

ACTED's Greening Strategy 2021-2025

June 2021



Summary

This document outlines ACTED's ambitious greening strategy to tackle environmental degradation and climate change while meeting the needs of the most vulnerable who are often those most affected by the deepening environmental crisis. The strategy pursues two objectives: 1. Greening the organization and reducing its overall carbon and environmental footprint; and 2. Upscaling its programming related to fighting climate change and preserving the environment, reducing environmental degradation and fighting pollution.

ACTED's greening strategy is aligned with its 3Zero vision aiming at positively impacting the issue of exclusion, climate change and poverty, but also – as a European organization – with the principles of the [European Green Deal](#), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets. The strategy aims to contribute to the commitments made by States at the COP 21 to limit the increase in temperature well below 2°C and if possible 1.5°C compared to the pre-industrial era, and anticipates the commitments of COP 15 on biological diversity that will take place in 2021 capitalizing on the Aichi biodiversity targets.

Background

Climate change and the environmental impact of human activities lie at the very heart of some of the most complex and pressing issues the world is currently facing. In the latest Global Risks Report 2021 from the World Economic Forum, four of the five top risks are related to the environment, with infectious diseases risks increasing because of human activities continuously encroaching natural habitats. Environmental degradation, deforestation, desertification, and pollution are an existential threat and already affect all the world's people and ecosystems. The most vulnerable, who have contributed the least to these disruptions, are the hardest hit. Without a drastic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in order to curb the increase in temperature well below 2°C and if possible 1.5°C compared to the pre-industrial era, and without ambitious and innovative measures to preserve and restore biodiversity, the current environmental crisis will continue to have an increasingly negative impact. The world's poorest and most marginalized communities will be the hardest hit by the effects of climate change, and have the less means to adapt and mitigate against its impacts by themselves, thus severely limiting the chances of vulnerable populations to sustainably improve their living conditions.

As the environmental crises deepens, solidarity organizations such as ACTED are faced with two simultaneous challenges. On the one hand, they must propose coherent and proactive actions in order to respond to this crisis and support populations to be more

resilient, prepare for and adapt to a new reality as well as preserve and conserve their environment and ecosystems. On the other hand, positively contributing to the collective responsibility by greening their operations to ensure that their work does not further contribute to deteriorating the environment people live in and rely on for their livelihoods.

ACTED's vision is that of a 3Zero World: Zero Exclusion (because nobody should be left behind), Zero Carbon (because we only have one planet) and Zero Poverty (because poverty should not hold back potential). This vision compels us to “walk the talk” on climate change and the environment and take all necessary measures to reduce our climate and environmental footprint at both an organizational and operational level, identify local and global solutions to climate change focusing on the most vulnerable and upscale our programming related to fighting climate change and preserving the environment.

We are the last generation with the ability to positively impact the issue of climate change. It is an opportunity to come together and shape the kind of world we want to live in. With the right intentions, strong determination, a commitment to collaboration and co-creation and guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Action we can meaningfully address the climate crisis and deliver positive change.

ACTED's Initiatives so far

Historically, ACTED's programming has always taken a resilience approach to supporting communities, aiming to link relief, rehabilitation and development throughout the cycle of our interventions to ensure sustainable development. Key themes such as Disaster Risk Management aligned with the Sendai Framework, Integrated Natural Resource Management, and Climate Smart Agricultural Production Systems have

been included in ACTED programming for many years. For example, in Myanmar, ACTED restored mangroves to reduce climate-induced disaster risks and in Uganda's Karamoja region which is prone to cyclical droughts ACTED developed a Drought Early Warning Systems (DEWS). Through principles of agro-ecology, agro-forestry, climate-smart agriculture, and permaculture ACTED restored degraded landscapes

in Somalia, Uganda and Kenya while producing food, cooking fuel, building materials, and animal fodder. In Indonesia's Nusa Tenggara Timur Province, ACTED promoted conservation agriculture, with the aim of maintaining soil ecosystems and protecting nutrients and soil structure in areas with less predictable rainfall patterns. In Afghanistan, ACTED built 130+ micro-hydro-power units, with a capacity of between 10 and 40 KW each, generating 2,250 KW of power per day for 29,000 households and in Lebanon ACTED supported a local start-up to establish an innovative app-based collection scheme for recyclable materials. ACTED builds on this body of experience and aims to further expand these concepts, while linking them to current efforts around reduction of carbon emissions, addressing the root causes of climate change and fighting exclusion and poverty. ACTED's Environment and Climate Change Adaptation Capacity Statement, and our Disaster Risk Reduction Capacity Statement both detail programs and achievements that ACTED has made in these areas over the past years.

ACTED engages with a wide variety of stakeholders. We work with governments, (national, sub-national and local), private sector (e.g. the renewable energy, Tech 4 Dev, Tech 4 Good, agri-business, micro-finance sectors and more generally companies and investors looking for achieving social & environmental impact), local civil society, donor agencies, UN, universities and research institutes to further these goals and build new collaborations. As a global solidarity actor with a presence in more than 40 countries, ACTED works with the motto to "Think Locally, Act Globally" to ensure the empowerment of local communities to address social, environmental and ecological challenges in a sustainable way. ACTED aims at identifying, catalysing and bringing to the global stage adapted solutions, built on local ingenuity. ACTED launched in 2008, the first platform for thought in Europe "Convergences" aiming at building new collaborations between public, private, and solidarity-based actors to promote the Sustainable Development Goals and the development of a world "Zero Exclusion, Zero Carbon, Zero Poverty." Events such as the annual [Convergences World Forum](#), with 5,000+ participants in Paris, France, and country-based Convergences Forums (Philippines, Tunisia, Myanmar, Greece, Colombia, Niger, etc.), aimed at the engagement of and co-construction between international stakeholders, citizens, local authorities, companies, public authorities, civil society organizations, focused on a number of SDGs realization issues including that of climate action, and the importance of the conciliation of ecological transitions alongside economic and social justice. As a member of [Alliance2015](#), ACTED pursues the goals of constructing equitable solutions to the climate crises with and for the hardest hit and building international cooperation back better to achieve more effective solidarity and collaborate, transforming food systems with those furthest behind and building international cooperation back better to achieve more effective solidarity and collaboration.

In 2018, ACTED introduced its *Environmental Safeguarding Policy*. This policy aims to protect the environment and reduce the risk of negative impacts with the aim of eventually reaching carbon neutrality. In line with this, ACTED is committed to good environmental stewardship in its operations and in all of its humanitarian and development programming.

1 Equivalent to 14,974 passenger vehicles driven for one year or 8,291 homes' energy use for one year or carbon sequestered by 34,137 hectares of forest in one year.

ACTED commits to minimizing the environmental impact of our operations while still balancing it with the necessities to fulfil our mandate. The principles to be adhered to by ACTED under this strategy include among others behavior change, protection of the environment, sustainable use of resources, minimization and safe disposal of waste, wise use of energy, sustainable procurement, responsible travel and transport, as well as regular assessments of environmental impacts.

In line with the policy requirement, in 2018 using 2017 data, ACTED conducted its first carbon footprint assessment based on the GHG protocol covering not only direct emissions resulting from ACTED-owned and operated equipment and purchased electricity (respectively, Scope 1 and 2 emissions), but also emissions from the production of goods, services and capital goods purchased by ACTED, waste generated in operations, business travel, employee commuting and upstream transportation and distribution (Scope 3 emissions). Under the GHG Protocol, the reporting of Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions is compulsory and reporting of Scope 3 emissions is voluntary. ACTED's 2017 baseline emissions were estimated to be 48,795 tCO₂e or 10 tCO₂e per full-time equivalent (FTE) employee. The majority of GHG emissions (82%) came from Scope 3 emissions and were thus associated with ACTED's operations and delivery of assistance to its beneficiaries. ACTED conducted an updated carbon footprint assessment of 2019 emissions accounting to a total of 68,851 tCO₂e¹ within which Scope 3 emissions represented 79%. Since January 2021, ACTED performs a monthly in-depth carbon footprint data collection in all its countries of operation as well as in HQ to better assess reduction opportunities and impact.

Based on recommendations provided in the carbon footprint assessment, ACTED implemented a first round of mitigation measures between 2018 – 2020. These measures include a partnership for waste collection and recycling with [ELISE](#), a specialist in collection and recycling of office waste, and [green energy provision](#) with [Plüm énergie](#) in our Paris HQ, and the carbon offsetting of all international flights booked by the Paris HQ through investing into household biogas plants in Nepal in partnership with [atmosfair](#). In addition, each country field office started to implement unique Green Action Support Plans (GRASPs) which included initiatives such as the solarization of offices, staff awareness raising and training, banning single-use plastics, reducing printing and photocopying, and shifting vehicle fleets to hybrid or electric cars, among other things.

In 2020, ACTED together with nine other NGOs, [formally committed to reduce its carbon footprint](#) by at least 30% by 2025 and 50% by 2030 in line with the IPCC recommendation and to measure the environmental and carbon impacts of our actions on a regular basis.

Finally, in 2020, ACTED officially launched its 3Zero vision and rolled out its 3Zero programming strategy, adapting its programming to better address the environmental crisis. This notably included the introduction or upscaling of programming around circular economy, ecosystems management and nature-based solutions, citizen-driven climate action, and sustainable infrastructure.

ACTED's Greening Strategy 2021-2025

The previous period of 2018-2020 was a starting point to address environmental concerns during which time ACTED HQ and ACTED missions freely set their greening ambitions, and designed reduction measures to be implemented. ACTED will now start rolling out a mandatory organizational-wide approach with dedicated actions and targets to address the climate crisis.

Through this strategy, ACTED aims to reduce its carbon footprint by at least 30% by 2025, 50% by 2030 in line with IPCC recommendations and ultimately achieve carbon neutrality for its operations. In addition, ACTED will upscale its work on climate change and environmental protection to account for a minimum of 25% of our programming portfolio by 2022.

ACTED's Greening Strategy 2021-2025 is based on 4 pillars and includes a combination of policy and operational approaches at the HQ in Paris as well as in the field:

1. **Mobilize** (our staff, partners, suppliers and donors and the humanitarian ecosystem at large);
1. **Measure** (our greenhouse gas emissions and environmental footprint);
1. **Reduce** (our carbon footprint);
1. **Adapt and Invest** (our programming related to fighting climate change and preserving the environment, reducing environmental degradation and pollution).

Mobilize: The first pillar focusses on “anchoring” the greening agenda inside the organization, across all departments and encouraging ACTED staff to adapt and change their behavior. ACTED staff in the Paris HQ and in the field will undergo training on how to make their daily professional activities more sustainable. Awareness raising sessions have been developed since the start of 2021, and will be complemented with online training modules from 2022 onwards to engage staff to measure and reduce carbon emissions. The ultimate aim is to embed climate consciousness in the DNA of all our staff.

In 2021, ACTED will sign the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations, standing together with other local, national and international humanitarian organizations and commit to step up our action to reduce risks and help people adapt to the growing impacts of the climate and environmental crises, maximize the environmental sustainability of our programmes and operations, and rapidly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and use our influence to mobilise urgent and more ambitious climate action and environmental protection among others.

In 2022, ACTED will revise its environmental safeguarding policy to reinforce its corporate commitment and align it with the latest standards and developments.

ACTED will work with its partners to ensure “corporate commitment” towards sound environmental management, including through mobilizing them to join the 3Zero Global Alliance and sign the [3Zero Charter](#), capacity building and training as well as due diligence requirements to reflect this commitment. ACTED will also contribute to developing a 3Zero label in support of initiatives promoting a 3Zero world, including those addressing the climate and environmental crisis.

To further support green supply chain practices, ACTED recognizes the importance of engaging with suppliers to reduce indirect carbon emissions. By 2025, a dedicated environment awareness raising campaign for suppliers will be designed, and an environmental audit framework introduced to support and monitor supplier's policies and practices.

With partners, donors, governments and other like-minded actors at both a local and global level within the ecosystem we are operating, ACTED will advocate for the recognition and mainstreaming of environmental protection within humanitarian and development operations aligned with the COP21 and COP15 goals, and the need to identify green innovation in the sector and exchange good practices. ACTED will also advocate towards its donors to provide the relevant financial and technical resources for the development of this approach.

ACTED will continuously mobilize communities reached (20m+ people in 2020) on how to improve behaviors, adapt to climate change (also see pillar Adapt and Invest) and take the opportunity to gather and share best green practices adapted to local contexts. This may include among others social media campaigns, mini projects, climate weeks, challenges, awards, etc.

Measure: At least every 2 years, ACTED will measure its carbon footprint in line with the internationally recognized GHG Protocol methodology and include not only the mandatory Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, but also Scope 3 emissions. The reporting benchmark will be total tCO₂e per full-time equivalent (FTE) employee and total tCO₂e per square meter. ACTED will also measure on an annual basis the total number of tCO₂e emitted for Scope 1, 2 and 3 per euro of revenue as reported in its audited financial statements. The results of this GHG inventory will be published and made publicly available on the ACTED website. In order to ensure reporting of reliable data from all field offices, a regular in-depth reporting process was already introduced in 2019, and is being strengthened and institutionalized since January 2021.

In addition, ACTED will pilot the integration of environmental impact assessments in a few ongoing projects from 2021 using the [NEAT+ tool](#) and introducing appropriate mitigation measures for potential environmental risks. Further environment assessment tools will be reviewed and possibly piloted throughout 2021-2022. A comprehensive guidance note will be developed in 2022 for environmental assessments, with recommended tools covering ACTED's varying sectors of intervention. By 2023, ACTED aims to carry out environmental impact assessments systematically across all new and ongoing projects. ACTED will collaborate with other global and local actors to ensure that data collection processes and tools are endorsed and comparable, contributing to a stronger global data base from which environmental risks and opportunities can be identified and advocated for.

Reduce: ACTED will focus on reducing its environmental impact throughout its own operations by at least 30% by 2025 and 50% by 2030 in line with the IPCC recommendations. The first area of focus will be on greening its logistics and supply chain as ACTED estimates that more than 40% of its expenses are related to procurement and other logistics costs. A revised Logistics Procedures Manual will be released in 2021, already highlighting ACTED's efforts to move towards a more sustainable and increasingly localized supply chain. For example, a “green bonus” will be introduced in procurement procedures aiming at maintaining the highest level of transparency and value-for money while choosing materials with a lower life-cycle carbon footprint. Based on the EU Green Public Procurement guidelines and other key reference guides, in 2022, ACTED will enforce more comprehensive green supply chain guidance notes providing clear recommendations to field practitioners on green best practices, and standard operating procedures to implement them. In particular, throughout 2021 and 2022, ACTED will develop and start implementing a dedicated waste management guidance note for warehouses and stocks, a green fleet management guidance note in order to reduce emissions and pollution due to transport, and a green procurement management guidance note including measures to avoid waster and plastic packaging, promote the use of recycled and biodegradable materials and more generally the procurement of items with longer life-cycles. Related training materials for staff will be developed accordingly.

In parallel, based on quantified objectives drawn from ACTED GHG global reports, detailed GHG emissions reduction action plans will be developed in each country, including ACTED HQ, covering the 2022-2025 period to “green” our office networks from capital to the sub-areas. They will include SMART indicators and will be reported against annually by each country and HQ, to track progress. Proposed measures will target sound environmental management of offices: improving water, paper and waste management, recycling, clean and minimum energy usage (as possible) and optimizing travels using greener means. In a further effort to reduce our business travels footprint, ACTED aims to extend its initial carbon offsetting and compensation of international travel that was introduced in 2020 to also include trains and hotels by 2023.

In addition, the full roll-out of its digital transformation strategy by 2023 will promote automated workflows which reduces significantly paper consumption.

As a result, ACTED will release in 2024 a comprehensive green operations technical guidance note from project design and implementation (front office) to operational management (back office).

Adapt and Invest: ACTED will continue to respond to climate-induced disasters and emergencies and at the same time upscale its programs related to supporting climate change adaptation of the most vulnerable and environmental protection; This strategy will be two-fold and focusses on programming and investments.

In terms of programming, as a general principle, ACTED will aim to reduce the negative environmental impacts of programming and promote humanitarian and development actions that have a positive impact on the environment. Climate smart adaptations and environmental protection will be mainstreamed throughout all existing programming through the release of a comprehensive green operations technical guidance note from project design and implementation to operational management (refer also to Reduce pillar). Environmental assessments will be gradually introduced (refer to Measure pillar) leading to appropriate mitigation measures for programming in case of potential negative environmental impacts. Some examples of this application are below:

- ACTED will support eco-system restoration efforts, and reforestation initiatives, especially in displacement contexts, in and around settlements and sites.
- In food assistance projects, ACTED will provide energy-efficient cooking solutions and promote the use of locally-purchased and sustainable-produced food.
- In livelihoods interventions, ACTED will promote solutions to avoid coping mechanisms that have a negative impact on the environment (e.g. fuel efficient stoves to limit charcoal production)
- In shelter and settlement projects, ACTED will promote sustainable materials (e.g. sustainable timber, reuse and recycle of materials), climate friendly infrastructure designs, and promote clean/renewable energy and energy efficient solutions.
- In WASH interventions, ACTED will promote eco-sanitation solutions whenever possible, waste water re-use or recycling, water harvesting solutions to limit water consumption and usage, increase monitoring of water tables to avoid over-abstraction, and use of clean energy solutions (e.g. solar) for water points such as boreholes.
- ACTED will increase its cash-based programming to strengthen purchase from local markets and reduce transportation and distribution of in-kind items. ACTED will advocate for integrating an environment component in calculating the minimum expenditure basket.

Additionally, ACTED aims to expand and upscale its environmental protection and climate change adaptation programming portfolio from currently 10% in 2020 to at least 25% in 2022. This includes in particular the following five thematic areas under the zero carbon component of ACTED's 3Zero programming strategy:

1. *Circular economy:* ACTED will support individuals, government institutions, service providers, the private sector and social entrepreneurs in particular in urban and peri-urban areas to design out waste and pollution, keep products and materials in use as long as possible and regenerate natural systems thus promoting an economy that keeps products, equipment and infrastructure in use for longer and improve the productivity of these resources.
2. *Sustainable infrastructure:* ACTED will promote the construction, rehabilitation or retrofitting of public infrastructure for production of green energy or for more efficient resource use and consumption. Such infrastructure can improve environmental conditions and

therefore people's health and quality of life. It also supports a green economy, creates job opportunities and enhances biodiversity.

3. *Citizen-driven climate action:* ACTED strives to embed climate consciousness in the "DNA" of all the stakeholders it works with and encourages greening personal lives by promoting lifestyle changes thus building momentum for systemic change to mitigate climate change and further environmental degradation.
4. *Collaborative and resilient ecosystems management:* ACTED aims to ensure that ecosystems and natural resources are regenerated, consumed and protected in a more sustainable manner so that local populations can responsibly benefit from them to meet their needs while conserving the ecosystems for future generations.
5. *Inclusive economic opportunities:* ACTED will support inclusive economic growth that is distributed fairly across society and creates opportunities for all by ensuring individuals have adequate skills and capacities to access available livelihood opportunities, and that markets are able to offer decent employment or self-employment opportunities for unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled individuals, especially in urban and peri-urban settings.

ACTED will also ensure that all countries update and align their Country Strategy Programs with the 3Zero vision, and highlight priority areas per country that will be their focus for environmental and green project areas. The number of programs aligned with ACTED's green strategy, will be tracked at project signature stage by ACTED's Grant Management Department, identifying the programmatic area of each project, and the percent of funding within each project to each of ACTED's nice programmatic areas. This will allow ACTED to track the annual progress of increasing our green program portfolio.

ACTED will align its green programming with relevant national plans and strategies and support governments in the implementation of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) which aim to identify the medium- and long-term adaptation needs of developing countries, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) which indicate efforts to reduce national greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change and long-term Low Greenhouse Gas Emission Development Strategies (LEDS) which lay out the necessary steps to full decarbonization for each sector.

The transition and expansion of green programming to reach 25% by 2022 will be done through the use of investments that can drive this transition, both at an operational level and through programming fundraising. This will be done in a number of ways:

ACTED is already investing in the development of ACTED Flagship Initiatives, specifically, THRIVE and the 3Zero House – which both programs aim to address the challenges of climate change. THRIVE is a holistic approach for community resilience in rangelands that are highly affected by climate change, that supports nature-based solutions for landscape restoration and green economic development for agricultural, pastoral and agro-pastoral communities. The 3Zero House is a physical or digital collaborative space that will serve to multiply and accelerate innovations and solutions in a country by local actors. The multidimensional nature of social problems calls for active and innovative multi-sectoral networking. The 3Zero House will serve as this unique hub that connects diverse actors from every sector - local social enterprises, civil society organizations (CSOs), and other agents of change - mobilizing them to fuel the ecological transition, and the digital transformation towards a Zero Exclusion, Zero Carbon, and Zero Poverty world. The development of these environmentally-oriented flagship initiatives aims to better hone our technical tools and partnerships for these widely-applicable initiatives to facilitate their adoption and adaptation at the country level.

By 2025, at least one of ACTED's environmental programs will undergo a carbon credit certification scheme allowing to turn its greenhouse gas

(GHG) emission reductions and removals into carbon credits. ACTED will approach innovative global financing mechanisms, such as climate funds, that can support the expansion of the green programming areas above. ACTED aims to receive funding from at least two global climate financing mechanisms by 2024.

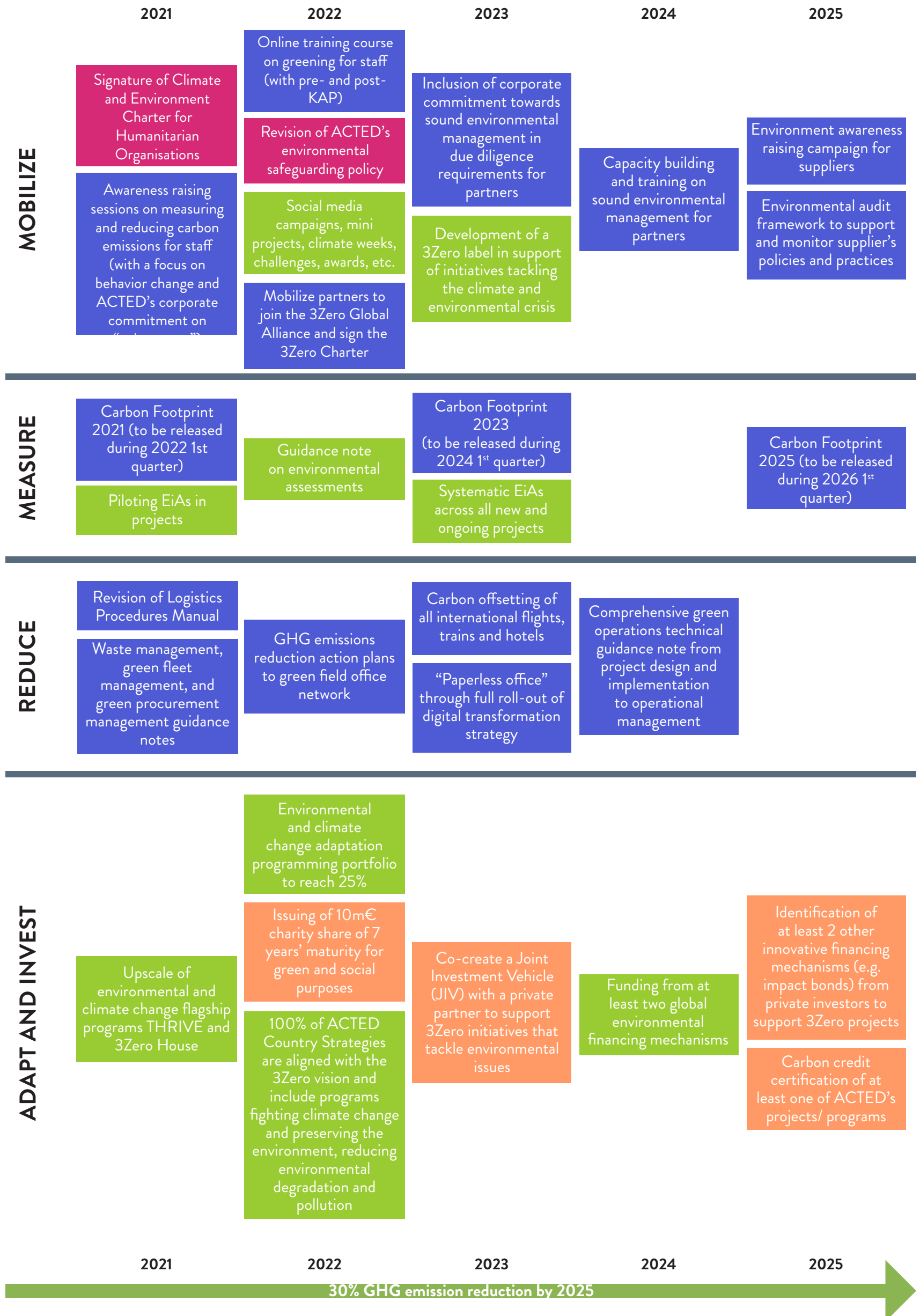
As part of its financial and investment strategy, ACTED has raised over 35m€ of solidarity shares and bonds from French institutional private investors seeking for financial and extra-financial returns, in order to pre-finance grants-funded projects, invest in its organizational development strategy, and support micro entrepreneurs through Oxus microfinance network. The last successful fundraising round of [4m€ of charity shares](#) in 2019 with a 7 years' maturity is being used to support ACTED's 2020 3Zero strategic plan with a specific focus on (i) pre-financing result/outcome-based "payment-by-result" projects funded by institutional donors; (ii) providing loans to micro entrepreneurs in Central Asia through its microfinance instrument, [OXUS](#). The margins generated will be progressively reinvested in the realization of ACTED's social and green objective by co-financing the 3Zero transition, including implementation of ACTED's GHG emission reduction strategy, progressive reinforcement and transformation of the organization's back office (personnel, digital transformation, data protection, office space)

and development of the 3Zero digital platform and 3Zero Houses to identify and scale-up local solutions to address social and environmental issues. Based on this experience, ACTED aims to:

1. Issue a 10m€ charity share of 7 years' maturity for green and social purposes in 2022 to:
 - Continue financing the 3Z transition of the organization;
 - Refinance and grow OXUS' green & social microcredit loan portfolio in Central Asia that supports entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises in greening their operations, products and services;
 - Pre-finance humanitarian and development actions with environmental focus and invest in nature-based solutions programs that can generate carbon credits.
2. Co-create by 2023 a Joint Investment Vehicle (JIV) with a private partner to support 3Zero initiatives that tackle environmental and economic development.
3. Look for other innovative financing mechanisms such as impact bond opportunities to support 3Zero projects: investment from a private impact investor reimbursed with interests based on independently evaluated outcome of a project.

ACTED Global Action Plan

Policy level action
Operational action
Programmatic action
Investment action



30% GHG emission reduction by 2025





ACTED