Guidance note

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How to run a greener project

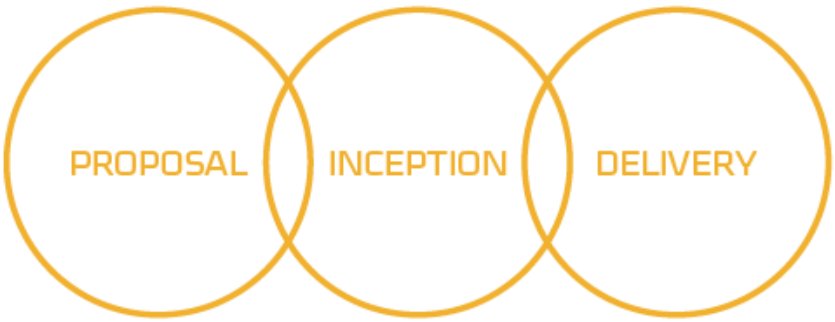
Itad recognises that the climate crisis is the defining challenge of our time. We are a socially conscious organisation, and our primary mission is to help poor and marginalised communities around the world. It is these communities who will be most affected by the effects of climate change. This guide contains advice for Itad staff on how to reduce carbon emissions within our projects.

Introduction

The guide draws on a four-step 'carbon code' (from the book *The Carbon Code* by Brett Favaro) that suggests we should:

1. First, **reduce** carbon emissions as much as possible.
2. Then, seek to **replace** carbon-intensive activities like flying with those that use less carbon to achieve the same outcome (e.g. trains and virtual meetings).
3. Then, **refine** our work to get the most benefit for each unit of carbon emitted (e.g. adopting a 'two-for-one' policy where we try to achieve two goals on every trip).
4. Finally (and only after all of the above), **rehabilitate** the atmosphere by offsetting the carbon we emit when we *do* fly, through purchasing high quality carbon offsets.

The guide includes ideas about how to put the code into action in Itad projects, across proposal, inception and delivery stages.



Why we should be thinking about flights

This guide focusses mainly on how we can reduce flights, recognising that this is by far the biggest source of carbon emissions on Itad projects. In 2019, Itad emitted **678** tonnes of CO2 through flights – equivalent to the annual emissions of **119** people living in the UK, or **6780** people living in Ethiopia. A single return flight to Nairobi uses **two tonnes** of Co2 per person – in the UK we currently use **ten tonnes** per person in a whole year, and this needs to come down drastically by 2050 to avoid catastrophic climate change.[1]

There are three reasons why we should be particularly concerned about aviation (find out more in this video), when thinking about climate change:

1. **Flying accounts for around 5% of global warming, and this is growing fast.**[2] Unlike other forms of transport, there are no current technological fixes that can reduce emissions from flights**.** Improvements in fuel economy are hugely outstripped by growth in the sector – aviation is one of the fastest growing sources of CO2.[3] Emissions have more than doubled in the last 20 years,[4] and China is planning to build over 200 new airports by the 2030s.[5]
2. **Flying is worse than other forms of emissions.** Aircraft emit carbon (and other greenhouse gases) at high altitudes, where there is a much greater warming effect.
3. **Flying is inequitable.** 15% of people in the UK take 70% of international flights. If aviation continues to grow, this means that other sectors will need to cut back more drastically, if we are to reach net zero carbon emissions in time to avoid catastrophic climate change. Effectively, this means everyone will end up paying for wealthier people to fly.[6]

Cutting back on flights is not just good for the planet – it has several other benefits too:

- Giving national partners more prominent roles on projects helps us **build research and evaluation capacity** in the countries we work in.
- It also **expands our** network **of skilled partners** to collaborate with in future and support high quality work, and allows us to deliver our work cost-effectively, reducing the number of expensive international consultant days required.
- Cutting down on flights has the potential to **benefit staff wellbeing** and **save significant staff time** – reducing days spent in airports and cramped plane seats, jetlagged in early meetings, applying for visas and filing expenses!
- Finally – **clients are increasingly requiring us to explain and justify our emissions**. As of January 2021, all UK contracting authorities are required to evaluate the 'social value' of proposals before awarding public contracts. One of these values is 'fighting climate change and reducing waste', for example through 'working towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions.'

[1] http://shrinkthatfootprint.com/carbon-targets-for-your-footprint

[2] http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/2018/10/un-climate-science-bodys-ipcc-report-highlights-that-aviation-must-accelerate-emissions-reductions/

[3] http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/moving_on_report.pdf

[4] https://www.transportenvironment.org/what-we-do/aviation

[5] https://www.airport-technology.com/news/china-new-airports-2035/

[6] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/oct/18/climate-change-airport-expansion-heathrow

1 Proposal stage

When putting your proposal together, ask yourself: 'how can I make this project as green as possible?'

Consider where people live when putting your team together. Recruit team members who live closer to areas you need to travel to. The longer the flight, the higher the emissions. Try to avoid recruiting consultants who will need to fly halfway around the world multiple times.

Consider the roles and responsibilities of national vs international team members. Structure your team so that national partners lead in-country work, minimising the need for international consultants to fly. Build time into the workplan for capacity development up-front, to help facilitate this. This has the added bonus of helping us live our values through developing the capacity of our global partners.

Market research carried out in 2010 found that 40% of leading UK companies had a policy in place to reduce business flights, and a further 20% were intending to implement one. Of the companies that had cut their flying, 85% did not intend to return to 'business as usual', agreeing that it is possible to fly less and remain both profitable and competitive.

http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/moving_on_report.pdf

Build environmental considerations into your proposal:

- **Consider sending international team members on some trips but not others**, e.g. can international consultants make an initial visit to set up and train national partners, who then lead the work in later stages?
- **Calculate projected emissions from your project** as part of the project budget, and consider up front how these can be reduced, using the measures discussed below.
- **Include carbon offsetting** in the flights budget. This will typically cost between £10-£20 a tonne (a return flight to Nairobi is around two tonnes). Itad have conducted research into the pros and cons of offsetting: the key point is that offsetting is far from perfect, and should be considered a last resort rather than a way to justify frequent flights.

2 Inception stage

Lay the groundwork for lower emissions throughout your project.

Run a remote kick off meeting, or get maximum value out of it if you do meet face to face:

- Consider using **remote conferencing technology** to host your kick-off meeting. This is a way of inducting teams into the pros and cons of the technology, as well as lowering emissions.
- If you decide a face-to-face meeting is necessary, consider a longer meeting that allows **plenty of time for team bonding and training**. See it as an opportunity to reduce the number of face-to-face meetings you need in future. Try to tie it together with other activities, such as client meetings and networking opportunities to promote Itad.
- Have a conversation with your team about project emissions to get their ideas and buy-in. Train your team in remote facilitation as part of the kick-off meeting, so everyone feels comfortable with it.

Talk to the client about how you can reduce emissions across the project. During client kick-off meetings, put the environment on the agenda. Scope out how they feel about remote meetings, and minimising the number of flights within the project.

Talk to your national partners about how you can reduce emissions in their countries too. It isn't all about international flights – data collection and other project activities often require internal flights and overland transport. Have a frank conversation about this in the inception phase with your in-country partners. Taking into account security and infrastructure challenges, how can you minimise the environmental impact of data collection and other in-country activities in your project?

When developing your workplan, plan for fewer, longer trips rather than more frequent, shorter trips:

- **Combine regional travel** through syncing up data collection across nearby countries, to avoid flying home and then back again shortly afterwards.
- Build **workshops** into data collection trips rather than flying out twice.
- Schedule time for **in-depth training and capacity development** with national teams at the start of the project, for example during the first round of data collection – with the aim of teams taking full ownership in future.
- Build in time for **intensive remote support** during data collection, instead of being on the ground – for example through daily debriefs with the team or reviewing data collection notes in an ongoing way.

Build remote facilitation meetings and workshops into your workplan. It's important to think about this up-front as it may affect your timeframes – as remote meetings are often scheduled differently (e.g. several shorter meetings rather than a full day workshop).

3 Delivery stage

Consider every trip you take: is it really necessary? Could you do things differently?

When you need to be somewhere in person, send fewer people:

- For meetings that require an in-person presence: **send one team member**, and have another participate remotely.
- For data collection: **send one person instead of two**, working with more national consultants if necessary. You could consider building in remote support from a second team member, instead of having them there on the ground.

Replace in-person meetings with video meetings wherever possible:

- Many high-level interviews can be conducted remotely. Teams provides great functionality, is increasingly used by clients who do not use Skype, and can automatically transcribe your interviews for you.
- Workshops with implementers can be led by trusted national consultants, with remote support.

Replace flying with trains within the UK and Europe. If it takes under **6 hours** to get to a destination by train, aim to travel overland unless there are exceptional circumstances at play. In most cases, this will take no longer than flying, once you factor in getting to and from the airport. If your trip takes between **6 and 8 hours** by train, go overland when you can.[7]

- Use the Man in Seat 61 website to get tips on train travel within Europe: https://www.seat61.com/index.html.

[7] This follows the example of other organisations like Oxfam (which stipulates no flights for trips under 8 hours- [Link]) and the University of Ghent sustainable travel policy [Link]

- You can buy multi-country European train and bus tickets through Rail Europe (https://raileurope.co.uk/), The Trainline https://www.thetrainline.com/ and Omio (https://www.omio.co.uk/).

When you do fly:

- **Choose the lowest-carbon option**. CO2 emissions are usually visible on price comparison websites. Choose direct flights where you can, as the most fuel intensive part of flying is take-off. Many planes consume up to three times as much fuel during take-off as they do when cruising.[8]
- **Avoid business class**. These seats take up more space and drastically increase your carbon footprint (by up to 50%![9])
- Follow the **'two for one' principle** – every time you fly, try and achieve a minimum of two things, to maximise the value of your carbon consumption.

Finally - try flipping your thinking.

Instead of starting from the assumption that flying is essential, try starting from the position that it is *not* necessary, and justifying every trip you make. Ask yourself:

- **Will it damage relationships if you don't go in person?** What about if you have a conversation about environmental impact first?
- **Will the quality of delivery be reduced if you aren't there**? Could this be mitigated in other ways, without jumping on a plane?

Tips for reducing environmental impact beyond flights

- **Minimise printing**. Can you have paperless meetings? Prioritise black and white printing where necessary. Use virtual tools for data collection and note taking.
- **Encourage the use of public transport** when your team is attending meetings and workshops.
- **Cut out plastic and other disposables.** Commit to no disposable plastic in any of your meetings or workshops – make sure there are water dispensers there instead, and avoid plastic cutlery and paper plates. Take a Lifestraw or other water filtering system with you when you travel, instead of buying disposable plastic bottles.
- **Go veggie.** Can you consider vegetarian lunches for project meetings by default – recognising the high carbon impact of livestock farming?
- **Choose hotels with stronger environmental records.** Hotels are often a major source of emissions and waste – think about this when booking.

[8] The Carbon Code (p.147)

[9] https://www.theguardian.com/environment/blog/2010/feb/17/business-class-carbon-footprint