

# Ideas for Change Makers

## Sustainable Organisations

- Micah organisations as role models -



**StopArmut2015**, Rosenstrasse 21b, CH-4410 Liestal  
stoparmut.ch, nachhaltig@stoparmut.ch



## Dear representatives of Micah Member organisations

We'd love to invite you all to an exciting journey.

Let's explore together the power of being role models as sustainable organisations! You may ask why you should care about sustainability. Well, sustainability can be a powerful tool to implement Integral Mission. It goes beyond good governance by addressing social needs – especially needs of the poor – and the care for God's creation.

Striving to be a 'sustainable organisation' is exciting, as it has many faces but one goal. It acknowledges the different circumstances in different countries – and therefore the need for different priorities in action. Nevertheless it strives to bring all countries to the same spot: the spot of sustainability and justice, where human development for all is granted within the limits of creation. Hence sustainability is about exploring how to inspire our partners and surroundings best in the sense of 1 Cor. 11.1 "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ". So, sustainable organisation is about integral mission - using our daily habits, organisational conduct, the organisation's mission and the means to reach them in the full sense of 1. Thim, 4.12: "Let no one despise your youth but be an example to the believers in word, on conduct, in love in spirit, in purity."

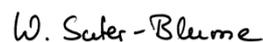
At the Micah Global Consultation 2015 we would like to embark on the journey to discuss our options to become visible role models of sustainable organisations. What does this mean in the north, south, east and west of the globe? How does it add credibility to our advocacy work, when we stand up for the poor and good governance? We think there is a tremendous power by "practicing what we preach" – and making it (more) visible.

So we are truly looking forward to an exciting expedition on discovering existing good examples and, the experience exchange that goes with it. And we would love to use this, to show to the world how Christian organisations take the lead and truly make a difference by integral mission!

So, please do join us and use the consultation to explore this journey over a coffee break or in the specific workshop session.



Peter Seeberger  
Campaign Director, StopArmut



Wiebke Suter-Blume  
Head Sustainability, StopArmut

## Endorsement by Micah Global

If we are going to speak out for transformation we need to live out the transformation we long for. What better way to model this than to ensure our organisations and ministries are demonstrating this in and through all we do and say. I was thrilled to see this strategic proposal come through from Micah Switzerland (StopArmut) and whole heartedly endorse this as a Global approach we want to see all members commit to.



Sheryl Haw  
International Director, Micah Global



## Content

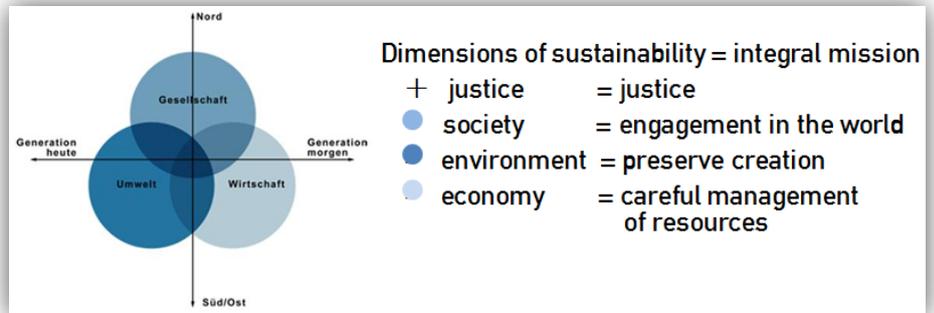
Foreword.....	2
1) Integral Mission gains credibility by sustainability .....	5
2) Sustainable Organisation – general aspects .....	6
3) Making a difference around the globe by “Micah Action Plan Sustainable Organisations” .....	7
Annex 1: What topics matter for sustainability? .....	8
Annex 2: Working papers .....	9
Check-up 1: Where does your country stand on its sustainability journey?.....	9
Check-up 2: Where does my organisation stand on its sustainability journey? .....	10
Evaluation of the Check-up .....	11
Action plan - your organisation’s journey towards sustainability: annual action .....	11
Micah reporting on my organisation’s journey towards sustainability .....	12
Sources .....	13
Contact .....	13

**This booklet serves as introduction and alignment for the “Micah action plan sustainable organisations”.** It aims to align organisations starting from different positions on the common journey towards sustainability.

### 1) Integral Mission gains credibility by sustainability

**Integral mission** (word, deed and lifestyle/role model) is at the heart of Micah. Leading by example and earning credibility through “practicing what we preach” is Micah’s claim as well as Micah’s distinction.

Striving for sustainability is an instrument, to put integral mission into practice. Sustainability sets an explicit link between standing up for the poor and respecting limits of creation.



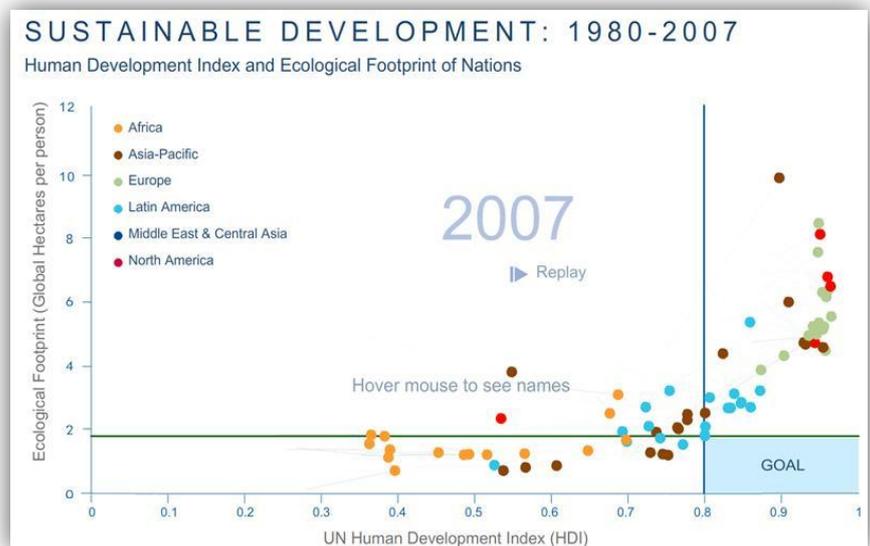
The most quoted **definition of sustainability** stems from the Brundtland Report (WCED 1987:43): *“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:*

- *the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and*
- *the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs.”*

#### All countries must improve to reach sustainable development.

When talking about sustainability on global level, it is important to find a common framework. It must respect different needs, point out different responsibilities and aim at the common goal of equally sustainable development for all countries.

The graph “sustainable development”<sup>1</sup> shows such a framework. It pictures human development on the horizontal axis – represented by the Human Development Index (HDI). And it shows the use of natural resources on the vertical axis – represented by the ecological footprint.



A country has reached sustainable development, when it has a HDI over 0.8 and an ecological footprint below 1.8. In that case it would show up below the green line and right of the blue line, thus in the blue quadrant “goal”. But no country is pictured there. And it is unlikely that any country will reach this status without actively striving for sustainability. The typical path of development leads from low human development and small footprint to high human development and big footprint – thus not into the sustainable spot of high human development and low ecological footprint.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.footprintnetwork.org/de/index.php/GFN/page/fighting\\_poverty\\_our\\_human\\_development\\_initiative/](http://www.footprintnetwork.org/de/index.php/GFN/page/fighting_poverty_our_human_development_initiative/)



## 2) Sustainable Organisation – general aspects

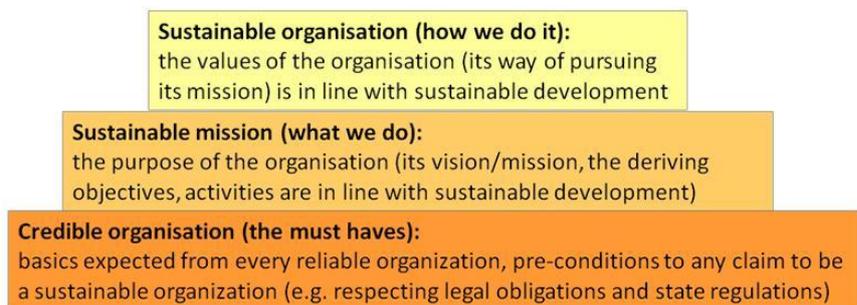
### Sustainability is a journey, not a defined status.

Therefore it is possible for organisations of different size, strength and progress to engage together and learn from each other. What is possible and relevant may vary according to the individualities of an organisation and the local context. A meaningful and relevant step in one context could be in another context out of reach or already fully implemented. Also the importance of human development and the ecological footprint could vary in different settings.



### The pyramid of sustainable organisations has to be built from the bottom to the top.

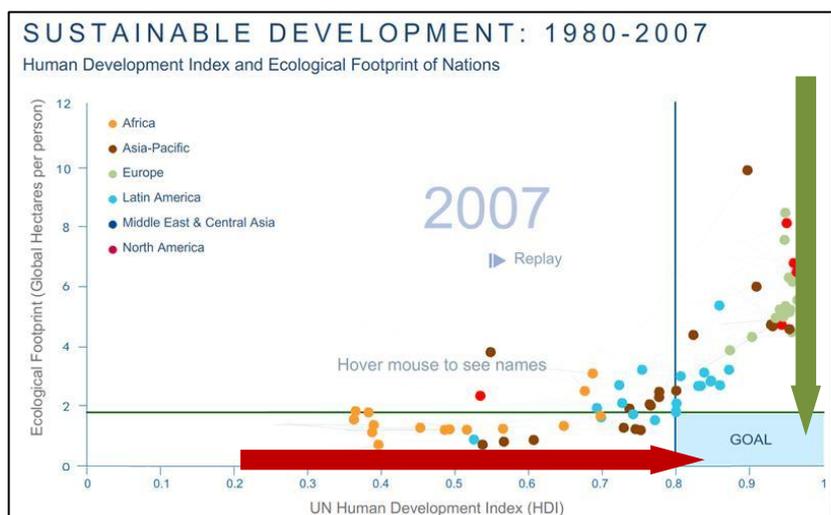
This ensures credible action and long lasting effect. Three stages can be differentiated (see graph, own account). Local regulation and international guidelines of sustainability management for NGOs offer orientation, which topics should be addressed. For inspiration see Annex 1.



### The local context of human development and ecological footprint defines relevant actions.

However, actions should be material for the sustainability performance of the organisation. And it should be relevant to the country's sustainability performance.

The actual position of the country, where the organisation is active, can serve as general orientation. Most times either the low human development (income, education, health) or the high ecological footprint is the main issue on the journey towards a sustainable lifestyle. Depending on the national context all organizations can lead the way to the sustainability as a role model:



- **Organizations operating in countries with low human development and small ecological footprint** should focus on human development and strive to do no harm to the environment.
- **Organizations operating in countries with high human development and big ecological footprint** should focus on reducing their ecological footprint and support others to lift their human development.



### 3) Making a difference around the globe by “Micah Action Plan Sustainable Organisations”

The “Micah Action Plan Sustainable Organisations” contributes to the core programme objectives of Micah:

- „[Integral Mission](#)“ shall be strengthened. Sustainability serves as tool to this.
- “[Enhancing the capacity of member organisations](#)” is at the core of the action plan. It focuses on the capacity to respond meaningfully to pressing questions in their surroundings. This can be in the field of human development or in the field of exploitation of resources.
- „[Networking](#)“ is fostered by the design of the action plan. The plan builds on sharing good practice and experience with the aim to develop a common sustainable organisation policy.

#### Striving for sustainability contributes to the distinction of Christian organisations around the globe.

Any Micah organisation that engages visibly and effectively in sustainability can gain respect and credit in its environment. Sustainability is no longer just a “nice to have”. It is by now regarded as good practice, especially for non-governmental organisations.

Sustainability is a relevant goal of the international community. The Millennium Development Goals will be succeeded by SDGs, that is “sustainable development goals”. Companies and states give themselves more and more often sustainability policies, measure them and report on their sustainability performance.

Non-governmental organisations often pursue a sustainable mission or promote sustainable development. However, NGOs that practice sustainability themselves, have sustainability policies or codes of conduct, measure their performance and report on it are still hard to find. Therefore role models of sustainable organizations are still needed in the world of NGOs. Christian organisations can take the lead.

#### Micah Action Plan Sustainable Organisations – using the chance to lead by example

The action plan is designed for kick-off at the Micah Consultation 2015. The aim is to collect and discuss good practice examples from the Micah member organisations in the next three years. As a result Micah can publish in 2018 a collection of good practice examples of sustainable organisations and a guidebook for organisations that would like to follow in the sense of 1 Cor. 11.1 “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ”.

Time frame	Action plan
2015: Micah Consultation	Kick-off: Presentation of the Plan and Workshop on sustainable organisation
2015-2018	<p><b>Member organisations around the globe</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting started with a Check-up: What exists already in my organisation, what does my country need? -&gt; see Annex 2 worksheet 1 and worksheet 2</li> <li>• Take action: picking a relevant measure of improvement every year -&gt; see Annex 2 worksheet 3</li> <li>• Contribute to the network: send in one good example per year to the Micah office -&gt; see Annex 2 worksheet 4</li> </ul> <p>In case of questions or interest in more exchange of experience: Contact the Micah office.</p> <p><b>Micah office and expert group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination of exchange and a workgroup on demand</li> <li>• Fostering exchange of experience by publishing annual good practice book (pdf)</li> <li>• Developing a Micah policy / guidebook on sustainable organisations</li> </ul>
2018: Micah Consultation	Finalization: Good practice publication + guidebook for sustainable organisations



## Annex 1: What topics matter for sustainability?

The simple answer is “literally everything”. However, that answer does not give orientation. A credible source what could be relevant aspects of sustainability is provided by the global reporting initiative (GRI) for non-governmental organisations. The table here (source GRI 2014:10) summarises mentioned aspects as inspiration. You could e.g. underline what would be relevant in your setting and mark with different colours what already exists and what needs to be worked on.

Standards	Aspects of sustainability
General	Transparency on management approach regarding strategy and analysis, organisational profile, identified material sustainability aspects, stakeholder engagement, good governance, ethics and integrity
Economy	Economic performance, market presence, indirect economic impacts, procurement practices, resource allocation, socially-responsible investments, ethical fundraising
Environmental	Materials, energy, water, biodiversity, emissions, effluents and waste, products and services, compliance, transport, overall, supplier environmental assessment, environmental grievance mechanisms
Social labour practices and decent work	Employment, labour – management relations, occupational health and safety, training and education, diversity and equal opportunities, equal remuneration for women and men, supplier assessment for labour practices, labour grievance mechanisms
Social human rights	Investments, non-discrimination, freedom of association and collective bargaining, child labour, forced or compulsory labour, security practices, indigenous rights, assessment, supplier human rights assessment, human rights grievance mechanisms
Social society	Local communities, anti-corruption, public policy, anti-competitive behaviour, compliance, supplier assessment for impacts on society, grievance mechanisms for impact on society
Social product responsibility	Customer health and safety, product and service labelling, marketing communication, customer privacy, compliance, affected stakeholder engagement, feedback / complaints and action, monitoring / evaluation and learning, gender and diversity, public awareness and advocacy, Coordination

This list can be interesting from different points of view for Micah organisations:

- The list does not require organisations to cover all aspects. It only asks them to assess, which aspects are relevant – thus material to them. And expects organisations to work on material aspects.
- The GRI guidelines are a well respected source and could give a good overview as well as in-depth guidance – even for organisations that are not interested in writing sustainability reports.
- The NGO specific supplement has been developed with the participation of WorldVision and TearFund, two Micah organisations (see GRI 2013 and GRI 2014). So it would add to Micah’s credibility if its organisations work with this standard!

**Annex 2: Working papers**

**Check-up 1: Where does your country stand on its sustainability journey?**

**Human Development**

Data for your country you can find on the Human Development Report Website (please scroll down!) (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries>). Look up the position of your country. Sustainable human development is reached by any index higher than 0.8.

Human Development Index: \_\_\_\_\_

Relevant factors for that position: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Discuss which details are relevant to improve / maintain the HDI position.

**Ecological Footprint**

Data are available from the Global Footprint Network. Look up your country at <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/trends/> Estimate the value (red line) of the last year given. A sustainable ecological footprint is reached by any value lower than 1.8.

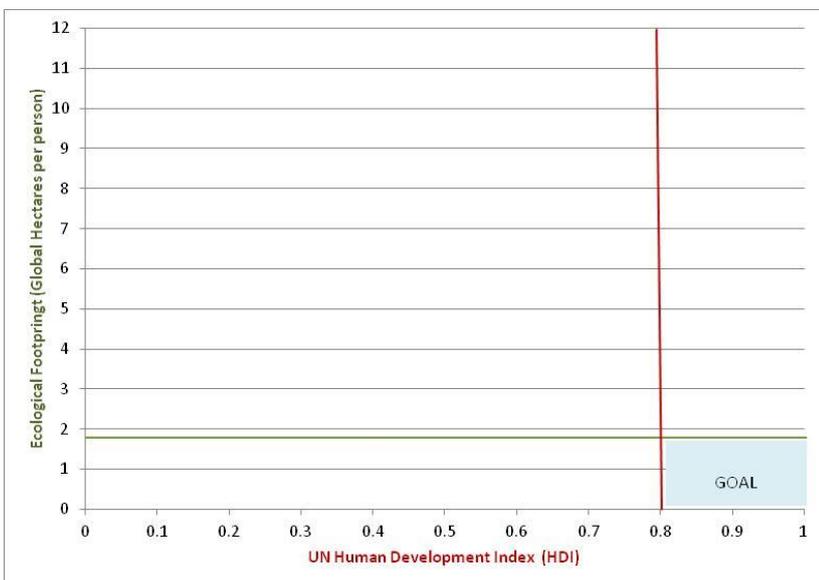
Ecological Footprint in global hectares per capita: \_\_\_\_\_

Relevant factors for that position: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Discuss, what could be key to achieve / maintain a ecological footprint of max. 1.8 per capita.

Map your country on the graph:



## Check-up 2: Where does my organisation stand on its sustainability journey?

**Sustainable organisation (how we do it):**  
the values of the organisation (its way of pursuing its mission) is in line with sustainable development

**Sustainable mission (what we do):**  
the purpose of the organisation (its vision/mission, the deriving objectives, activities are in line with sustainable development)

**Credible organisation (the must haves):**  
basic expected from every visible organisation, pre-conditions to any claim to be a sustainable organization (e.g. respecting legal obligations and state regulations)

If you look at the pyramid of sustainable organisations: How is your organisation doing? List keywords of everything you already do, even if you think it goes without saying. Start from the bottom of the pyramid and work to the top.

	Question	Examples for answers	Your organisation
3. Level: Sustainable Organisation	“How do we do our work?” Does this support our mission and improve sustainability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voluntary codex of good governance</li> <li>• sustainability policy for the annual conference</li> <li>• Fair trade coffee in the office</li> <li>• CO2 compensation of business travel</li> <li>• printing on eco-paper</li> <li>• ...</li> <li>• ...</li> </ul>	
2. Level: Sustainable Mission	“What do we do?” Does this contribute to a more sustainable society?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposed campaign</li> <li>• Awareness rising by Just People Courses, annual conference etc.</li> <li>• Poverty alleviation projects</li> <li>• Support and empowerment of change makers by seminars, networking, tools and tips</li> <li>• Projects to foster education, health and care for the environment</li> <li>• ...</li> <li>• ...</li> </ul>	
1. Level: Credible Organisation	Are the “must haves” in place? Are national minimum requirements met?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial accounting and book keeping according to national standards incl. annual revision</li> <li>• Employment contracts incl. social insurance according to law + transparent remuneration scheme</li> <li>• ...</li> <li>• ...</li> </ul>	



### Evaluation of the Check-up

Once you have done the check-ups, set priorities:

- Underline aspects in check-up 2 that make your organisation a visible role model in your environment. What action will be considered in your country as recommendable?
- Underline aspects in check-up 2 that make the most relevant contribution to your countries journey towards sustainable development. Take the position of your country from check-up 1 into account.
- Discuss what similar organisations like yours in your country do. How you would compare their performance to yours?
- Discuss what relevant aspects you should work on, in order to make a difference in your country. How high has your performance standard to be, in order to count as role model?

### Action plan - your organisation's journey towards sustainability: annual action

The Micah action plan for sustainable organisations asks members to determine minimum one action per year on one of the three levels of the pyramid. Share the example with the Micah network. This aims to foster visible and relevant impact of Christian organisations around the globe and to enhance integral mission. Choose concrete and meaningful actions that you can implement within one year. The motto "less is more" applies. Be specific about the activities (who does what and what shall be achieved):

Choose a level to work on and write down the action you would like to add to your normal activities in the following year:

	Action (what, who, when, how, desired results)
3. Level: Sustainable Organisation	
2. Level: Sustainable Mission	
1. Level: Credible Organisation	



**Micah reporting on my organisation's journey towards sustainability****Organisation** (name) \_\_\_\_\_

Address of organisation (postal code and web) \_\_\_\_\_

**Context:** Our organisation operates in (country)\_\_\_\_\_.

The country has a HDI of \_\_\_\_\_ and an ecological footprint of \_\_\_\_\_.

**Contribution to sustainable development**

Action (name) \_\_\_\_\_ (year) \_\_\_\_\_

Description

- describe what did you do by text, picture or figures
- describe what has changed or achieved by text, pictures or figures

**More information** Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person (name/email) \_\_\_\_\_

## Sources

---

Global Footprint Network (n.d.): [Our Human Development Initiative](#). access 22.07.2015

Global Reporting Initiative (2014): [G4 Sector Disclosures. NGO](#). access 22.07.2015

Global Reporting Initiative (2013): G4 Sustainability Reporting Guidelines. [Reporting Principles and Standard Disclosures](#). access 22.07.2015

Global Reporting Initiative (2013): G4 Sustainability Reporting Guidelines. [Implementation Manual](#). access 22.07.2015

WCED (World Commission on Environment and Development) (1987):. Our common future. Oxford: Oxford University Press, quoted on [iisd](#). access 22.06.2015.

---

## Contact



Inspiration

This initiative has been proposed by the Swiss campaign "StopArmut", a former Micah-Challenge organisation. It is our concern to bring change by living out the principles we propose and inspire others to follow our model.

Our main activities is to train Christians to contribute by their lifestyle to a more just and sustainable world and to fight poverty on a structural level. We believe and we propagate the principles of integral mission as an expression of a credible Christian life that impacts to most vulnerable of our society.

For further information please contact:

nachhaltig@stoparmut.ch or

Wiebke Suter-Blume +41 (0)76 / 746 68 58 (Monday-Thursday).

[www.stoparmut.ch/nachhaltig](http://www.stoparmut.ch/nachhaltig)



Stand: Aug 2015/wsb

