

A CALL FOR COMMUNITY

Stronger Together in Uncertain Times

Introduction

Throughout the world, approximately **305 million people¹** are affected by humanitarian crises. In the **context of an ongoing and worrying defunding crisis**, the fate of millions of people requiring urgent assistance is in jeopardy. As institutional humanitarian funding is reduced, organisations are finding it increasingly difficult to navigate these challenges and continue essential programmes.

What this crisis reveals is a challenge known in the sector for many years: that the crucial support provided by the humanitarian community is highly vulnerable to sudden changes in financing channels. To maintain our work, we must find ways to continue to evolve and adapt. In this document, **we call for the community to commit to collaborative working as a critical part of the solution** in the years to come. Sharing these experiences can help other organisations understand the concrete impact of joint approaches, supporting their adaptation strategies. We present a sample of ongoing activities with the goal of inspiring future action and new ways of working in the humanitarian sector.

Through the hulo cooperative's work since 2021, we have demonstrated that collaboration can help the sector generate real **cost reductions** and **increase quality and efficiency**. This ensures that each organisation's funding goes as far as possible, allowing us to do more with the same resources. **The humanitarian supply chain is one area where sharing expertise and collaborating can make a substantial difference**, being responsible for much as 65% of emergency response expense.

305

million people in need
throughout the world

47.4

billion USD required to
meet humanitarian needs

¹Source: Global Humanitarian Overview 2025, UNOCHA



Since 2021, **15 organisations** have joined the cooperative and **121 organisations have participated**, shared knowledge, and contributed to Joint Initiatives. Both local and international organisations are working as peers in the field, sharing expertise and resources in diverse projects based on Joint Procurement, Joint HR, Joint Mobility, and Joint Environmental Initiatives in our first 7 countries of intervention.

These initiatives are based on **consensus and unity**. Humanitarian organisations combine their efforts to do more together, rather than going alone, assisted by procurement intelligence and shared expertise. This ultimately allows more beneficiaries to obtain better goods and services. Organisations are also able to increase their support for local markets (a vital part of anticipatory action and building capacity for local actors), integrate sustainability criteria, and improve their accountability by working together.

Facing critical questions about where humanitarian aid is headed, we believe that the solutions must start by **joining together as a community**. When it comes to indirect costs², it is imperative that we **stop working in silos**. There are no simple solutions, but duplication of non-value-adding activities are missed opportunities for improvement that the sector can ill afford.



Ways We Can Work Together

In these uncertain times, collaborative approaches can help humanitarians to improve our impact as a sector. Coordinating across organisations, large and small, is complex. By learning from previous projects, we can find easier ways to start. Below, you will find examples illustrating how humanitarians can work together effectively to save time, money, and resources.

²Programme support costs, including logistics, supply chain, and procurement.



Joint Procurement Initiatives

For years, humanitarian organisations have purchased the same goods and services in the same markets, individually and expensively. This redundancy contributes to process inefficiency and a lack of price transparency, creating unnecessary complexity between organisations and suppliers. Joint procurement of goods and services allows organisations to **obtain better quality products for lower prices**, while **enhancing transparency**.

To determine where it makes most sense to work together, data-driven procurement intelligence is essential to identify which markets and items have the most potential for optimisation.

This is what differentiates joint procurement from simply aggregating needs; in hulo's Joint

Procurement Initiatives, a confidential analysis of procurement and accounting data allows for a strategic and informed prioritisation of calls for tender³.

On average, the cooperative's Joint Procurement Initiatives have resulted in **13.2% savings**⁴. Bringing together actors to pool information and expertise, going with one voice to the market, is what makes joint procurement streamlined and mutually advantageous.

Current and forthcoming JPIs have an estimated value of around €22 million⁵. Based on the current 13.2% estimated savings rate, **potential savings of approximately €2.9 million** are possible for 2025. Taking hulo members' procurement data, **construction services** (including materials), **vehicle rentals**, and **food supplies** (dry and fresh food for distributions) **have high potential for financial savings** through future Joint Procurement Initiatives.

With potential savings like these, the argument for maintaining our current ways of working no longer holds. **Can we afford to still go it alone?**

13.2%
savings on average
from Joint Procurement
Initiatives

Spend categories with the highest savings potential

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1. Construction services	1. Construction services	1. Construction services	1. Construction services	1. Construction services
2. Vehicle rental	2. Vehicle rental	2. Vehicle rental	2. Vehicle rental	2. Vehicle rental
3. Training/event management	3. Premises rental	3. Food supplies	3. Food supplies	3. Food supplies

³ Since 2022, sixty-six (66) participant interviews took place, during 7 internal evaluations in 4 countries. In the DRC, an evaluation was not possible due to internal constraints, and Colombia and Chad will be evaluated in 2025, following their first full year of operations. This was combined with the collection and analysis of baseline price data and purchase order lines from our members, contributing to an in-depth understanding of our impact.

⁴ Participants noted that hulo's involvement also improved the quality of products received, with 86% of participants that this was one of the most important aspects of added value.

⁵ Usually for a one-year period, estimated as of early January 2025.



Joint Mobility Initiatives

Combining transportation and carpooling can reduce costs and environmental impacts. Through pilot Joint Mobility Initiatives, organisations have benefitted from vehicle sharing projects to reduce transport costs and fuel consumption. On frequently travelled routes, hulo and its member Fleet Forum have facilitated trips between offices, field bases, guest houses, and airports. So far, this has generated over **50% financial savings**, with an associated reduction in organisations' carbon footprint. JMI's are a quick win for organisations looking to save without compromising their programmatic or environmental priorities.



International Transport

In emergencies, humanitarian organisations charter costly and carbon-intensive flights to deliver aid quickly, but these flights are not always full. Initiatives like the **EU Humanitarian Air Bridge** and hulo help optimise this transport. Supported by the European Union, the Humanitarian Air Bridge provides free flights for humanitarian cargo. Hulo coordinates these flights by consolidating needs and maximising cargo loads. Other organisations, such as Bioport and Atlas Logistics, offer technical support. Working as a community allows us to **leverage our expertise** and **build public-private partnerships** to manage large-scale operations more efficiently.

EU Humanitarian Air Bridge in Numbers (since 2020)

99

humanitarian organisations
participating

18

countries
supported

222

humanitarian flights
organised



Joint Environmental Initiatives

Despite the urgency of an environmental evolution in humanitarian aid, sustainability mechanisms and policies may now prove even harder to implement in the current climate. To continue investing in environmental approaches, cooperation to pool our limited resources can be part of the solution. Some of hulo's first Joint Environmental Initiatives have focused on responsible **waste management** and **reverse logistics**, helping interested organisations identify recyclers and suppliers that adhere to best practices. Further, hulo's JPIs integrate environmental, social and governance criteria, meaning that JPI-procured goods are locally sourced and in accordance with "Do No Harm" principles. This work supports organisations in negotiating more effectively and reducing the **environmental** and **social impact of operations**.



**Waste
Management**



**Environmental
Expertise**



**ESG for
Procurement**



**Environmental
Market Intelligence**



Digital Solutions

Digital tools across programmes and operations have transformed our ways of working in the last decade. As humanitarian organisations, we have embraced the integration of digital solutions to innovate and deliver more impact. Translating this approach for the supply chain, the cooperative has developed an application, **Shared Resources**, that creates an online marketplace made by and for humanitarians to **facilitate resource pooling**. These solutions can bring humanitarians together by creating a virtual community for likeminded actors around common problems. Our hope is that this app can reduce day-to-day redundancies and match our surplus with real needs.



What's Next?

What we are facing is not a temporary problem; as such, it cannot be addressed with stopgap and piecemeal solutions. While we previously tackled funding cuts with internal budget reductions and “cost-shaving”, **these approaches are no longer sufficient** by themselves to bridge the growing chasm between humanitarian needs and ever-decreasing funding. Moments of crisis demand us to **rethink** our positioning, how we **approach** problems, and what is needed to navigate these complicated times. They also present us with an opportunity, as a community, to **challenge our norms** and **embrace innovation**.

Moving forward, the humanitarian community must look outwards, not inwards, and embrace our collective potential to find sustainable solutions. Within our rich and diverse span of kindred organisations, we have all the **expertise, capacity, and creativity** necessary to overcome these challenges. Now is the time to be bold and **welcome new solutions, replicate what works, and adapt best practices** to our unique contexts.

As a cooperative, we want to work across the humanitarian community to innovate and improve our operations, and we believe that collaborative practices can play a critical role for the sector. Moving from reacting to funding challenges towards proactively anticipating them, we can create a future where complementarity, not competition, allows us to thrive.

Join us in finding the path forward together.

About Us

Hulo is the first humanitarian cooperative, helping humanitarian organisations optimise their logistics and supply chains since 2021. We connect logistics stakeholders to improve the efficiency of humanitarian aid and reduce our environmental impact by pooling resources, optimising supply chain management, and developing new digital solutions for today's challenging world.

For more information, please visit us on our website or LinkedIn:



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