

Red Goes Green

Barriers and enablers for effectively greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability across the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement



Photo: IFRC

Climate change and environmental degradation is increasing the world's vulnerability and exposure to risks, disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable communities. Recognizing our global collective responsibility to take urgent mitigation and adaptation measures, the humanitarian community has a responsibility to support vulnerable communities to increase their resilience to the impacts of the climate and environmental crises. Equally, humanitarian organisations have a responsibility to take a more serious approach to limit their own climate and environmental footprint and strengthening the environmental sustainability of their actions, so as to not contribute further to the crises.

In order to capture learnings, experiences and good practice, the Green Response Working Group has undertaken research to understand the barriers and enablers for effectively greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability at an organisational level across the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. The study focused on interviewing Movement

components with experiences of systematically and institutionally greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability (40 individuals across 12 organisations), with additional interviews held with environmental experts and local humanitarian actors (6 individuals). With the aim to provide practical guidance for further action, the findings and recommendations have been turned into a Checklist for organisations within the Movement (and beyond) to help them to effectively green practices and strengthen environmental sustainability. The full report can be found [here](#).

This research forms part of the Green Response Working Group's broader goal to increase community resilience to the impacts of the climate and environmental crises and to strengthen the environmental sustainability of humanitarian action. It recognizes that the humanitarian community must adapt its ways of working in order to more efficiently and sustainably reduce and address current and future humanitarian needs.

Checklist for humanitarian organisations to effectively green practices and strengthen environmental sustainability

Assessment/baseline

- Have you undertaken an assessment and/or established a baseline of your environmental impact?
- Are you including all aspects of your organisation's operation and activities, including facilities (e.g. energy and water use, waste management practices), transport and travel behaviour (e.g. your fleet, airplane emissions), supply chain (both office supplies and relief items etc.) and programmes (e.g. generators, environmental impacts of WASH, Shelter, Health interventions, waste management practices in the field)? It is better to undertake a materiality assessment* that identifies the environmental impact of all the activities of the organisation as a whole, but starting with a few key indicators and general areas of improvement is also a good approach to scale up from.

Systems, processes, templates and tools

How will you update your ways of working? There are many useful industry standards (e.g. [ISO 14001:2015](#), [ISO 14064-1:2018](#), [GHG Protocol](#), [Global Reporting Initiative standards](#) etc.) and other resources and tools developed for the humanitarian community (see for instance the [Environmental Emergencies Centre](#), the [Environment and Disaster Management \(EDM\) program](#), [Environment and Humanitarian Action \(EHA\) Connect](#), the [Sphere environmental standard](#) or contact the Green Response Working Group). It is important that environmental considerations are integrated across your annual planning processes and the project management cycle as well as internal procedures and systems (e.g. procurement, facilities management, travel and transport etc.).

Concept and commitment

- Has 'greening', 'environmental sustainability' or other related concepts been clearly articulated and defined in your organisation's long-term strategic documents (e.g. Strategy 2030)?
- Are there supporting documents, e.g. policy, implementation plan, outcomes framework etc. that explain in more detail what needs to be done?

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

- Do you have a separate implementation plan or is it fully integrated within your organisational plan? Either way works and a combination of both is best. Your plan should:
- Identify specific roles and responsibilities
 - Clearly describe tasks and timelines
 - Have a clear and realistic time schedule
 - Communicate the plan to all staff
 - Include appropriate training and guidance
 - Acknowledge staff input and opinions to improve implementation as you progress
 - Include indicators and periodic outcome measurement that is communicated to all staff incl. leadership
 - Include staff incentives

Leadership

- Has your leadership visibly endorsed the organisation's ambition to green practices and strengthening environmental sustainability?
- How? (E.g. through the passing of a long-term organisational strategy, a policy etc.)
- Has this been communicated to all staff and/or externally?

Funding

- Are you able to allocate multi-year and dedicated funding?
- Is it 'core-funding'?
- If not, what is your plan for securing long-term funding to enable a continuous change process?

Human Resources and stakeholder engagement

- Do you have (at least) one full-time, ongoing employee formally in charge of green/environmental sustainability implementation?
- If not, are you able to engage existing staff to be in charge of implementation (noting that it should be part of their position description)?
- With both options, does the appointed person have enough authority and budget to make change happen?
- How will you engage staff across the organisation to feel part of, and want to take initiative to, improving practices? See also Implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Do you have designated champions at different levels of the organisation (leadership, technical, admin, branches etc.)?

Resources

- Have you identified what types of training, practical guidance, systems and tools you will need?
- Are these already available or do you need to create new ones? Check available resources with your partners and include outstanding resource needs (and expected costs) in your implementation plan.

Partnerships

Have you linked up with partners (in-country, within the Movement, externally)? Relevant partners could include government (including Ministries of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Risk Management, Foreign Affairs), research institutions/academia, private sector, civil society etc. The Green Response Working Group, the Climate Centre, as well as other like-minded members within the Movement are all good points of contact.

* A materiality assessment is the process of identifying, refining, and assessing numerous potential environmental issues that are included in the organisation's overall environmental impact and then prioritising issues that are most 'material' to the organisation. For more information, see for instance the Global Reporting Initiative, <https://www.globalreporting.org/how-to-use-the-gri-standards/questions-and-answers/materiality-and-topic-boundary/> [Accessed 02 October 2020].



For more information on the Green Response Working Group, please visit the website: <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/green-response/> or contact the Green Response Working Group Chair, Caroline Gardstedt: caroline.gardstedt@redcross.se