THE HALO TRUST

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY

OUR ENVIRONMENT VISION

Sustainability and resilience for people affected by conflict and environmental change.

OUR MISSION

HALO's Environment work is essential to prevent, mitigate, and respond to the long-term environmental impacts of conflict as well as supporting the sustainable livelihoods of people affected by conflict. With community resilience and sustainability at the heart of our mission, HALO's work will have a stronger and longer-lasting impact.

HALO's mission is to protect lives and restore livelihoods of people affected by conflict.

In order to achieve our mission we must address the dynamics between conflict and environmental change that impact people's lives and livelihoods, including climate change and the destruction of ecosystems. This Environment Strategy therefore supports HALO's mission and will help to inform future organisational strategy and policy.

ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

HALO'S MISSION

To protect lives and restore livelihoods of people affected by conflict

HALO'S VISION

A world where people can thrive in peace and dignity without fear from the impact of conflict

HALO'S ENVIRONMENT VISION

Sustainability and resilience for people affected by conflict and environmental change

GOAL 1

Address the long-term environmental impacts of conflict

GOAL 2

Enhance livelihoods, food and water security to strengthen community resilience to environmental change

GOAL 3

Reduce HALO's global environmental footprint

INTRODUCTION

Climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation are recognised as some of the greatest threats to human life and sustainable livelihoods. The impact of environmental threats is felt most severely by impoverished communities, with conflict acting as a 'threat multiplier'.

Rising global temperatures will see an increase in extreme weather events, more severe storms, longer heatwaves and drought. Most countries where HALO works are already witnessing the effects of climate change, with 14 of the 25 countries most vulnerable to climate change currently experiencing violent conflict. The direct and indirect negative environmental impacts of conflict and violence are detrimental to lives and livelihoods, especially when compounded by climate change.

HALO's grassroots network gives unique insight into the environmental cost of conflict across four continents. We see drained wetlands turned into minefields, explosives contaminating land and water, and deforestation and illegal harvesting destroying ecosystems in the absence of functioning governance and protection structures.

Through this strategy, HALO aims to understand the environmental impacts of conflict and actively address them, playing our part in conservation and ecosystem restoration efforts. This strategy also sets out how we seek to support communities to become more resilient to the impact of environmental change that exacerbates food and water insecurity.

Underpinning these goals are ambitious targets to reduce our own environmental footprint. To do this we need to address our Greenhouse Gas emission, and other waste and possible pollutants across the countries where we work and at an organisational level. We will set in place clear targets and monitoring systems to meet our obligations.

This strategy will be supported by an Action Plan setting out how the organisation will build the required structures, capacity, expertise, and introduce new standards to deliver on the strategy. We will also pursue new funding opportunities to support our ambition, and call on donors to support efforts to reduce our environmental footprint.

CONFLICT AND ENVIRONMENT CHALLENGES

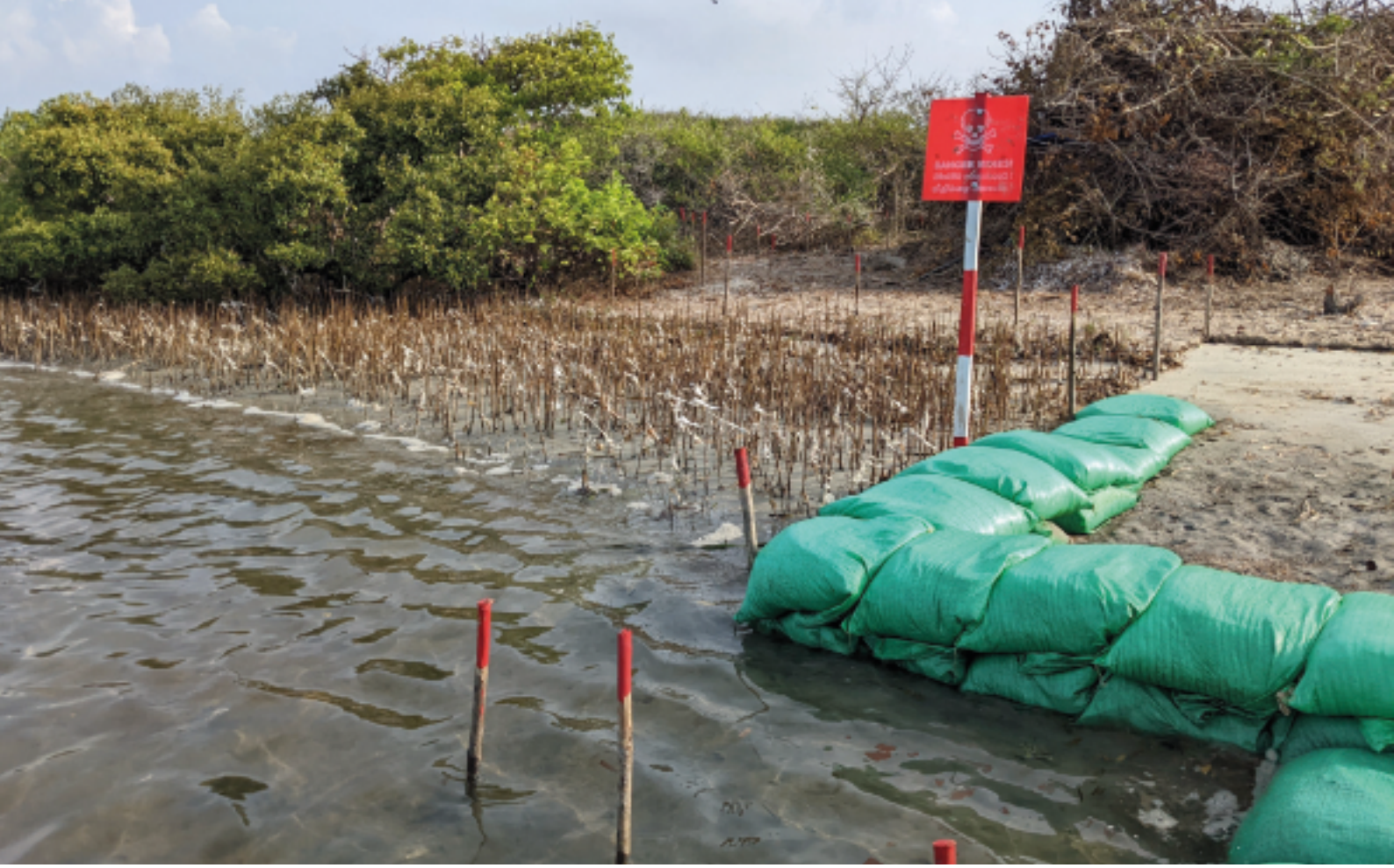
IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The 19 countries with the highest number of ecological threats are among the world's 40 least peaceful countries and over 80% of conflicts take place in biodiversity hot spots. With a growing base of evidence, the destructive impact of conflict on the environment is stark, but is often unrecognised until after destruction has taken hold. According to the World Bank, violent conflict has increased after decades of relative decline, with deaths in war, displacement and military spending all having surged since 2000. Wars are more protracted than ever, rarely concluding in peace agreements and instead flaring up in perpetual cycles of violence and destruction to the natural and built environment.

The war in Ukraine brings to light the use of the environment as a weapon of war, with the large-scale environmental destruction from events such as the bombing of the Nova Kakhova dam and contamination of land reducing agricultural production. Attacks on the environment are becoming more common in modern warfare, leading to water, soil and land contamination, or releasing pollutants into the air. In Iraq for example, heavy crude oil was pumped directly into a river affecting the drinking supply. Such attacks on the environment reduce the resilience of people to adapt to climate change, in this case further exacerbating water insecurity in Iraq.

War can also lead to indirect effects on the environment. While sometimes the absence of people after a conflict can help nature to regenerate in an area, more often the protracted nature of modern conflicts results in further environmental degradation as security deteriorates and authorities with weakened governance, as well as communities themselves, are less able to manage and protect the environment. During Angola's 27-year civil war much of the country's wildlife, including its indigenous elephant population, was destroyed or displaced. In Sri Lanka mangrove forests were destroyed for military purposes, continuing to impact communities who are dependent on these ecosystems for their livelihoods and protection from hazards such as tsunamis, tropical cyclones and sea level rise.

International humanitarian law protects against the widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment because of its intrinsic value and necessity for human life and the number of countries recognising ecocide is increasing. The protection of the environment during conflict and the restoration of damaged environments after conflict are increasingly recognised as vital in order to sustain livelihoods and restore carefully balanced ecosystems for future generations.



CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICT

Global average temperatures have already increased by 1°C since pre-industrial levels. The Paris Agreement aims to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C, however countries are currently not on track to meet this target. Global scientific consensus is that the world's temperature is on the path to warm by 2°C by mid-century. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects that this warming will mean, among other things, more frequent and intense heatwaves, fewer cooler days, more intense extreme weather events, and longer droughts and increases in sea levels. Seawater absorption of higher levels of carbon dioxide (CO_2) is also leading to ocean acidification, with impacts on many ocean species.

Nearly 3.4 billion people in 78 countries are estimated to be highly climate vulnerable to both extreme and slow onset events, with low readiness to adapt to shocks such as water shortages that may lead to food insecurity, disease, and loss of livelihoods. Seventy two percent of these countries ranked high on the fragile states index. Most of the highly fragile states have a large proportion of the population living in areas with high exposure to climate shocks and stresses, a majority of which are in Sub Saharan Africa.

The impact of climate change on lives and livelihoods can already been seen around the world as these changes take hold, but as temperatures continue to rise extreme weather events and other impacts will hit the most vulnerable areas particularly hard. Water and food insecurity are exacerbated by heatwaves, droughts, and floods and are already increasing the risk of conflict in the Middle East and North Africa. Climate change poses an additional strain to ecosystems already at threat.

Climate change does not directly cause conflict. Instead, its effects can lead to environmental impacts such as loss of water or grazing land, which can result in increased pressure on resources, which may result in socio-economic tensions. Climate change is a threat multiplier that could thus contribute to an increased risk of conflict particularly in areas with weakened governance, high rates of poverty and inequality, and existing social tensions.

Scientists agree that biodiversity loss and climate change are both driven by human economic activities and mutually reinforce each other. The Glasgow Climate Pact and Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework recognise the importance of the interconnected nature of these planetary crises and set out roadmaps to address them. In this UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration the evidence clearly points to the need for a systemic approach to address the interconnected issues of climate change vulnerability, biodiversity loss, and the environmental impacts of conflict.

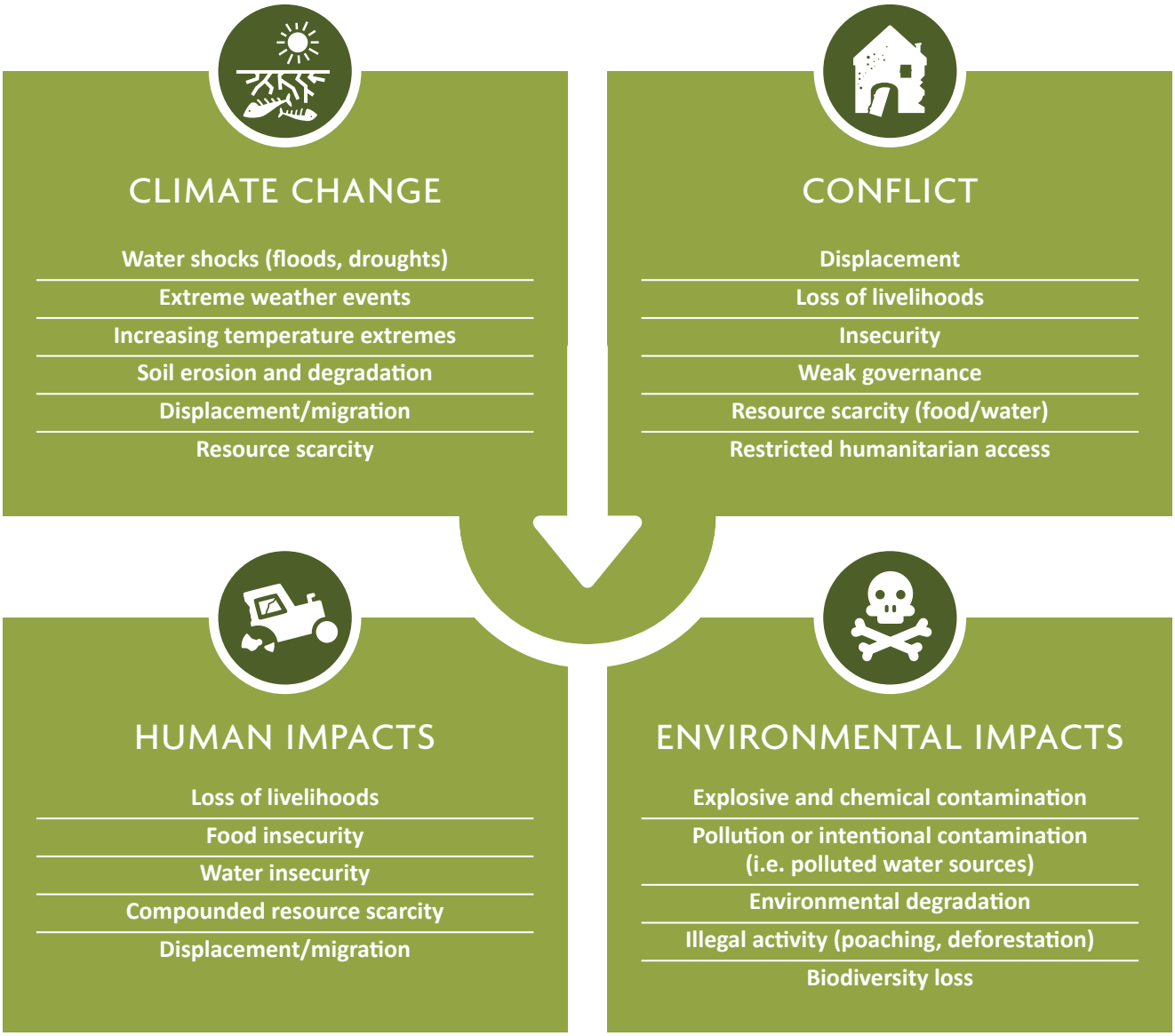


Figure 1 above shows the complex and interconnected human and environment impacts of conflict and climate change that HALO's environment strategy seeks to address.

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS

GOAL 1: Address the long-term environmental impacts of conflict

The environmental impacts of conflict are encountered every day in HALO's work, whether it be the lasting effects of explosive and chemical contamination of land and water, the impact of landmine placement and landmine clearance on soil, flora and fauna, or unsustainable land use practices by conflict affected communities.

In order to restore livelihoods and support the resilience of people affected by conflict, HALO's work seeks to address the long-term negative impact of conflict on local and regional environments and prevent unsustainable land use practices that can lead to further deterioration of livelihoods.

HALO will also support conservation and ecosystem restoration in areas affected by conflict, particularly in protected areas that are harmed or at risk because of war.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

Develop a research based network to structure our understanding of the environmental impacts of conflict across HALO's countries of operation.

Actively address the environmental impacts of conflict by supporting conservation and eco-system restoration in affected countries.

Actively address the direct environmental impact of EO use and contamination beyond clearance.

Measure, reduce and mitigate any negative environmental impacts of HALO's mine action and WAM activities.

Share learning with others to inform good practice in the management of environmental impacts of conflict.

GOAL 2: Enhance livelihoods, food and water security to strengthen community resilience to environmental change

In order to truly support conflict affected people to build resilience and prosperity, HALO's work addresses threats to livelihoods in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss, exacerbated by conflict. In every country where HALO works the impact of environmental change can be seen, whether it's climate change resulting in changing rainfall patterns, greater extremes of temperature, more extreme weather events such as cyclones, hurricanes or droughts; or in biodiversity loss and land degradation caused by conflict.

Conflict compounds the impact of environment and climate change as insecurity limits people's ability to cope and forced displacement can increase pressure on finite resources. HALO supports communities to enhance their own livelihoods and build resilience to environmental change through strengthened food and water security, and adaptable livelihoods and taking into account local gender and conflict sensitivities. For example, where previously HALO has returned land to safe use, now HALO aims to help farmers improve the productivity and sustainability of their land for future generations with sustainable farming practices, climate smart cropping and irrigation systems.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

Develop country-specific action plans to support communities experiencing food and water insecurity due to climate change, worsened by conflict.

Work with partner organisations to build sustainable livelihoods opportunities in communities in a gender and conflict sensitive manner.

Work with local communities to promote sustainable land use practices.

Monitor impacts at a community level on food and water security, sharing learning and results with others to inform good practice in climate change resilience.

GOAL 3: Reduce HALO's global environmental footprint

HALO is committed to reducing our environmental footprint through reducing and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and minimising all other waste and pollution. HALO has environmental obligations to support national targets in the countries where we work and to support donor nations to achieve targets set in their international aid policy. This includes reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions by reducing and mitigating our global emissions from travel, vehicle fleets and operational bases. HALO will call on donors setting contractual environmental footprint obligations to support the cost of measures required to reduce them.

Where HALO is unable to remove Greenhouse Gas emissions completely, for example in the need to use appropriate vehicles for the conditions in which we work, we introduce carbon negative interventions to remove CO_2 from the atmosphere, for example reforestation or increasing soil CO_2 sequestration. HALO is also committed to reducing other waste and pollutants such as plastics, wastewater, oils etc.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

Monitor and reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions across the organisation.

Introduce carbon negative interventions wherever possible to offset remaining emissions.

Monitor and reduce other waste and pollutants produced.

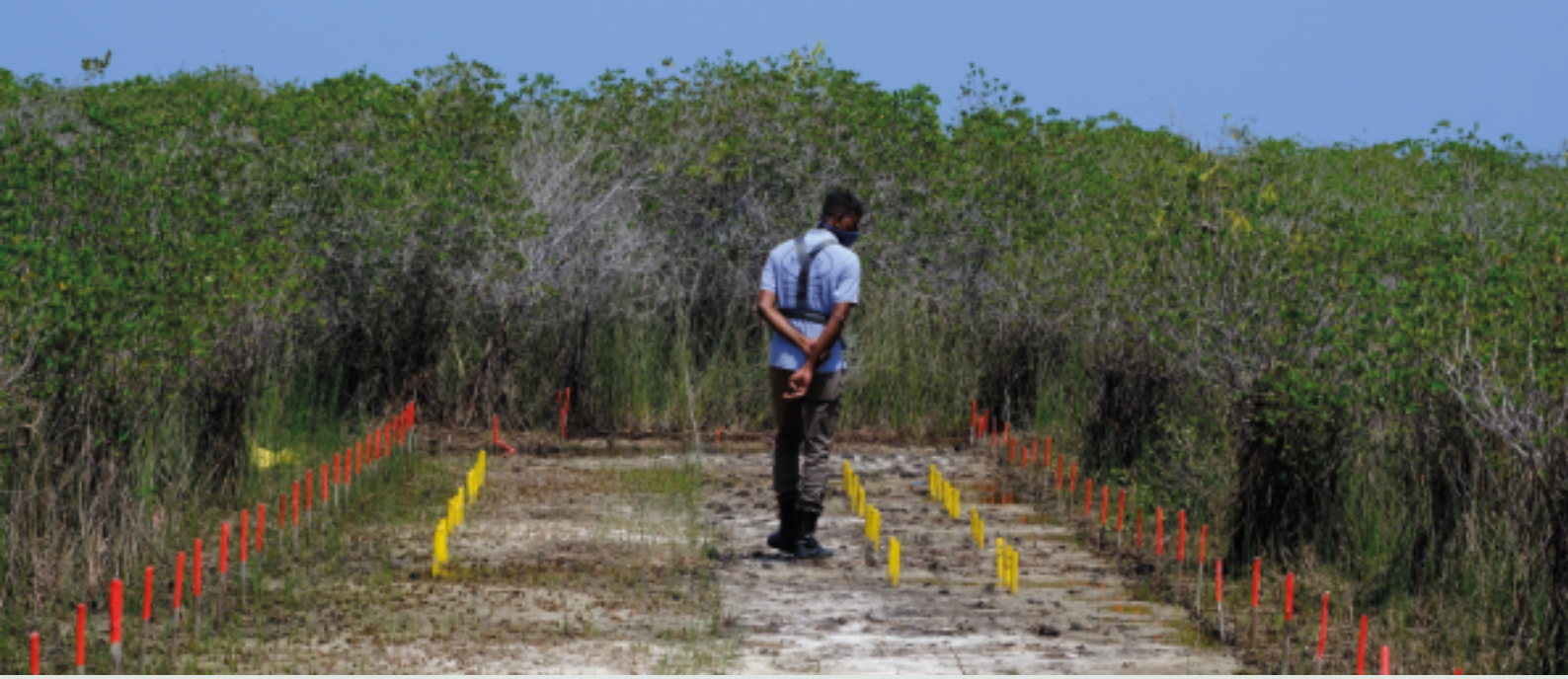
Report on our progress against targets on an annual basis and share lessons learned with others.

HALO'S NET ZERO COMMITMENT

As a charity registered in England and Scotland, and a supplier to the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, HALO is committed to meeting the UK's Net Zero Target "to achieve at least a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, compared to 1990 levels by 2050". To achieve this HALO commits to the following targets:

Produce an organisational Greenhouse Gas baseline and carbon reduction plan across all programmes

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve net zero by at least 2050



OUR APPROACH

PEOPLE CENTRED

In support of our global mission, our Environment Strategy puts people at the core of everything we do, to address the impact of environmental change and conflict on their lives and livelihoods. While our work may have additional benefits such as climate change mitigation or improvements in ecosystems for flora and fauna, our starting point is the human impact and our entry point into all our environment work is through our connections with local communities and understanding of their interactions with their local environment.

SUSTAINABILITY FOCUSSED

We will maintain environmental, social and economic sustainability at the core of our environment strategy. Our environment work will seek to address unsustainable practices in communities and return land to a more sustainable use, to improve livelihoods for future generations, even after HALO's work there is finished. We will also ensure our own internal practices are more sustainable, reducing waste and ensuring we do not leave a negative environmental impact.

SCIENCE BASED

Our environment work will be informed by the latest scientific research and data available to us. Where there are gaps in knowledge and data required to give us the understanding we need, we will seek to conduct research and gather data and make it publicly available to contribute to shared understanding.

PARTNERSHIP ORIENTED

HALO's environment work will continue to build on a strong foundation of local and international partners. Through NGOs, private and academic partnerships we will expand our understanding of the issues we seek to address, gain valuable insights and technical knowledge to bring into our work, and assess our own impact in a transparent way.

GLOSSARY

Adaptation (climate change): The process of adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climate change and its effects, which seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities (Field et al. 2014).

Biodiversity: All kinds of different living organisms within a given area (National Geographic).

Carbon negative: An activity that goes beyond achieving net zero carbon emissions to actually create an environmental benefit by removing additional carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Climate: The long-term and average weather conditions in a given area over a period of time, ranging from months to thousands or millions of years (Field et al. 2014; WMO 2019).

Climate change: A change in the state of the climate that persists for an extended period: typically, for decades or longer. It refers to any change in climate over time, whether owing to natural variability or as a result of human activity (IPCC 2007; IPCC 2018b).

Climate crisis: The enhanced vulnerability of people due to the increasing severity of the effects of climate change.

Climate finance: Local, national or transnational financing – drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing – that seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions that will address climate change (UNFCCC 2020).

Climate risks: The adverse consequences that climate variability and change – or adaptation or mitigation responses to such a change – might have for lives, livelihoods, health and well-being, ecosystems and species, economic, social and cultural assets, services, and infrastructure. Risk results from the interaction of vulnerability, exposure, and hazard (Field 2014).

Climate shocks: The realisation of climate risks, which fundamentally affects peoples' lives, livelihoods, health and well-being; ecosystems and species; economic, social and cultural assets; services; and infrastructure (Field 2014; Sinha 1999).

Climate variability: Fluctuations in climatic conditions on all scales beyond individual weather events. The term is often used to denote deviations of climatic statistics over a given period of time. Variability may be due to natural internal processes within the climate system, or to variations in natural or anthropogenic external factors (WMO 2019).

Conservation: The care and protection of the earth's natural resources including air, mineral, plants, soil, water and wildlife, so that they can persist for future generations (National Geographic).

Desertification: Land degradation in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas caused by human activities and other factors such as physical, biological, political, social, cultural, economic and climatic variations (Ambalam 2012).

Ecosystem restoration: To prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems on every continent and in every ocean (UNEP).

Environmental degradation: A process through which the natural environment is compromised in some way, reducing biological diversity and the general health of the environment. This process can be entirely natural in origin, or it can be accelerated or caused by human activities (GEMET).

Food Security: Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. (World Food Summit, 1996)

Mitigation (of climate change): Human efforts to reduce or prevent emission of greenhouse gases and to reduce their concentration by enhancing carbon sinks (UNFCCC 2020).

Net Zero emissions: means a balance of the whole amount of greenhouse gas (GHG) released and the amount removed from the atmosphere.

Resilience: The ability of individuals, communities, institutions and systems to anticipate, absorb, adapt, respond to and/or recover from shocks and stressors caused by conflict, violence and hazards of various kinds without compromising their long-term prospects (ICRC).

Sustainability: The reconciliation of environmental, social, and economic demands. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

Vulnerability: Condition brought about by physical, social, economic, environmental, and political factors or processes that increase the susceptibility of a community or individuals to a specific shock or hazard. The term describes a person or group's inability to anticipate, cope with, resist and/or recover from the impact of natural or man-made shocks or hazards without compromising their long-term prospects (ICRC).

Water security: The capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability (UN Water).

THE HALO TRUST

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