DISTRIBUTE AID

Project-based offset programme

We are excited to announce the launch of our green initiative this September 2022! Distribute Aid is committed to finding sustainable ways to protect our environment now and in the future. We believe we can achieve this by adopting various solutions that collectively work to create an eco-friendly organisation.

Although many aspects of our organisation encourage sustainability in the humanitarian aid field, our work still imposes a cost on the environment. To counter these effects, Distribute Aid will give direct cash payments to grassroots organisations working to counter environmental degradation in the areas in which we operate. This document explains why Distribute Aid felt it was important to set up our own project-based programme independent of existing "offset" programmes, defines the sorts of grassroots organisations we will support as part of the programme, and offers a detailed analysis of how our operations impact the environment.

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Why did we set this programme up?

We decided to set up a project-based offset programme at Distribute Aid because we found that many existing offset programs felt very distant from the work we do and did not support local communities. Instead of directing our partners to existing programmes where they will likely face the same issues that we did, we wanted to offer a personalised programme. Our programme is tailored specifically for our grassroots humanitarian relief partners. It also reflects Distribute Aid's own values, including transparency, proactivity, collaboration, and a results-driven approach.

Sending humanitarian aid from one place to another in 2022 inevitably generates CO2 emissions. Our programme acknowledges this reality while seeking to counteract the negative environmental effects of shipping with positive support for grassroots sustainability organisations.

Our programme is not centred around direct carbon removal projects known as offsets/carbon tokens. For this reason, it does not meet the requirements of some existing carbon standards and registries. However, it was never intended to! We believe that when it comes to mitigating the impacts of climate change and creating real and sustainable difference, offsets targetted at reforestation and renewable energy projects, though important, will not change the habits of society. Our programme includes projects that focus on community involvement to improve social behaviours through activities that are accessible in day-to-day life to have a direct and long-term difference.

What projects will you be supporting?

Our project-based programme reflects the nature of the services we provide at Distribute Aid. The programme supports grassroots community projects by five organisations located in the three regions with the highest volume of shipments we distribute to: Northern France, Greece, and Lebanon. Since we use both land and sea freight, we support groups that focus on protecting a range of environments to promote sustainable livelihoods. These include marine preservation, recycling initiatives, and gardening projects.

DISTRIBUTE AID

PROJECT-BASED OFFSET PROGRAMME

These projects work towards meeting the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:

Here is an overview of the individual sustainability projects our sustainability initiative supports.

HOW DO DA SHIPMENTS GENERATE CO2 EMISSIONS?

Between January 2021 and July 2022, 26% of our shipments involved sea containers. The remaining 74% reached their destination by way of a truck. We do not use air freight due to its considerable more harmful impact to the environemnt, for example, long-haul air freight can generate 47 times as much greenhouse gas emissions as ocean freight. [1] With that said, sea and road freight also involve processes which are detrimental to the environment. This section contains a short overview of these processes so that we can be transparent about our climate impact with our community and underscore the importance of the sustainability efforts that our programme supports.

SEA FREIGHT

Fossil Fuels

Maritime shipping contributes to an estimated 3%[2] of global greenhouse gas emissions. Ships generate carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions by the burning of fossil fuels; significantly contributing to global climate change and ocean acidification.[3] Although shipping is one of the modes of transport with the lowest CO2 emissions per distance and weight carried. The environmental effects have profound implications for air and water quality and marine and estuarine biodiversity.[4]

Ballast water

Ballast water is water extracted from the ocean at port to weigh down and stabilize ships when at sea, it is then discharged back into the ocean at the final destination during the process of unloading and loading containers. This process leads to the release of aquatic/ marine microbes, plants and animals into new environments which can then spread invasively; these invasive aquatic species are among the greatest threats to oceans around the world and critically disrupt the biodiversity of ocean and land ecosystems.[5]

Although there are now regulations in place so as to treat ballast water, it has been estimated that more than 7000 species are transported each day through ballast tanks, and that some 40 recent invasions occurred because of ballast water discharging.[6] Hull fouling also poses huge threat to the biodiversity of marine environments,organisms attach themselves to the hull of the ship and then get transported elsewhere - where they become invasive to local ecosystems.[7]

Underwater sound pollution

Container ships cause underwater sound pollution that causes disrupts to the behavior, physiology, and reproduction of marine species. Shipping alone has contributed an estimated 32-fold increase of low-frequency noise along major shipping routes in the past 50 years – underwater noise levels in EU waters have more than doubled between 2014 and 2019. Noise by caused by human-activity can mask “environmental cues indicating the presence of prey and predators, resulting in loss of social cohesion, missed opportunities for feeding, or failure to avoid a predator”[8].[9]

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PROJECT-BASED OFFSET PROGRAMME

Waste

The dumping of non-biodegradable solid waste into the ocean from ships is extremely harmful to marine life and threatens biodiversity. It is forbidden for ships to dispose of litter, including dunnage wood and plastic at sea: any waste must be discarded at port reception facilities under law and is carefully monitored through recordkeeping requirements.[10] Yet, more than 636,000 tons of waste per year are brought into the sea from ships.[11] In addition, the occurrence of spills of oil, toxics, other cargo or fuel are also major contributors to ocean waste pollution.

ROAD FREIGHT

Road freight currently generates 15% of European C02 emissions and 10% of total global emissions. Air pollution is the main threat posed by road transportation as different gases are released into the atmosphere such as carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxides and particulates such as soot; all of which contribute to ozone formation as these gases absorb radiation in the stratosphere which lead to global warming.

In addition to this, trucking leads to land-use environmental stresses due to the habitat fragmentation that occurs when infrastructures are built for transportation lines. Not only are habitats directly destroyed, but barriers created by roads that plants and animals will not cross, decrease the functional areas available and effectively cut ecosystems in two. The pollution that arises from noise, light and chemicals through road freight also have huge implications to the surrounding ecosystems.[12]

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How much does it cost to offset the carbon emissions generated by your shipment with DA?

1 ton of CO2 emitted costs **$15** [13] to offset.

We calculate the CO2 emissions generated by your shipment using the Activity-Based Method which follows the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Transport volume by transport mode x average transport distance by transport mode x average CO2-emission factor per tonne-km by transport mode}}{100{,}000{,}000}$$

*We include a buffer amount of 10% to account for emissions we are not able to ascertain. Once completing the calculation, we multiply the value by $15. This is the total amount it will cost to offset the carbon emissions generated by your shipment with DA.

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