where possible, explore options to compost food waste or collaborate with local residents who may want food waste for their animals.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Implement energy-saving measures in your office and focus on reducing and managing waste effectively.

### DIGITAL IMPACT

#### Paper or Digital?

Choosing between digital and paper mediums is complex. While digital options might appear more environmentally friendly, they involve substantial energy consumption due to the maintenance of digital

infrastructures, including electricity and water used in "cloud" systems and for data transfer and storage<sup>1</sup>. Today, cloud storage's carbon footprint surpasses that of the aviation industry<sup>2</sup>.

According to a report by Except Integrated Sustainability, the choice between digital and paper can be summarised as follows: If you are merely scanning through documents, it is more sustainable to read them online. However, if you will read a document more than three times or pass it to another reader, printing is more advisable.<sup>3</sup>

### Additional Considerations

The choice between paper and digital media involves numerous factors:

- **E-waste:** The environmental impact of e-waste accumulation is significant.
- **Labour and Exploitation:** The manufacturing of digital devices often involves exploitation of human and animal labour.
- **Tech Colonialism:** The phenomenon of big tech colonialism, including the use of land for data centres and electronics factories<sup>4</sup>, requires careful scrutiny regarding their location, construction, land ownership<sup>5</sup>, and resource consumption.

### Checklist for Digital and Paper Tool Evaluation:

- **Device Research:** Investigate the companies manufacturing the devices you need. Check their policies, ethics, location, resource usage, device repairability, and recycling options.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Opt for energy-efficient computers and screens.
- **Offline Work:** Aim to work offline whenever possible to conserve energy.
- **Web Server Selection:** Choose web servers that use less energy.
- **Service Provider Investigation:** Research your internet and electricity providers, preferring those with ethical practices. Opt for open-source operating systems.
- **Strategic Social Media Use:** Use social media thoughtfully and avoid overloading websites with images.
- **Email Management:** Regularly clean up your mailbox.
- **Storage Optimisation:** Use compressed storage options.
- **Device Management:** Turn off devices when not in use and establish protocols for handling used office materials—donate, sell, or recycle.

### Paper Usage Guidelines:

- **Recycled Paper:** Prefer recycled or FSC-certified paper.
- **Reuse:** Ensure that paper copies are made with the intention to be reused, not just for one-off use.
- **Paper Recycling:** Recycle old papers effectively.
- **Printer Choices:** Choose printers with refillable ink tanks to reduce waste.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652622032115>

<sup>2</sup> <https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/the-staggering-ecological-impacts-of-computation-and-the-cloud/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://except.eco/knowledge/is-digital-more-environmentally-friendly-than-paper/>

<sup>4</sup> In the case of BDS for Palestine: <https://bdsmovement.net/boycott-hp>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/indigenous-peoples/>

## TRAVEL

### Reducing Our Environmental Footprint

Travel, with its varied challenges across different countries and regions, significantly impacts our ecological footprint. The availability of robust public transportation infrastructure varies greatly, emphasising the need to prioritise sustainable travel methods.

#### Recommended Travel Options:

- **Primary Choices:** Whenever feasible, participants should opt for walking or public transportation. These are the most sustainable options available.
- **Alternatives:** In areas where public transportation is not sufficient, consider cycling or group bus hires as environmentally friendly alternatives.

#### International Travel

International travel presents complex challenges for the International Voluntary Service (IVS) movement, often without straightforward solutions. While long-distance travel may sometimes be necessary, every effort should be made to choose lower-impact transportation methods.

- **Limiting Air Travel:** If air travel is unavoidable, it should only be considered for distances exceeding 800 kilometres, after all other options have been thoroughly explored.
- **Carbon Offsetting:** To mitigate the environmental impact of long-distance flights, hosting organisations could encourage participants to support local environmental projects through donations. This helps offset emissions and contributes positively to the host country's ecological efforts.

#### Travel Checklist:

- **Prefer Sustainable Modes:** Prioritise walking, biking, sailing, train travel<sup>6</sup>, car-sharing, and public transportation for shorter distances.
- **Restrict Air Travel:** Limit flying to essential long-distance travel over 800 kilometres, and only as a last resort.
- **Support Local Environmental Projects:** For long-haul flights, consider engaging in carbon offset programs by donating to environmental projects either organised by the host or other local entities where participants can 'offset' their emissions' by making donations to environmental projects.
- **Consult the Alliance Sustainable Travel Info Sheet:** For detailed guidance based on your country of departure, refer to the Alliance Sustainable Travel Info Sheet, [http://www.alliance-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Infosheet\\_sustainable\\_transport\\_2021\\_update.doc.docx.pdf](http://www.alliance-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Infosheet_sustainable_transport_2021_update.doc.docx.pdf)." This resource helps you choose the most environmentally friendly transportation options.

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<sup>6</sup> We understand the overall environmental impact of trains may be on a par with planes - depending on the length of the journey. (pesticides used on the train tracks, fuel used by trains etc are all to be taken into account).

## ACCOMMODATION

When selecting accommodation, it's crucial to make informed choices that align with our commitment to sustainability and ethical practices. Consider who operates the accommodation, how your funds are being utilised, and their adherence to sustainable and ethical standards. If possible, prefer accommodations provided by the host organisation. If the host's facilities do not meet the requirements, or if they are unavailable, seek alternatives such as non-profit organisations that align with our values.

### Accommodation Checklist:

- **Ethics Policy:** Ensure the accommodation has a clear ethics policy that covers labour conditions and environmental impact.
- **Workers' Rights:** Prioritise accommodation where workers' rights are respected and protected.
- **Waste Management:** Inquire about the accommodation's waste reduction practices. Check if waste is separated and if organic waste is composted.
- **Low-Impact Options:** Where feasible, choose accommodations known for their low environmental impact or bioclimatic properties.
- **Sustainable Hygiene Products:** Prefer accommodations that use eco-labelled or locally made natural/organic hygiene products with minimal packaging.
- **Resource Conservation:** Request that sheets and towels not be changed daily to conserve water and energy.
- **Responsible Resource Use:** Encourage participants to use electricity and water responsibly, promoting conservation efforts.

## FOOD AND WATER

As stewards of our planet, it is crucial to consider not only our diets but also the broader environmental and social impacts of our food choices. A significant issue is food waste: globally, approximately one-third of all food produced is discarded, and in the U.S., this figure reaches nearly 50%. Often, fruits and vegetables are thrown away simply because they do not meet aesthetic standards, despite being perfectly edible.<sup>7 8</sup>

Water consumption also demands our attention. It's essential to be conscious of the amount of water we use in everyday activities such as showering, washing dishes, and even the cleaning products we choose, which can affect local water quality and ecosystem health.

At home or in the office, the quality of our drinking water is crucial. Whether sourced from municipal supplies, wells, springs, or rainwater systems, it's vital to test for contaminants like

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2013/2/23/eu-supermarkets-blamed-for-kenya-food-waste>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jul/13/us-food-waste-ugly-fruit-vegetables-perfect>

'forever chemicals'—substances that persist in the environment and potentially harm health. In France, for example, NGOs have actively campaigned to monitor and reduce levels of glyphosate in the population. Filtering water is a recommended step to ensure water safety.<sup>9</sup>

By making more informed choices about what we eat and how we use water, we can significantly reduce our environmental footprint and support healthier, more sustainable communities.

#### Check-list:

- **Reduce Food Waste:** Encourage participants to avoid wasting food during meals and to consider leftovers creatively.
- **Support Local and Sustainable Food Sources:** Prefer accommodations that offer locally-sourced, non-processed foods. Support local, organic, free-range, and small-scale producers. Promote eating seasonally available foods and attending local producers' markets.
- **Encourage Sustainable Gardening:** Engage participants in home-gardening or community gardening projects. Determine if your organisation can produce its own food or if LMTV volunteers can help maintain gardening plots.
- **Minimise Packaging:** Reduce packaging use wherever possible. Encourage participants to use refilling systems for existing packaging or to purchase reusable packaging that can be taken home or reused for other projects.
- **Promote Reusable Containers:** Provide opportunities for participants to fill up their water bottles. Encourage the use of reusable glasses and cups.
- **Conserve Water:** Encourage participants to be mindful of their water use, especially during showering and dishwashing. Consider recommending eco-friendly sponges and water-saving practices.
- **Choose Non-toxic Products:** Use natural, non-toxic cleaning products, soaps, and shampoos. Inform participants about reef-safe sunscreen products and their benefits.
- **Conserve Water While Doing Dishes:** If participants are responsible for washing their own dishes, encourage them to be mindful of their water usage. Suggest the use of eco-friendly sponges, which are more sustainable and reduce environmental impact<sup>10</sup>.

#### PURCHASE OF GIFTS/SOUVENIRS

Gifts and souvenirs are a popular aspect of IVS events. It's important to be mindful about the type of gifts we choose and their potential for reuse. Consideration should be given to both the utility and the sourcing of these items to ensure they align with sustainable practices.

#### Guidelines for Producing and Selecting Gifts:

- **Material Use:** For items like tote bags or T-shirts, opt for natural and organic materials such as cotton, bamboo, linen, wool, hemp, and naturally dyed materials. This approach avoids harmful chemicals and plastics.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.pan-europe.info/campaigns/great-glyphosate-court-case/stopglyphosate>

<sup>10</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/15rF7PeBnQ9E93JOIO5gYc1q0bD8OMa5R/view?usp=sharing>

- **Local Production:** Seek to have these items produced locally. Supporting local artisans and businesses not only boosts the local economy but also reduces the carbon footprint associated with transportation.
- **Ethical Sourcing:** Guide participants on choosing gifts that are made from ethically sourced and natural materials. Promote products crafted by local artisans to support community businesses.
- **Sustainability in Purchasing:** Encourage the purchase of second-hand or upcycled products. These choices help reduce waste and support a circular economy.
- **Reusable Shopping Bags:** Urge participants to use cloth bags instead of plastic ones when shopping at markets. This simple switch significantly cuts down on plastic waste.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For further information and to explore more tools and training opportunities on environmental sustainability, please visit the following websites:

- **Alliance Network Environmental Sustainability Tools:** Access a wide range of tools to support your sustainability initiatives at [Alliance Network](#).
- **SCI Climate Themes:** Learn more about climate action and sustainability themes at [Service Civil International](#).
- **CCIVS iLearn:** Participate in online courses on Gardening, Bioconstruction, and Soil4Life available through [CCIVS iLearn](#).
- **Living Earth Campaign:** For comprehensive resources and information about the Living Earth Campaign, visit [CCIVS Living Earth](#).