

THE CARTER CENTER

Shared Responsibility - Shared Solutions

Charting a Pathway to Comply with the Commitments of the Humanitarian Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations

"Communities are motivated and capable to develop and implement solutions if given the space, tools and voice."

- President Jimmy Carter

19 June 2026

Executive summary

The Carter Center advances peace, protects health, strengthens democratic governance and promotes human rights in places where communities are already experiencing the consequences of climate and environmental change. Climate change is therefore not a stand-alone environmental issue for the Center. It is a threat multiplier that affects disease transmission, water and food security, migration, resource competition, public trust, civic space and the capacity of communities to shape their futures.

This report sets out how The Carter Center will use the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations as a practical framework for action. It translates the Charter commitments into a Carter Center approach grounded in community agency, rights, evidence, partnership and operational integrity. The report shows how the Center is already adapting its programming to climate realities through work on women and youth participation in Zambia, climate and conflict in the Sahel, climate justice and critical minerals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and research on the climate sensitivity of communicable diseases.

The report is organized around six mutually reinforcing pathways of change: strengthening access to climate information; enhancing inclusive decision-making; protecting climate advocates and human rights defenders; strengthening local capacity to prevent conflict and manage climate stressors; addressing climate impacts on health; and leading by example by decarbonizing The Carter Center's operations. Together, these pathways explain how the Center will contribute to the seven Charter commitments while remaining true to its mission and public identity.

The proposed public targets for 2026-2030 combine programmatic and operational commitments. They include integrating climate-risk considerations into relevant new strategies and project designs; strengthening locally led climate action; generating evidence on climate-health, climate-peace and climate-governance risks; using the Center's influence to support inclusive and rights-based climate action; maintaining annual greenhouse gas inventories; and working to reduce organizational greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by 2030 against the FY 2022/23 baseline of approximately 11,000 tCO₂e, with a long-term objective of net zero by 2050.

At a glance: The Carter Center contribution

The Carter Center is applying its core mission to a climate-affected world: helping communities use information, rights, dialogue, health systems and accountable institutions to confront climate risk - while reducing the harm caused by its own operations.

1. Why climate change matters for The Carter Center

Climate change is becoming one of the most consequential issues for the communities and institutions with which The Carter Center works. It threatens current and future generations, and it also undermines hard-won progress in peace, health, democratic governance and human rights. The IPCC warns that climate change is a threat to human well-being and planetary health, and that the choices and actions taken in this decade will have consequences now and for thousands of years.

"Climate change is a threat to human well-being and planetary health. There is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a livable and sustainable future for all."

- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

For The Carter Center, the practical meaning of this risk is clear. Climate change affects the conditions that allow people to live healthy, peaceful and dignified lives. It changes where disease vectors can survive, disrupts water and sanitation systems, intensifies pressure on land and livelihoods, contributes to displacement and migration, and tests whether public institutions can respond fairly and effectively. Where communities already face poverty, exclusion, weak institutions or conflict, climate shocks can deepen vulnerability and erode trust.

Health and disease control Warming temperatures, flooding, water stress and changing ecosystems can affect vector-borne and water-related diseases. This matters directly for the Center's work on Guinea worm, river blindness, trachoma and schistosomiasis, as well as mental health and health-system resilience.	Peace and social cohesion Droughts, floods and declining livelihoods can intensify competition over land, water, pasture and other resources. In fragile settings, this can heighten grievances, contribute to displacement and increase the risk of violence.
Democratic governance and trust When public systems cannot respond to climate impacts transparently or fairly, confidence in institutions can weaken. Communities need access to information, participation and accountability to shape decisions that affect their lives.	Justice, rights and civic space Climate impacts fall hardest on people with the fewest resources to adapt. Climate action must therefore protect rights, civic space and the voices of communities, defenders, journalists, women, youth and marginalized groups.

This is why The Carter Center's climate response starts with communities. Working with and through communities allows the Center to understand local capacities, identify the most important vulnerabilities and support solutions that are legitimate, inclusive and sustainable. It also allows the Center to focus on people and places facing high climate risk and limited capacity to respond.

2. The Carter Center approach: shared responsibility, shared solutions

"We have the choice. We can continue to drift along with no plan, relying on wishful thinking and slogans and hoping for the best, or we can decide to develop a realistic energy policy and carry it out with the determination this great challenge demands."

- President Jimmy Carter

The Carter Center's approach builds on the legacy and vision of President Jimmy Carter of achieving change through practical action, moral responsibility, community engagement and a belief that people can solve problems when they have information, opportunity and voice. Rather than seeking to become a climate organization, The Carter Center is working to adapt its mission to a climate-affected world.

The Center's climate action is grounded in five principles. These principles will be translated to action by integrating them into requirements for program design and implementation. Each relevant program will be able to show how these principles are applied in ways that are appropriate to its context, while retaining the flexibility to respond to local needs and emerging risks.

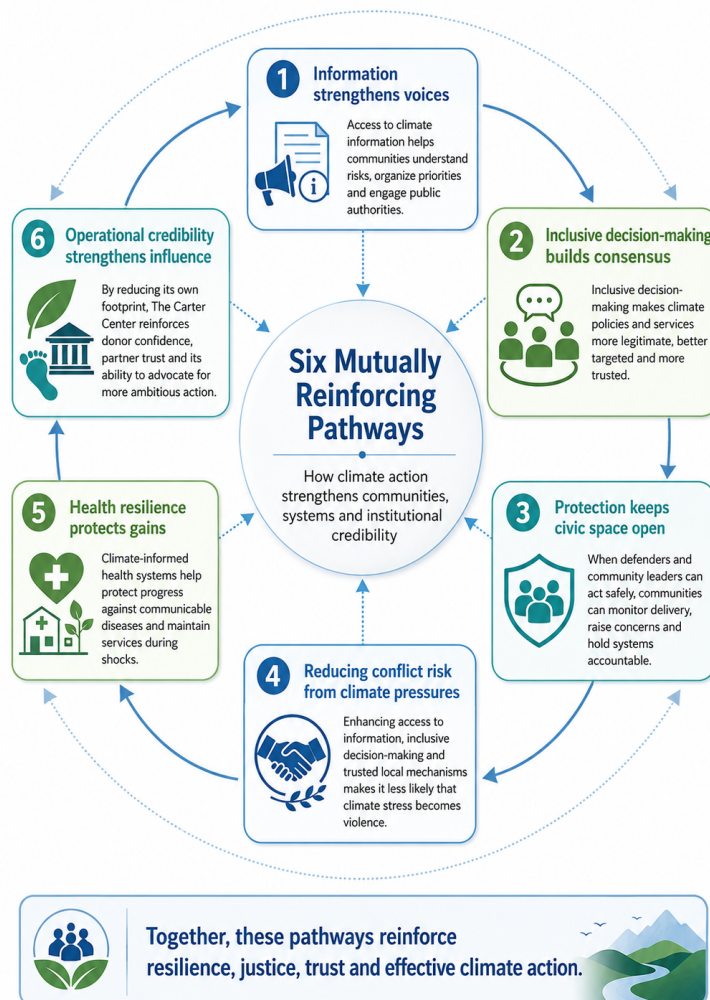
- i. **Prioritize community agency and local ownership** - work with affected communities as partners to identify climate risks, set priorities, and shape solutions. The aim is not only to consult communities but ensure that their knowledge and priorities influence the design and delivery of climate-related action.
- ii. **Prevent, minimize and manage harm** - anticipate and reduce environmental impacts of program delivery while preserving the effectiveness of assistance and mission delivery.
- iii. **Adopt an equity approach** – assess how climate risks and solutions affect different groups and identify the structural factors that make some people more vulnerable than others. Programmatic activities will aim to reduce these barriers and avoid reinforcing existing inequities by promoting inclusive decision making and tracking who benefits from interventions.
- iv. **Use evidence and learning** - use the best available science, local knowledge and adaptive learning to design interventions in a manner that anticipates evolving risks and continually take opportunities to reflect on what is working and what needs to be changed.
- v. **Operate through partnerships to maximize collective impact** - climate risks require collaboration across humanitarian, development, peace, health, governance, research and private-sector actors.

3. Six programmatic pathways working as one system

The Carter Center's theory of change includes six pathways that together form the Carter Center's approach to climate action. These pathways are not separate programs but mutually reinforcing methods that allow The Carter Center to support adaptation, resilience, justice and lower-emission practice across its mission areas.

Pathway	What it does	Why it matters for climate action
1	Strengthen access to climate information	Communities need credible, localized, timely and understandable information on climate risks, services, legal rights and resources. Information is the foundation for participation, accountability and local action.
2	Enhance inclusive decision-making	Climate decisions are more legitimate and effective when affected communities - including women, youth and marginalized groups - can participate in shaping policies, plans and resources.
3	Protect climate advocates and human rights defenders	Climate action requires civic space. Environmental defenders, journalists, human rights defenders and community leaders must be able to raise concerns about land, pollution, public finance, extractive industries and climate impacts safely.
4	Strengthen local capacity to prevent conflict and manage climate stressors	Climate change can intensify competition over land, water, livelihoods and mobility. Local cooperation, dispute-resolution and resource governance can help prevent stress from escalating into violence.
5	Address climate impacts on global health	Climate change can affect disease ecology, service continuity, heat stress, mental health and water and sanitation. Health systems need climate-informed surveillance, preparedness and response.
6	Lead by example by decarbonizing operations	The Center is reducing emissions and environmental impacts from travel, energy, procurement, logistics, waste and field operations while strengthening reliability and resilience.

How the pathways reinforce one another



4. How the pathways support the seven Charter commitments

The seven voluntary Charter commitments were developed through consultations across the humanitarian sector and launched in 2021. They help humanitarian actors respond more systematically to the climate and environmental crises and provide a guide to reduce climate-related risks and vulnerabilities. The Carter Center's six pathways provide the program logic to make these commitments a reality. The table below shows how they fit together.

Charter commitment	TCC pathways	How The Carter Center contributes
1. Help people adapt to climate and environmental crises	P1, P2, P4, P5	Provide accessible climate information, inclusive decision-making, conflict prevention and climate-health preparedness help communities anticipate, manage and recover from climate impacts.

Charter commitment	TCC pathways	How The Carter Center contributes
2. Maximize environmental sustainability and reduce emissions	P6	The Carter Center's Decarbonization Pathway will progressively reduce operational carbon emissions
3. Embrace local leadership	P1, P2, P4	Community agency is the core of the approach: affected people help define risks, priorities and solutions.
4. Understand climate and environmental risks and use evidence	P1, P4, P5	The Center links climate data with local knowledge, health evidence, conflict monitoring and rights analysis.
5. Work collaboratively across and beyond the humanitarian sector	All pathways	The pathways require partnerships with communities, public authorities, civil society, scientists, health institutions, donors, suppliers and peer organizations.
6. Use influence to mobilize more ambitious climate action	P2, P3, P5, P6	The Center can use evidence and convening power to support climate justice, access to information, protection of civic space and responsible operations.
7. Set targets and measure progress	All pathways	P1- P5 pathways are embedded in existing programming, as such the Center will track progress within existing programming monitoring frameworks. P6 has set targets and measures in TCC's Decarbonization Strategy and progress will be tracked and reported through annual carbon emission reporting

Climate-informed programming already underway

The Carter Center has already begun adapting its work to climate realities. The following examples show how the pathways are becoming visible in practice.

SheRise in Zambia

The SheRise work in Zambia illustrates how women and youth can be supported to participate in local climate discussions, understand climate impacts and influence decisions that affect their communities. It reflects the pathways on access to information, inclusive decision-making and local leadership.

Climate and conflict in the Sahel

In the Sahel, climate stress interacts with resource pressures, displacement, livelihoods and local conflict dynamics. The Center's peace programming is integrating climate considerations into conflict analysis and dialogue so communities and authorities can manage tensions before they escalate.

Critical minerals and climate justice in the DRC

The global energy transition is increasing attention to critical minerals. In the DRC, the Center's climate and environmental justice work highlights the need for transparent, rights-based and accountable natural resource governance so that Congolese communities benefit from the transition and are protected from harm.

Climate-sensitive disease research

The Health Programs are examining how climate change may affect communicable diseases the Center is working to eradicate or eliminate, including through changing vector ranges, water conditions, flooding, heat and service disruption. This supports climate-informed surveillance, preparedness and One Health collaboration.

Carbon footprint and Green Team action

The Center has established a baseline carbon footprint and is improving its inventory over time. The Green Team supports implementation of the Decarbonization Pathway, including sustainable travel, energy efficiency, renewable energy options, procurement, field-office resilience and green office practices.

5. Commitments and targets

The seven commitments of the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations provide a practical framework for translating climate responsibility into action. The Carter Center aims to fulfill these commitments through its six mutually reinforcing pathways. These pathways include: strengthening access to climate information; enhancing inclusive decision-making; protecting climate advocates and human rights defenders; strengthening local capacity to prevent conflict and manage climate stressors; addressing climate impacts on health; and reducing emissions caused by its own operations.

While the pathways describe how the Center will act, the targets listed below define the results it aims to achieve. Together, they show how the Carter Center's intends to scale up its existing mission and programming to more effectively address the needs of an increasingly climate affected world.

Commitment 1. Step up response to growing needs and help people adapt

The Center will continue to integrate climate risk into relevant peace, health, governance and human rights work in climate-exposed settings. Collectively, these programmatic interventions will strengthen the capacity of communities and institutions to anticipate, manage and recover from climate impacts.

How the pathways deliver the commitment	Improving access to information helps communities understand risks and services. Inclusive decision-making allows affected people to shape priorities. Building trust in local mechanisms reduce the risk that climate stress becomes violence. Climate-informed health systems help maintain disease-control gains and essential services during shocks.
Target	By 2030, relevant new strategies, major proposals and project designs in climate-exposed settings will identify climate risks and explain how the intervention will strengthen adaptation or reduce vulnerability.

Commitment 2. Maximize environmental sustainability and reduce emissions

The Center will reduce the environmental impact of its own operations while maintaining the quality and reach of its mission. The approach will prioritize reducing emissions at source before considering high-quality removals for residual hard-to-abate emissions.

How the pathway delivers the commitment	The Center will maintain and improve its carbon inventory; prioritize direct reductions; and implement practical measures on purposeful travel, energy efficiency, renewable energy, field-office resilience, procurement, logistics, waste and sustainable office practices.
Targets	Reduce total organizational greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by 2030 against the FY 2022/23 baseline of approximately 11,000 tCO ₂ e. Maintain and improve the organizational carbon inventory on a regular basis and use the results to prioritize mitigation measures.

Commitment 3. Embrace the leadership of local actors and communities

The Center will support locally led climate action by helping communities access information, participate in decisions and define what resilience means in their context.

How the pathways deliver the commitment	Communities are better able to lead when they can access usable information, participate in decisions and build on trusted local institutions. This approach supports locally defined resilience priorities and helps ensure that climate action is legitimate, equitable and durable.
Target	By 2030, relevant climate-related programming will include community engagement and feedback mechanisms that enable affected people, including women, youth and marginalized groups where appropriate, to influence design, implementation or review.

Commitment 4. Increase capacity to understand risks and use evidence

The Carter Center will continue to develop its programming after developing contextual knowledge through blending climate data, local knowledge and program evidence to understand how climate risks affect disease, conflict, governance, rights and social equity.

How the pathways deliver the commitment	Climate information becomes actionable when it is understandable and connected to local knowledge. Conflict analysis can examine how climate pressures affect land, water, livelihoods and mobility. Health programs can assess how changing temperatures, rainfall, flooding, water conditions and service disruption may affect communicable diseases and health systems.
Target	By 2030, the Center will produce or contribute to evidence and learning products on climate-health, climate-peace, climate-governance or climate-rights linkages and use relevant findings to improve programming.

Commitment 5. Work collaboratively across and beyond the humanitarian sector

The Center will collaborate with communities, civil society, authorities, researchers, health institutions, human rights networks, donors, suppliers and peer organizations to advance practical climate action.

How the pathways deliver the commitment	Information, participation, rights protection, conflict prevention, health resilience and operational decarbonization each require collaboration. Depending on the context, the Center will work with communities, civil society, authorities, researchers, health institutions, human rights networks, humanitarian and development partners, donors, suppliers and private-sector actors.
Public target	By 2030, the Center will convene or participate in at least one structured climate learning or partnership exchange each year and develop partnerships that advance locally led climate action or operational sustainability.

Commitment 6. Use influence to mobilize urgent and more ambitious action

The Carter Center will use its credibility, evidence, convening power and relationships with communities, civil society and public institutions to promote more ambitious climate action. Its advocacy will be grounded in the experiences of affected communities and will focus on solutions that are inclusive, rights-based, transparent and responsive to local priorities.

How the pathways deliver the commitment	The Carter Center's pathways create the foundation for credible and practical influence as well as the potential to scale up both the amount of climate programming and the advocacy linked to that programming.
Public target	By 2030, the Center will use its position to advocate for more ambitious climate action as well as support policy dialogues, convenings or public products that promote climate justice, access to information, protection of defenders, climate-health action, responsible natural-resource governance or more sustainable humanitarian practice.

Commitment 7. Develop targets and measure progress

The Center will use its target framework and internal dashboard to track progress, learn and adapt. Targets will be reviewed as data and ambition improve.

How the pathways deliver the commitment	The Carter Center will use its target framework and internal monitoring system to track progress, strengthen accountability and support learning. The aim is not only to report activities, but understand whether the Center's climate-related work is helping communities become more informed, resilient, healthy and able to influence decisions that affect their lives. Targets and indicators will be reviewed periodically as evidence improves, data systems mature and the organization's level of ambition increases.
Public target	Share an annual Charter progress update covering pathway-based program action, operational emissions, learning and target status. Review the public targets periodically as evidence, data quality and ambition improve.