

# Red Goes Green

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



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International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement

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**Edition:** December 2020

# Acknowledgements

International Red Cross Red Crescent Green Response Working Group and the author of this report would like to thank all those who have contributed to this research. This includes the participating organisations and individuals who generously shared their time and experiences. A special thanks to Malika Noisette, Netherlands Red Cross, and Esperanza Ursua, Spanish Red Cross, for their assistance in translating text and facilitating interviews in French and Spanish respectively, and to Kathrine Vad, ICRC and Nicole Maine, Canadian Red Cross, for their review.

We would also like to acknowledge the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) for its contribution to this research project.

This research was conducted on behalf of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement Green Response Working Group and was made possible by ongoing support from Caroline Gårdestedt, Swedish Red Cross, Chair of the Green Response Working Group.

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# Executive Summary

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.

This research is focused on the latter and was undertaken based on an identified need to better 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 Movement). The research is underpinned by a strong sustainability approach and guided by normalisation process theory and the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research. 40 individuals across 14 organisations within the Movement were interviewed based on their experiences of systematically and institutionally greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability. Additional interviews were held with environmental experts from UNEP/UNOCHA Joint Environment Unit (JEU), the World Wildlife Fund and Sweden's Royal Institute of Technology, as well as with three representatives of the Alliance for Empowering Partnership (A4EP).

The findings from the research conclude that:

- A committed and engaged leadership is more likely to lead to sufficient resources. Strong communication from leadership will also support perceptions of the relative importance of greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability.

- Increased compliance requirements, business strategy/competitiveness and altruism/accountability are all motivations for change and can be drawn upon as relevant.
- People are more likely to be motivated and take personal responsibility if concepts are clearly defined in organisational strategic documents, visibly endorsed by the leadership. High-level concepts and goals must also be translated and described practically to support implementation.
- Having a dedicated and detailed implementation plan is good practice but environmental goals and objectives should also be integrated into organisational outcome frameworks and annual planning and reporting processes.
- The presence of dedicated, knowledgeable and empowered staff, formally tasked with driving implementation, is crucial for effective implementation.
- Environmental considerations must be integrated across all processes, systems and tools that staff use in their daily work. Key environmental industry standards and procedures, as well as humanitarian environmental resources and tools, can be useful when updating and adjusting ways of working.
- Funding allocation should be predictable, multi-year and realistic in relation to expected outcomes.
- Mainstreaming environmental considerations across an organisation takes time. Incremental changes and piloting new solutions allow for more feasible and evolving ambition.



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- Implementing change should not negatively impact the organisation's ability to carry out its humanitarian mandate. Prioritisation will likely become less of an issue once environmental considerations have been integrated into existing processes, systems and tools.
  - Undertaking a materiality assessment enables a systematic approach for assessing and prioritising the organisation's most significant environmental impacts. At the same time, establishing a few key indicators and setting up a baseline is a good start and allows for further up-scaling.
  - It is not just about emissions. All aspects of environmental sustainability should be addressed, including the humanitarian supply chain and environmental impacts from programme delivery.
  - Establishing collaborations with in-country and international partners and donors can significantly support the change process. National Societies should be supported with long-term and predictable funding in order to build relevant capacity, systems and processes.
  - Organisations within the Movement face particular barriers relating to its structural and social characteristics, including to the level of autonomy among branches/regional/sub-regional offices and departments. Useful measures include establishing organisation-wide documents expressing climate and environmental commitments and goals; supporting pilots among motivated staff/branches/offices; and staff incentives/disincentives.
  - Building capacity across the Movement should include two parallel processes: dedicated environmental specialists and building environmental competence across different technical areas.
  - Sharing experiences and resources within the Movement will benefit the implementation process.
- With the aim to provide practical guidance for further action, the findings and recommendations from this research have also been turned into a Checklist for organisations within the Movement (and beyond) to help them to effectively green practices and strengthen environmental sustainability.

# Introduction

Climate change and environmental degradation is increasing the world's vulnerability and exposure to risks, disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable communities. As the humanitarian community seeks to address the humanitarian impacts of the climate and environmental crises and support those most vulnerable to anticipate, absorb and adapt to its shocks and stresses, humanitarian organisations are increasingly asked to demonstrate how they are limiting their own climate and environmental footprint and strengthening the environmental sustainability of their actions. Environmental sustainability is increasingly becoming essential to the credibility, accountability and compliance of humanitarian organisations.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Green Response Working Group (hereafter the Green Response Working Group or GRWG), chaired by Swedish Red Cross, consists of, and works in close collaboration with International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement components as well as external partners to strengthen the environmental sustainability of humanitarian action. The GRWG works with the fundamental understanding that building community resilience and integrating environmental sustainability across all operations and programmes must be an integral part of how the humanitarian community approaches its work, in order to more efficiently and sustainably reduce and address current and future humanitarian needs.

The International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (henceforth, the Movement) consists of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Secretariat and 192 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies). All Movement components are at various stages of, and have different priorities and capacities for, greening their practices and strengthening the environmental sustainability of their actions.

This research was initiated based on an identified need to capture how measures to green practices and strengthen environmental sustainability are being implemented across the Movement to enable shared learnings, good practices and peer-support and learning. It seeks to understand the barriers and enablers for greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability across the Movement, with particular interest in capturing the implementation process and identifying common barriers or challenges experienced by various components of the Movement, and how these have been successfully/unsuccessfully addressed in various contexts.

## Approach and Definitions

This research is framed by a strong sustainability approach, with the understanding that natural capital can never be substituted by other forms of capital and that environmental sustainability encompasses and establishes the necessary conditions for economic and social sustainability and development (Neumayer, 2013, Pelenc et al., 2015, Barua and Khataniar, 2016).

Environmental sustainability refers here to a state in which the demands placed on the environment can be met without reducing its capacity to allow all people to live well, now and in the future (GEMET, 2020a). It is here understood that environmental sustainability is broader than climate action but limiting climate and environmental impacts can both contribute to mitigating climate change, for instance by reducing emissions and greening practices, and to strengthening people's resilience to climate change (IUCN, 2015, GEMET, 2020a).

For the humanitarian community, it is here proposed that environmental sustainability encompasses two aspects. Firstly, strengthening environmental sustainability requires a stronger emphasis on identifying and reducing communities' underlying environmental (as well as social and economic) vulnerabilities and exposure to



Photo: Nigel Dickinson/Red Cross

risks. This aspect includes investing in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures, especially those that promote nature-based solutions<sup>1</sup>, using current and predicted climate and environmental risks to inform programming. Secondly, strengthening environmental sustainability requires that the humanitarian community addresses immediate humanitarian needs in a way that does not break the fundamental promise to 'do no harm' by putting communities at further risk. It means driving a process to identify, report and improve on the organisation's global and local climate and environmental impacts.

This aspect encompasses both internal practices and the entire humanitarian response cycle. At a global level, this means assessing and limiting the most significant environmental impacts, reducing emissions and demanding higher quality and sounder environmental practices along the supply chain. At a local level, this means incorporating climate and environmental risks and considerations in each step of the project cycle, ensuring environmentally sustainable approaches to addressing humanitarian needs and working closely with communities and local capacities. Across these two aspects also lies a core responsi-

<sup>1</sup> Nature-based solutions (NBS) have been defined by IUCN as "actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits" (IUCN, 2016, see also Griscom et al., 2017)

bility of humanitarian actors to enable local voices and the voices of the most vulnerable and those most impacted by climate change and environmental degradation to be heard at all levels of the climate and environment debate, and to advocate for more effective, large-scale action and investment at a global level. This research is primarily focused on the second aspect of strengthening environmental sustainability for the humanitarian community; the process to identify, report and improve on the organisation's global and local climate and environmental impacts.

Environmental degradation refers here to a process through which the natural environment is compromised in some way, reducing biological diversity and the general health of the environment. This process can be entirely natural in origin, or it can be accelerated or caused by human activities (GEMET, 2020b). Environmental degradation is both an impact of climate change, and a compounding risk to communities affected by climate change.

"To green practices" or "greening" refers here to actions and measures to reduce the causes of climate change and environmental degradation (33<sup>rd</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, 2019, IFRC, 2020a).<sup>2</sup> It means improving on, or replacing, existing practices in order to make them more climate-smart (see below) and environmentally sustainable.

Climate-smart: There is no universally accepted definition of 'climate-smart programming'. For the purpose of this report, we use the Red Cross and Red Crescent definition which equates this to 'good and sustainable programming': supporting inclusive green development, making use of

available weather forecasts and climate science to enable people to anticipate, absorb and adapt to climate shocks. In addition, it includes efforts to reduce climate and environmental impact during humanitarian programming, response and recovery operations (IFRC, 2020b).

Low/high implementation organisation(s) refer to the level of effectiveness to which an organisation has been un/successful in implementing change across its practices, procedures and systems. Here, they refer to RCRC Movement organisations that have ineffectively/effectively greened their practices and strengthened their environmental sustainability (Damschroder and Lowery, 2013).

## Research question



The overarching question to be answered is:

*What are the barriers and enablers for effectively greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability at an organisational level across the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement?"*

While the research question is focused on the Movement, its findings and recommendations may be equally relevant for organisations across the humanitarian and development communities.

<sup>2</sup> The definition of 'greening' aligns to that of the IFRC-ICRC pledge on 'Strengthening the resilience of communities to climate change and environmental degradation through climate-smart humanitarian action' made at the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, November 2019, Geneva, Switzerland. It is here kept intentionally broad to include activities within policy development, programmes (e.g. greening WASH, Shelter, ERUs), offices and facilities, procurement and logistics, delegates etc. with the intention to limit and improve climate and environmental footprints. See also IFRC, 2020a.

# Methodology

## Theoretical framework

The approach to answering the research question was guided by the following theories and frameworks:

- **Normalisation process theory (NPT):** NPT is a socio-behavioural theory seeking to understand how complex practices – for example ‘greening’ – are made workable and integrated in context-dependent ways. It looks at four different constructs of the process that are relevant to consider for the implementation, embedding and integration of greening practices:
  1. Coherence (meaning): what is the work and how easily can it be described. Here, what does ‘greening’ and ‘strengthening environmental sustainability’ actually mean in the context;
  2. Cognitive participation (commitment): who does the work and are they willing and prepared to invest time and energy in it. Here, what is the organisational uptake, and do they see the value in investing in it;
  3. Collective action (effort): how does the work get done, is additional training/capacity-building provided, how compatible is it with existing practices, does it fit with the overall goals and activities of the organisation and what impact will it have on resources, division of labour and responsibility. Here, what are the activities undertaken as part of ‘greening’ the organisation, what is the collective investment in it.
  4. Reflexive monitoring (comprehension): how the work is understood and how it can be adapted and improved on the basis of experience and feedback. Here, what is the process for monitoring, evaluating and facilitating continual improvement of the organisation’s environmental performance (e.g. how is the greening going).

The constructs are inter-dependent and act iteratively (May and Finch, 2009, Murray et al., 2010, Hooker et al., 2015). Though NPT is not explicit in the piloting and scaling up of change initiatives, it is here proposed that it is indirectly covered through iterative collective action and reflexive monitoring. Scalability is made more explicit in the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (below).

- **Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR):** The CFIR provides a comprehensive taxonomy of defined constructs that impact upon the implementation process. The development of the CFIR was based on a systematic review of the implementation literature about factors that potentially affect any implementation. It is a well proven scientific tool for implementation analysis (CFIR, 2020a). Applied to this study, the constructs include: characteristics of greening/strengthening environmental sustainability (e.g. complexity, trialability, resources and cost); inner setting (e.g., compatibility and integration of environmental considerations into existing processes and systems, leadership engagement and relative priority); and the process used to implement the program (e.g., quality and extent of planning, engagement of key stakeholders). Outer setting was limited to external pressures and their level of influence, as there was such a geographical spread among participating organisations. The characteristics of individuals involved (e.g., knowledge and attitudes), was not used in this study as the focus was not on individual behaviour change. The interview guides were developed using the CFIR interview guide tool.

## Method

Interviews were elicited through purposive and snow-ball sampling techniques based on participants’ ability to contribute to the research,

meaning here their level of expertise and/or experience in greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability at an organisational level (Berg, 2007). Initial recruitment was based on previous direct contact between the organisation/individual and the Green Response Working Group, as well as those who were otherwise known to be working on these issues. Notice of the study and calls for participation was also distributed through the IFRC Disaster Risk Reduction Advocacy Group. The inclusion criteria for participating in the research was that the organisation was part of the Movement and “was currently in the process of systematically and institutionally ‘greening’ its practices or in other ways strengthening its environmental sustainability”. Efforts were made to have Movement components from different geographical regions and of varying size included in the sample, including through snowball sampling techniques.

Interviews were conducted between April and July 2020. A total of fourteen (n=14) components of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement were interviewed, reaching data saturation (Guest et al., 2006) (see also Figure 1). The interview guide was, as mentioned, based on the CFIR guide and included both open questions and matrix questions using a 5-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932), asking participants to what level they agreed with different statements (the Likert questions). Please find a list of interviewees and the interview guide in Annexes A and B. The majority of interviews were conducted as group interviews, as several individuals were identified to be working on complementary issues on greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability within their organisation. A total of 40 people from the Movement were interviewed. These group interviews were still counted as one (n=1), but varying answers and/or disagreements in researching collective responses were noted. The Likert questions were sent to participants following their group interview, and a collective response was either provided, or an average was created based on individual responses. This yielded less responses than directly eliciting answers during the interview (11 people or 28% of participants sent the Likert question did not respond), however based on experience from the first two group interviews, single-answer quantitative questions easily became open-ended qualitative questions when asking several individuals to form a consensus. Therefore, it was decided that the Likert questions were to be taken out and sent after the interview to save time and allow for quantitative data collection.



40 individuals across 12 organisations within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement were interviewed, along with 6 environmental experts and local humanitarian actors.”

Four (4) additional interviews were held with representatives outside the Movement; three (3) of them were environmental experts from UNEP/UNOCHA Joint Environment Unit (JEU), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Sweden’s Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) Sustainability Office respectively. The environmental experts were selected based on previous contact with the Green Response Working Group and a separate interview guide was developed for them (see Annex C). They are referred to in the text as external environmental experts. Additionally, one interview was held with three representatives of the Alliance for Empowering Partnership (A4EP), a network of organisations committed to strengthening the humanitarian architecture and locally led response. The A4EP members included representatives from Humanitarian Aid International, Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits and the Global Mentoring Initiative. Rather than set interview questions as with the Movement members or the external environmental experts, these participants were specifically asked about the barriers and enablers for greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability from a local organisation perspective.

Most interviews were recorded but not transcribed. Notes were taken by the interviewer. Participants were asked for verbal consent at the start of the interview; permission to record the interview was also requested (when recorded).

### Limitations

This study is limited by several considerations. For instance, data was elicited only from people directly involved in the implementation for greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability. Other peripherally involved stakeholders (e.g. leadership), were not included.

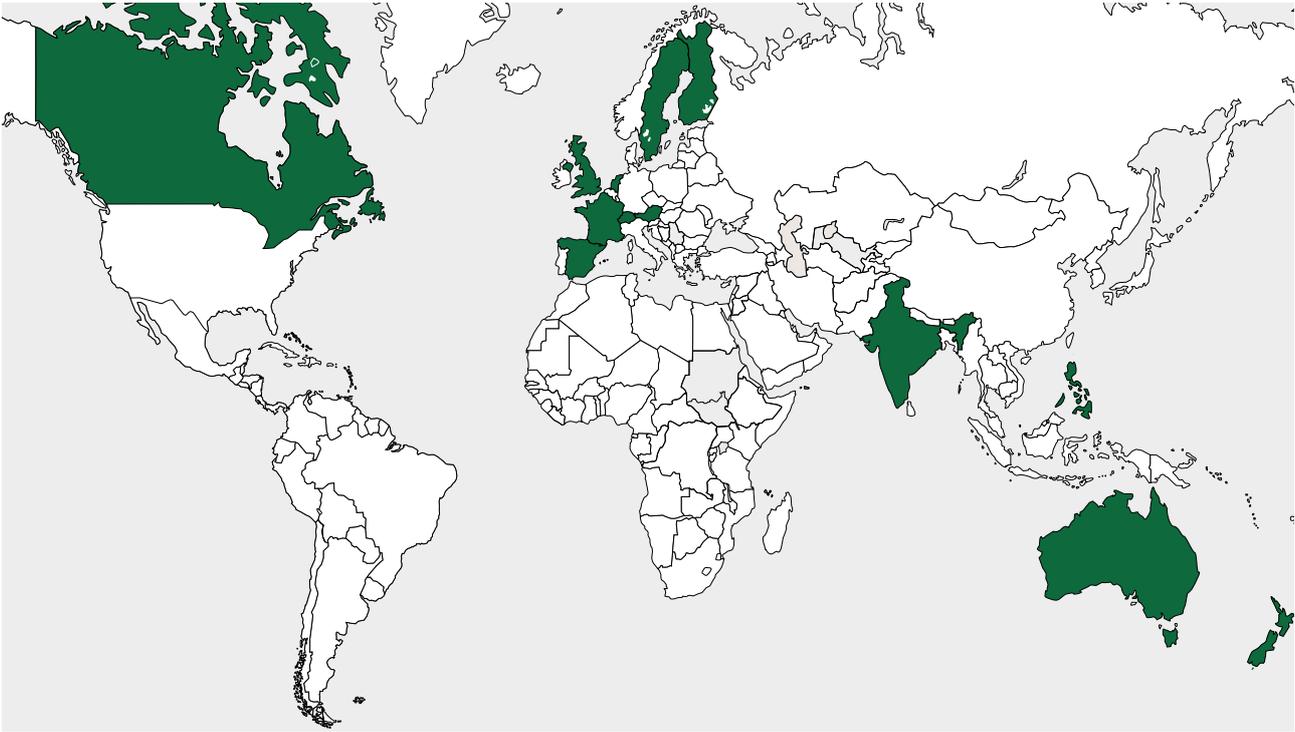


Figure 1: World map with all participating organisations

Initial discussions of the scope also included the possibility of identifying barriers and enablers at an operational/programmatic level, drawing upon field experiences from Head of Emergency Operations (HEOps), Environmental Field Advisors, technical delegates (e.g. Water and Sanitation, Shelter, Logistics and Procurement etc.) and host National Societies recently involved in large emergency response and initial recovery operations. This remains a potential topic for further research, though findings from this study are also relevant to consider when seeking to improve ways of working in emergency response and recovery operations.

A clear limitation of this study is the lack of a broader representation of National Societies. Although most regions were represented – the exception being Africa (despite several recruitment attempts) – there is a clear majority of European National Societies represented in the sample. In addition, only two National Societies would be considered “Operating National Societies” (sometimes known as Host National Societies, hereafter referred to as Operating National Societies) and the rest would be considered “Participating National Societies” (sometimes known

as Partner National Societies, hereafter referred to as Participating National Societies) (IFRC, 1997 and 2013).<sup>3</sup> Despite significant efforts, this study was unsuccessful in recruiting Operating National Societies to be interviewed. This limitation could be due to the narrow selection criteria for interview participants (see above), a lack of resources, capacities and/or strategic prioritisation of Operating National Societies to systematically green practices and strengthen environmental sustainability, or an inability of the researcher to access and recruit them. Likely it is due to a combination of the above as well as other reasons. It is understood however, that Operating National Societies (as many local actors) often face challenges to move from project-based funding to more sustainable and predictable funding, which is crucial to for the long-term investment required to systematically and effectively green practices and strengthen environmental sustainability (see costs and the role of the donor in findings, also see IFRC, 2020b). Regardless, there is an opportunity for the Green Response Working Group to better engage with Operating National Societies in the Green Response work. This is reflected in the conclusion and recommendations.

<sup>3</sup> There is no clear definition of or delineation between Operating/Host and Participating/Partner National Societies. An over-simplistic categorisation would be to understand Operating/Host National Societies as receiving funding and technical assistance from Movement components (including other National Societies, IFRC Secretariat and/or ICRC), as well as from external partners. Participating/Partner National Societies can in turn be understood as providing funding and technical assistance to Operating/Host National Societies. Of course, Participating/Partner National Societies also receive funding and technical support from its partners, but to a lesser extent from Movement components. It is relevant to note that Participating/Partner National Societies deliver their own programmes domestically as well as support programmes internationally, which are delivered in partnership with Operating/Host National Societies (bilaterally) and/or IFRC Secretariat and/or ICRC (multilaterally).

# Findings

## Defining and committing to greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability

Establishing a clear definition of what greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability means in practice for the organisation can help provide structure and assist in formulating clear goals.

Participants were initially requested to describe what 'greening' or 'strengthening environmental sustainability' means in practice for their organisation and asked whether there was a general agreement on terms and concepts. Overall, whether concepts had been formally defined or not gave an indication of the level of coherence across the organisation:

- **Concepts formally defined:** often through policies (e.g. climate or environmental policies) and longer-term strategic documents. While most participants in the study knew about the existing definitions (as they were already working on these issues), several noted that the level of awareness and understanding of these concepts was inconsistent across their organisations. Further, several participants maintained that high-level definitions in strategic documents were not always translated to guide practical actions operationally.
- **Concepts not formally defined:** Some participants argued that a broad understanding of the concept without a set definition within the organisation allowed for flexibility and an agile approach to progress various activities. There were also several participating organisations that were currently in the process of defining these concepts but had already initiated a bottom-up approach to get activities going without being hindered or delayed by organisational consensus.

Generally, there is a notable increase in prioritising climate and the environment in longer term humanitarian strategies. Within the Movement,

the IFRC Strategy 2030, developed through a consultative process in which 10,000 people around the world participated, including National Societies and external experts and partners, has identified climate and environmental crises as the number one challenge for the next decade. The Strategy makes strong commitments to strengthening environmental sustainability in how IFRC delivers its services (IFRC, 2018a). Similarly, the ICRC Strategy 2019-2022 includes a strategic orientation toward building sustainable humanitarian impact (ICRC, 2020a). The Movement has also formulated its ambitions to address the climate crisis, of which greening is a key ambition (IFRC, 2020a). These strategic documents have reportedly been useful for National Societies in guiding how they approach climate action and environmental sustainability and when advocating for organisational change internally. Several National Societies, especially those with high implementation, pointed to organisational long-term strategic documents that clearly outlined climate change and environment as a priority.

There is correlation between those participating organisations that have defined their concepts for greening/environmental sustainability in



A strong coherence (agreement of concepts and terms) is more likely to translate to cognitive participation (commitment), and in turn, to the allocation of funding, resources, the development of goals and indicators, trainings and capacity development."

high-level organisational strategies and policies, clearly and visibly endorsed by the leadership, and the presence of dedicated resources, including human resources, and clearly defined goals and actions. This suggests that a strong coherence (agreement of concepts and terms) is more likely to translate to cognitive participation (commitment), and in turn, to the allocation of funding, resources, the development of goals and indicators, trainings and capacity development (May and Finch, 2009, Murray et al., 2010, Hooker et al., 2015). It should be noted that many of the organisations that showed stronger coherence and commitment also had a longer history of working on these issues, indicating that achieving coherence and commitment requires time and perseverance. It was also emphasised by an external environmental expert that it is crucial to adopt a systematic approach to greening by integrating environment into strategic documents and foundational policies and procedures that staff use in their daily work. This not only supports mainstreaming, but also supports individual responsibilities across different areas.

### Motivation and influence

There were similar arguments among the participants as to why the organisation should be, or already was greening practices and strengthening the environmental sustainability of their activities. Common arguments included: moral imperative as a humanitarian network dealing with the humanitarian consequences of the climate and environmental crises to be part of the solution, not the problem (e.g. "it's the right thing to do"); good business strategy (attracting new partners, including private sector and being ahead of future compliance requirements from donors); new compliance requirements by governments etc.

When asked about the decision to green practices and strengthen environmental sustainability, 61% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the decision was strongly influenced by the

organisation's proven ability to adapt ideas from outside to fit its way of doing things; 64% agreed that it was strongly influenced by pressures from outside the organisation; 57% agreed that it had been strongly influenced by successful processes for greening practices from organisations within the Movement, and 62% agreed that it had been strongly influenced by successful processes outside the Movement. Several organisations mentioned private sector, government or partners within their country context for the last mentioned.

### Relative priority

In times of disasters and crisis, the immediate imperative for the Movement is to save lives, reduce suffering, damage and losses, and to protect, comfort and support affected people. This imperative should always remain the priority, as was also re-iterated by most participating organisations.

Interviews for this research were conducted in the first half of 2020, a time when the world was coming to terms with the global COVID-19 pandemic. Asking participants to what extent greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability may take a backseat to other high-priority initiatives therefore had a given framing. All organisations noted delays in their planned activities due to competing priorities because of COVID-19. A few participants noted that changes that had already been fully implemented, meaning greening practices had been fully embedded into the ways of working, continued, whereas improvements currently underway had a higher risk of being de-prioritised. Often it was up to the staff assigned to drive and champion implementation to ensure continued prioritisation. A few participants also mentioned the opportunities presented by the pandemic, including new ways of working (e.g. increased digitalisation and decrease in travel) and opportunities for integrating environmental considerations into national

In your opinion, the decision to green your practices and strengthen environmental sustainability has been strongly influenced by:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My organisation's proven ability to adapt ideas from outside to fit our way of doing things	0%	15%	23%	38%	23%
Pressures from outside the organisation	0%	21%	7%	64%	7%
Successful processes for greening practices from organisations within the RCRC Movement	0%	21%	21%	57%	0%
Successful processes for greening practices from organisations outside the RCRC Movement	0%	31%	8%	62%	0%

recovery measures. Even in the time of COVID-19, most organisations reported a high prioritisation of greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability. This was especially apparent among those that had reported a strong agreement of concepts and terms and commitment outlined in strategic documents (see above).

While the external environmental experts acknowledged the continuing issue of prioritisation, they also highlighted that the links between environmental sustainability and the quality of humanitarian action, including the sustainability of its impact, is becoming increasingly important. The link between human activity on the environment and the emergence of infectious diseases (including zoonoses, such as the coronavirus) has also prompted urgency to increase understanding and management of environmental risk and impacts in longer term response and recovery.

Issues that are inherently cross-cutting, such as protection, gender and inclusion, community engagement and accountability and environmental sustainability, are often at risk of being deprioritised, both in terms of funding allocation and relative importance on the agenda. While growing in importance, most participants recognised that environmental considerations are often still considered a ‘nice to have’.

### Leadership

This area strongly distinguished between high and low implementation organisations. The organisations that were successful in greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability generally reported to have strong



The organisations that were successful in greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability generally reported to have strong endorsement, engagement and prioritisation from their leadership.”

endorsement, engagement and prioritisation from their leadership. Staff were also encouraged by the leadership to get involved in the process. Equally, organisations that were struggling or had yet to properly initiate the process often reported the lack of, or delay in, leadership engagement and commitment as a barrier for successful implementation. Several participants noted that while the leadership was informed, it was not necessarily involved in the process of greening practices.

### Complexity: how hard is it?

Regarding the complexity of greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability, there was less consensus regarding how long the process takes and whether it is a clear departure from previous practices and ways of working. However, 93% either agreed or strongly agreed that everyone in the organisation will be affected and will need to adjust their ways of working; and 92% agreed or strongly agreed that most or all internal processes will need to be adapted. This

With regards to greening practices, would you agree that Senior leadership/management <sup>4</sup>	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
agree on clear goals for greening practices across the organisation	0%	43%	7%	14%	36%
have established timelines and deliverables:	7%	43%	14%	21%	14%
is informed and involved in the process:	8%	8%	8%	42%	33%
agree on adequate resources required to reach established goals:	7%	50%	14%	7%	21%
have designated champion(s):	0%	29%	0%	43%	29%
set a high priority on its success:	0%	36%	21%	21%	21%
have endorsed it in visible ways:	0%	29%	29%	21%	21%
provide staff with information on performance measures and guidelines:	7%	36%	7%	29%	21%

<sup>4</sup> Noting the disparate responses across these Likert questions for the whole cohort, the analysis took into account how low- and high-implementation organisations had responded respectively. The responses are still shown in its entirety to be consistent across the report.

Relating to how complex it is to green practices in your organisation, would you agree that	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Greening practices will take a long time, at least 10 years.	0%	29%	29%	14%	29%
Everyone in the organisation will be affected and will need to adjust their ways of working	0%	0%	7%	43%	50%
Most or all internal processes will need to be adapted	0%	0%	8%	58%	33%
Greening is a clear departure from previous practices and ways of working	0%	29%	21%	43%	7%

implies that implementation of greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability requires a significant effort from staff members and a mainstreaming of environmental considerations across internal systems and processes. Several of the external experts voiced caution in over-complicating the process, noting that incremental improvement is an effective approach, and can sometimes be preferred to a significant overhaul of current ways of working, which may create push-back and delays.

### Compatibility: integrating environment into existing processes

Integrating environmental considerations into existing processes and systems is necessary to mainstream and effectively change behaviour. Participating organisations from the Movement were asked about how greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability had been or is being integrated into current processes. Their responses are structured under two categories: 1) internal practices; and 2) delivering programmes.

#### Internal practices

Generally, organisations had made more progress on improving internal practices, which often focused on reporting on and limiting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This includes integrating environmental standards or principles into procurement guidelines or practices; travel policies, reporting procedures and/or systems already capturing cost and quantities of energy and water use, paper consumption etc. Indicators for waste management were sometimes added on to these systems. Some organisations had established a separate monitoring and reporting system (e.g. 'Green office'), whereas others had added indicators to existing systems (including external travel partners). Indicators and reporting systems and processes mentioned by participants generally aligned to global industry standards for assessing environmental impact (e.g. office facili-

ties' energy, water and paper consumption, waste management practices, procurement, as well as transport and travel behaviours) (inter alia, ISO, 2018, GHG Protocol (World Business Council for Sustainable Development), no date, GRI, 2016(a) and 2016(b), see also UN Greening the Blue, 2019).

The use of external consultants to undertake an environmental materiality assessment of the organisation was mentioned by several participating organisations, which is in line with good practice and is helpful in establishing a baseline from which to report and consistently improve on environmental performance. 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 (GRI, 2020). The cost of such an exercise varies depending on scope, however, it would still be considered significant and a clear indication of organisational commitment and investment. The use of external support to set up systems and processes for monitoring and reporting on the organisation's environmental performance was also mentioned by several participants.

The supply chain (the production and transport of office supplies, branded merchandise as well as relief items such as tarpaulins, kitchen sets, hygiene kits, food and seeds etc.) was included, in full or in part, by some of the participating organisations in their environmental impact assessments and management approaches. However, most organisations did not include the humanitarian supply chain, meaning items procured for their programmes (e.g. relief items, equipment etc). The humanitarian supply chain often represents a significant proportion of emergency response and recovery operations as well as a material proportion of its overall climate and environmental footprint. As such, the inclusion of the humani-



Lebanese Red Cross, in collaboration with Swedish Red Cross, piloting the NEAT+ to assess environmental sensitivities in the Informal Tented Settlement (ITS) in Semmaqiyeh, Akkar, Lebanon, approximately 200 meters from the Syrian border. Photo: Amanda George

tarian supply chain, if and as relevant, will more accurately capture the true global impact of an operation and an organisation (IFRC, no date, Van Wassenhove, 2006, Sarkis, Spens and Kovács, 2013, Hasselbalch et al 2014, Salvadó et al, 2017, ICRC, 2018, IFRC, 2018b). For example, in 2018 the ICRC mapped the environmental impact of its activities worldwide, including greenhouse gas emissions from its activities and humanitarian supply chain. The assessment showed that acquiring and distributing relief items – primarily rice, vegetable oil and hygiene parcels containing cotton-based products – made the biggest contribution to the organization’s footprint, accounting for nearly 30% of the total (ICRC, 2018).

### Delivering programmes

The integration of environmental considerations across both domestic and international programmes varied significantly across the different organisations. One organisation reported that they had updated their project planning templates so that each project (both international and

domestic) was required to include environmental aims and objectives. Other organisations reported some ad hoc environmental considerations, such as indicators for the natural environment in economic security needs assessments; alignment to Sphere standards specified in Emergency Plans of Actions (which includes shelter and settlement standard 7: Environmental sustainability); or an increased focus by the international department to support partners to deliver climate smart programmes to vulnerable communities.

Several participants emphasized that programme or project processes were strongly influenced by donor requirements, which in turn varied significantly across the different contexts in terms of environmental compliance. Barriers for integrating environmental considerations into programme/project design and implementation appeared to be due in part to varying levels of influence and control, given that projects are most often done in collaboration with implementing and funding partners under specific timeframes.

Other barriers include timing within the humanitarian response cycle and the inclusion of environmental considerations in relevant templates. As an example, learnings from the deployment of an Environmental Field Advisor to support the Mozambique: Tropical Cyclones Idai and Kenneth operation highlight that is not enough to identify environmental risks and propose mitigating measures, the assessment must also align with the timing of the Emergency Plan of Action revision and longer-term local staff must be sufficiently trained and aware of how to drive the issues once the deployment has finished. Similarly, in the recent IFRC global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were barriers to integrating environmental consideration due to the format of the Emergency Plan of Action, which does not prompt environmental consideration, and where, as a cross-cutting issue, easily becomes 'everyone's responsibility and therefore no one's problem'. Although a small adjustment, prompting the identification of environmental risks and opportunities into assessment, planning and evaluation tools and templates is crucial to effectively implement a new way of working.

Acknowledging the importance of identifying and improving on an organisation's emissions and internal practices, it is equally important to address the environmental impact of its programmes, especially as this can have direct and long-term impact on people's health, livelihoods and resilience locally. Accountability towards environmental impact locally is also fundamental to the humanitarian principle to 'do no harm'. The Movement has also made clear commitments to systematically integrate community engagement, participation and accountability measures in order to improve its actions (Council of Delegates, 2019). IFRC is also the co-convenor of the Localisation Workstream of the Grand Bargain, which includes commitments to enable and support the strengthening of local leadership and decision-making in humanitarian action (IFRC, 2018c).<sup>5</sup> These commitments should be reflected in how each organisation within the Movement

approaches environmental sustainability in its programme delivery, including how it integrates environmental considerations across each step of the project management cycle.<sup>6</sup> For many participating organisations within the Movement, this remains a gap.

### Piloting and trialability

Regarding pilots and trialability, participating organisations had different experiences in rolling out new practices. Most organisations had piloted systems and approaches for reporting on and improving internal practices (e.g. travel, energy, waste, procurement). Some had first piloted in a branch or region, while others had started with a pilot in the headquarters that was then rolled out to the branches or regional offices. For some organisations, it had been easier to implement pilots in the field as part of programme delivery, for instance climate-smart disaster risk reduction/nature-based solutions projects, solar-water pumping solutions, more responsible black water management practices, environmental impact assessments, capacity-building for delegates and checklists. It was noted that there is sometimes little difference between what would be classified as a pilot and what is an ad hoc project testing new techniques and ways of working (notably pilots often have a strategic intent and commitment to scale up, whereas ad hoc projects are more often driven by passionate technical staff taking the opportunity and finding likeminded partners). Both internal and field pilots present an opportunity to capture learnings and good practices that can be shared. Based on the experiences of participating organisations, greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability readily lends itself to be tested at a small scale across a variety of activities that can then be adjusted and scaled up.

### Resourcing

Similar themes emerged when participants were asked about what support had proven to be useful. Whether organisations expected to have sufficient resources to green practices and strengthen

5 There is no internationally agreed definition of "Localisation". The Grand Bargain, launched during the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, is an agreement between the largest donors and humanitarian agencies that commits to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action. It includes 51 commitments, under eight workstreams, including workstream 2: More support and funding tools for local and national responders which specifically calls for "making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary". Roepstorff defines "localisation" as the 'process of recognising, respecting and strengthening the leadership by local authorities and the capacity of local civil society' ROEPSTORFF, K. 2019. A call for critical reflection on the localisation agenda in humanitarian action. *Third world quarterly*, 41, 284-301. See also [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Grand\\_Bargain\\_final\\_22\\_May\\_FINAL-2.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Grand_Bargain_final_22_May_FINAL-2.pdf) and Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain>, both accessed 2 October 2020.

6 Contextualized analysis for understanding existing and future environmental vulnerabilities often requires longer term data. In some country contexts there is limited data and knowledge (ICRC, 2020b). Programme design and delivery should in those cases consider including the building of necessary local data and capacities in collaboration with local, national and international actors. In context where such data and capacity does exist, it is important to link up and establish long-term partnerships with relevant authorities and experts.



Photo: Matthew Carter/IFRC

environmental sustainability varied significantly. Generally, resources were constrained for most of the organisations. Even those organisations that had dedicated human resources (1-2 full-time staff) noted that more resources were needed. Human resources, funding for activities, tools (including reporting tools and systems) and trainings were identified as key resources needed for effective implementation. Several participants also noted that given the cross-departmental nature of the work, it was necessary to engage and empower people from different departments and technical areas to drive change within their own sphere of influence.

### Guidance and trainings

Online as well as face-to-face trainings were considered a key resource – this includes trainings directly focused on systems, processes and practices for strengthening environmental sustainability (e.g. internal systems for monitoring and improving on energy, water, waste, travel etc.) as well as technical trainings (e.g. WASH, Shelter) that integrate environmental sustainability components (especially when framed under quality, cost and sustainability improvement). One of the external environmental experts spoke of targeted training and competency building, noting that training should be designed to enable staff to do their particular tasks better, rather than providing overall training on environment and sustainability. Several participants mentioned that they had received support from government agencies or other stakeholders within their own country contexts, this was especially the case when there were national environmental legal

compliance requirements. The auxiliary role as a vehicle to both support public authorities to green/strengthen environmental sustainability in the humanitarian sphere and vice versa, was highlighted by one participant.

Practical guidance, checklists etc. either developed by the organisation or by Movement partners were mentioned by several of the participating organisations. Within the Movement, respondents specifically mentioned the Green Response Working Group (especially relating to training delivery and technical advice as well as sharing of relevant guidance and resources), the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre (especially relating to climate change adaptation/climate-smart programming and support to National Societies to assist them in engaging with their authorities on climate action), and the ICRC-IFRC open-access 4-week course on Sustainable Development in Humanitarian Action. Guidance from external partners (such as World Wildlife Fund (WWF), UNOCHA/UNEP Joint Environment Unit (JEU) or Environment in Humanitarian Action Network (EHAN)) were also mentioned. External experts referred to the use of established support channels, such as the Green Recovery Connect helpdesk run by WWF and partners (providing environmental specialist support in disaster recovery, reconstruction or risk reduction work); and methodologies such as the Rapid Environmental Assessment (REA) (guidance for assessing and analysing the environmental context of a particular crisis or disaster, updated in 2018) and the Nexus Environmental Assessment Tool (NEAT+) (a practical and rapid project-level envi-



The Aerobic Faecal Sludge Treatment Unit in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh seeks to reduce risks to human health and the environment by improving excreta management through new technology. Photo: Kurt Saygin/IFRC

ronmental screening tool). They also mentioned the usefulness in ensuring that any environmental assessment, approach, terminology or indeed stakeholders align with the humanitarian response cycle, and to include environmental indicators in the monitoring and evaluation plans early.

Several participants mentioned that additional requirements and resources may be counter-productive rather than helpful and create resistance. This is especially relevant for field implementation, e.g. response and recovery operations and for managing the risk of overburdening already overstretched and under-resourced Operating National Societies. Here, it was emphasised that short, practical guidance and technical specialists that can provide quick and easy answers for incremental improvements was the preferred approach.

### **Human resources**

One of the distinguishing factors between high- and low-implementation organisations was the presence of dedicated, knowledgeable and empowered staff able to drive the implementation process within the organisation. Generally, the person(s) interviewed from the participating organisation were leading the implementation. Slightly less than half of the participating organisations had dedicated, full-time staff (at least one full-time staff) who held positions such as Environmental Advisor or similar. Where these positions sat within the overall organisational structure varied, but included finance and logistics department, Secretary-General's staff and risk management department (one organisation had its own department). The other organisations reported to have one (and more often, several) persons driving the process on a voluntary

basis, in addition to their substantive roles. These persons generally held technical or managerial positions, and many reported to have challenges with competing priorities relating to their other responsibilities and were often not able to dedicate as much time as they wanted to progress different activities. Whether the people leading the implementation had sufficient authority appeared less important than having the supporting and backing of the leadership to drive change. One participant noted that level of authority was less important in their context than the ability to form consensus, which had the benefit of supporting more personal responsibility of the different stakeholders. All persons interviewed held positions at headquarter level.

From a programmatic perspective, human resource capacity has recently been built within the Movement through the deployment of environmental field specialists, as well as by the integration of environmental competencies for the recruitment, development and deployment of rapid response personnel. For instance, Environmental Field Advisors have been deployed to support the response and recovery operations in Mozambique and Bangladesh (GRWG, 2019). The recently finalised IFRC tiered Core Competency Framework for Rapid Response Personnel includes environmental competencies, with learning pathways for capacity-building currently under development (IFRC, 2019). As part of this work, the Green Response Working Group has undertaken a mapping of available and relevant resources and materials that can be used to train Red Cross rapid response personnel.<sup>7</sup> It was highlighted across both the interviews with Movement members and external environmental experts that field personnel who understand the added value of increasing environmental sustainability across operations and have the relevant competencies, not only promote more sustainable approaches to addressing needs, but build the capacity of their colleagues, a process which is then replicated across subsequent operations. Similarly, external environmental experts also highlighted the use of environmental advisors to support effective implementation and to manage prioritisation issues, especially in operational settings. This includes not only specialist advisors deployed as part of the humanitarian response, but equally building and drawing upon the local environmental authorities and capacities and enabling their engagement with national disaster risk management and humanitarian actors.



High-implementation organisations generally reported to have costs for human resources allocated from “core funding” (financial resources for sustaining the organisation’s operations) and environmental objectives (both for internal practices and programming) included in annual plans and budgets.”

### Costs and the role of the donor

When asked about what costs had been considered, participating organisations’ answers varied significantly, and it was clear that funding allocation strongly affected implementation. High-implementation organisations generally reported to have costs for human resources allocated from “core funding” (financial resources for sustaining the organisation’s operations) and environmental objectives (both for internal practices and programming) included in annual plans and budgets. This made them less dependent on short-term, project-based funding or funding cycles to progress implementation. One participant stated that environmental objectives were also included in their Emergency Plans of Actions. The low-implementation organisations generally did not have longer-term funding for human resources (with the exception that staff were allowed to dedicate time to drive these issues, however this was generally in addition to their existing work), and programmatic funding was often opportunistic and project-based. Several participating organisations were in the process of developing a plan of action or roadmap (some based on an environmental materiality assessment) where costs had yet to be clearly identified. There were several mentions of the tension between ambition and relative investment. Some organisations reported that their leadership had visibly endorsed and made commitments to green practices and strengthening environmental sustainability but had yet to translate these commitments to adequate funding, which in turn put pressure on the staff tasked with implementation.

<sup>7</sup> For further information about this mapping and available resources, kindly contact the Green Response Working Group Chair, Caroline Gårdestedt, [caroline.gardestedt@redcross.se](mailto:caroline.gardestedt@redcross.se)

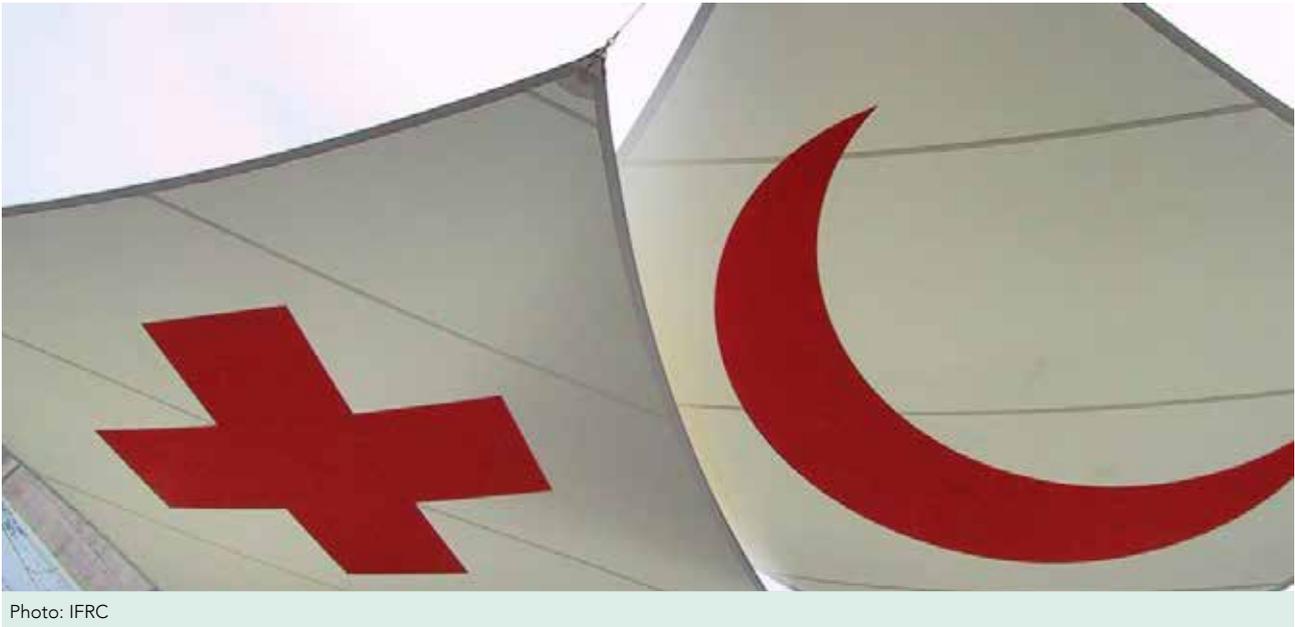


Photo: IFRC

A few participants mentioned established partnerships with both government and private sector, including with funding support to deliver programmes with an environmental focus: a few also mentioned that the investment in greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability had made the organisation more attractive to potential funders, including the private sector.

Putting the same question to the external environmental experts, one respondent emphasized that funding allocation is currently not adequate to respond to the increasing interest and building momentum of climate action and environmental sustainability work within the humanitarian system. This in turn puts significant pressure on people working on these issues to deliver results and show progress, without giving them the resources to adequately implement change. Another respondent emphasized the fundamental issue of the current cost-benefit analysis, especially in humanitarian response and early recovery settings, which does not capture the complex and longer-term environmental trade-offs and only takes into account present-day costs. It can take several years or even decades to see the full environmental impact of response and recovery operations, in which time international humanitarian actors will most likely have left and funding ceased, leaving the responsibility of environmental recovery to local authorities, civil society and communities. One external environmental expert also emphasized the importance of including all activities and human resources required to green practices and strengthen environmental sustainability in the ordinary/core budget, cautioning

strongly against framing these activities under a project, as it hinders a systematic approach to improving ways of working.

As already mentioned, 62% of respondents agreed that pressures from outside the organisation had strongly influenced their organisation's decision to green practices and strengthen environmental sustainability. Many respondents mentioned the role of the donor to incentivise and drive compliance to improve ways of working, which is in line with other recent research (see for instance, JEU, no date, Brangeon and Crowley, 2020). However, for many Operating National Societies, moving from project-based funding to more sustainable and predictable funding is often a challenge. This has reportedly caused occasional tension between the funding of humanitarian activities and activities to green/strengthen environmental sustainability (where the latter has had to be put aside). The Operating National Societies interviewed mentioned several project-based partnerships, with funding support from Participating National Societies, where investment and potential higher up-front costs to support longer-term sustainability (e.g. solar panels versus maintenance and fuel of generators) have been accepted. However, the often-limited funding for organisational development that is intended to cover infrastructure and equipment (e.g. offices and computers) as well as staff costs, among other things, often cause prioritisation issues for greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability. It is also relevant to remember that many of these National Societies operate within contexts that already have fragile eco-systems and environments, with communi-

ties that are dependent on the surrounding natural resources for their health, well-being and livelihoods, and that are already feeling disproportionate impacts of climate change. Supporting these National Societies to deliver services that do not exacerbate any vulnerabilities, but strengthen climate and environmental resilience of these communities, is therefore even more important.

Similarly, in interviewing representatives of A4EP (members from Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits, Inc., Global Mentoring Initiative and Humanitarian Aid International), the participants raised concerns about donor-driven greening/ environmental sustainability compliance that risk becoming another 'tick-box' exercise that excludes local actors from funding due to compliance requirements. They also made note of the large influx of international capacities in a disaster response and its resulting environmental impacts, and the limited investment in technologies to make interventions more efficient, cost-effective and environmentally sustainable at local level. The participants highlighted the need for a more holistic approach, including system-wide and institutional preparedness measures that better support strategic and operational response management. This includes moving beyond the humanitarian response cycle to invest in local capacity across the humanitarian-development nexus, providing long-term support to local partners to establish necessary policies, procedures and behaviours and enabling them to lead programme design and coordination, together with meaningful participation from affected population (Hartelius, personal communication, May and October 2020).

As such, while funding partners/donors – whether government, private sector or from within the Movement – have an important role in driving quality improvement through stronger environmental compliance and accountability requirements, they must also allow for adequate budgeting to account for the true costs of different actions. Donors must also invest in long-term support and predictable funding to strengthen policies, procedures and practices and build, and especially retain, local capacities. This is something to be considered within the Movement, especially how Operating National Societies can be supported in their development and capacity-building to green their practices and strengthen their environmental sustainability, including supporting them to secure long-term partnerships and funding, both domestically and with inter-

national partners. For instance, one participating organisation had made specific commitments to integrating environmental considerations into how they support the Localisation Agenda. This localisation and environmental sustainability approach includes partnering with local actors to pilot green and nature-based solutions, and supporting the development and delivery of trainings and relevant tools to identify and address environmental risks.

It can be concluded that costs for implementing change, greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability are long-term and strongly geared towards human resources, which in turn requires sustained and predictable funding. This poses a challenge for the humanitarian system, which is often limited by the humanitarian response cycle, short-term funding agreements (from as little as 3-6 months for responses to approximately 5 years for longer-term partnerships) and donor priorities. As such, leaders and partners within the humanitarian system need to make a more concerted effort to invest in improving how the system operates. This may also require changes in expenditure, from a primarily programmatic focus to an increasing focus on mentoring, training, accountability and compliance support, administrative support etc. allowing for overhead costs that enable the continuation of operations and institutional development and retention.

### **Implementing Particularities of the RCRC Movement**

Regarding structural characteristics, it is clear that the different components across the Movement are complex, varied and often have a long history, which can influence implementation. Regional offices, departments and branches operate with varying levels of autonomy and independence. They are also often geographically dispersed and have different needs and priorities. Different governance structures will have different processes for how, and by whom, decisions and funding allocations are made, and sometimes these two processes are quite separate (meaning decisions are made but funding allocations do not necessarily follow). These structural characteristics were all highlighted as challenges for effective implementation by most of the participating organisations, noting that consensus-forming and relationship building was a necessary long-term process to enable change. ICRC and IFRC Secretariat also operate in multiple countries around the world, where the conditions for greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability vary

significantly across different country contexts, which further complicates a consistent approach. Notably, IFRC is also a membership organisation, which inevitably leads to more compromise to accommodate its 192 members. One participant described the challenges of driving implementation from headquarters to field level as the “funnel effect”, where the wide end of the funnel is the headquarters, throwing in new initiatives, policies, priorities etc. which are then impossible to effectively integrate at an operational field level.

Most (if not all) Participating National Societies have both an international and domestic department. For those interviewed, the process for greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability had for some commenced within the international department, whereas others had started within the national department or within core business functions. This does not seem to have had a significant effect in the longer term, as long as the entirety of the organisation eventually was included in the change process.

There were mixed views around whether social characteristics, such as the older and newer generations, hindered or enabled change. Several participants noted that there was a resistance to change among the older staff and volunteers within the organisation, where the younger staff and volunteers, especially the youth membership, were generally more receptive to changing practices and motivated to participate in environmental sustainability and climate action activities. A few participants highlighted, based on their experiences, that it was better to focus on enabling and supporting staff and volunteers that are receptive and motivated, as they will naturally push those more resistant to be part of the process. Another noted that while their organisational structure may not lend itself to rapid change, in a disaster or humanitarian setting it can operate very quickly, indicating that it may be a lack of motivation and sense of urgency rather than structural characteristics hindering change.

Regarding the absorptive capacity for change, meaning the extent to which people are moti-

vated and willing to make changes to the organisation’s ways of working, respondents were fairly evenly split as to whether all staff members agree that greening the organisation has many more advantages than disadvantages. Respondents agreed more than they disagreed that staff members are receptive to change in processes, but the majority of respondents (50%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Considering the structural and social characteristics of the different components of the Movement, the general willingness for change among staff members, and building on the long experiences of some organisations to green practices and strengthen environmental sustainability (see also complexity above), a longer timeframe (5-10+ years) to effectively green practices and strengthen environmental sustainability is recommended. It should be recognised as a long-term investment that requires perseverance of those tasked with implementation. For this long-term change process, establishing channels for peer-support would be beneficial.

**A plan for implementation: goals, indicators, reflecting and evaluating**

Setting goals at an organisational level is a well-established measure to support implementation, monitoring and reporting. Generally, there were several different understandings among participating organisations of what constitutes an ‘implementation plan’. Some referred to an organisational document that included reporting requirements to the highest level (and sometimes to external partners). Others referred to a policy and/or team work plan that were specific to the person(s) with the overall responsibility to drive implementation and were less well-known across the organisation. Some organisations were yet to develop an implementation plan, awaiting baseline findings to establish goals and targets.

High-implementation organisations generally reported having an organisation-wide implementation plan as well as indicators from their implementation plan integrated into the organisational annual planning process, some more explicitly

To what extent to you agree that:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
All staff members in your organisation agree that greening the organisation have many more advantages than disadvantage	0%	36%	21%	36%	7%
Staff members in your organisation are receptive to change in processes.	0%	17%	50%	33%	0%

The implementation plan for greening practices	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
identifies specific roles and responsibilities	0%	17%	25%	50%	8%
clearly describes tasks and timelines.	0%	17%	25%	25%	33%
has a clear and realistic time schedule	0%	27%	27%	36%	9%
includes appropriate training and guidance	0%	42%	17%	33%	8%
Has been communicated with all staff	17%	17%	8%	50%	8%
acknowledges staff input and opinions	0%	25%	25%	33%	17%
includes periodic outcome measurements that are communicated to all staff incl. leadership	8%	25%	8%	42%	17%
includes staff incentives	25%	42%	0%	17%	17%

quantitative than others. This supported a more dispersed funding allocation across different departments and technical areas; it also supported allocation of responsibilities beyond the person tasked with driving implementation. Generally, most organisation did not report a participatory process for establishing goals, rather it was driven by leadership commitment, compliance, external assessments or by the person(s) tasked with implementation, sometimes supporting different departmental staff members establishing their own goals. Often, it was a combination of all of the above. 50% of respondents did, however, agree or strongly agree that their implementation plan acknowledges staff input and opinions. There was also no mention of formal reflections and evaluations by internal staff at regular intervals on how greening and strengthening environmental sustainability could be improved within the organisation. Instead, it was focused on set period outcome measurements. In general, all participating organisations would benefit from improving their reflexive monitoring (comprehension), meaning the process for monitoring, evaluating and facilitating continual improvement on the basis of experience and feedback (May and Finch, 2009, Murray et al, 2010, Hooker et al, 2015).

Out of the participants that responded to the question relating to their implementation plan, 58% agreed or strongly agreed that their implementation plan 1) identifies specific roles and responsibilities; 2) has clearly described tasks and timelines; 3) has been communicated to all staff including leadership; and 4) includes periodic outcome measurements that are communicated to all staff including leadership. 45% agreed or strongly agreed that it has a clear and realistic time schedule. Generally, the implementation plans did not include staff incentives.

### Engaging and formally appointing internal implementation leaders

The relevance of champions is acknowledged in both the literature (CFIR, 2020b) and equally by those interviewed. The participating organisations reported both formally and informally appointed champions, at headquarter and regional/country/branch levels and from a variety of different positions (youth, volunteers, technical staff, managers and leadership). Several of the organisations reported having established 'green teams' or similar. The continued engagement of these champions was partially contingent on whether they felt supported by management/ leadership, which in turn made them more comfortable to dedicate time to this work. The participating organisations that had dedicated staff members for implementation reported to be very reliant on these informal and formal champions to ensure progress of the different activities, especially at field level.

### External Change Agents

Generally, the participating organisations have collaborated and received support, including technical support, from national authorities (such as Ministries of Environment), environmental organisations (such as WWF, UNEP and local organisations), private sector (including consultancies for materiality assessments, software and tool development and support), academia and research institutes. The respondents also reiterated the support received from the RCRC Climate Centre, especially around supporting climate smart programming, the Green Response Working Group, the IFRC Climate Action Task Force and the Shelter Cluster Environment Community of Practice.



Photo: Palestine Red Crescent Society

# Conclusion and Recommendations

This section will proceed with a summative analysis that draws upon the collective experiences of all participating organisations and interviewees, and especially the common aspects of high-implementation organisations. It will conclude with recommendations in the form of a checklist for humanitarian organisations wanting to green their practices and strengthen their environmental sustainability, as well as key recommendations for the Green Response Working Group.

## Conclusion

The findings from the research, based on experiences of participating organisations and interviewees to green practices and strengthen environmental sustainability, conclude that:

- Establishing an enabling inner setting within the organisation is a deciding factor for implementing change. A committed and engaged leadership is more likely to lead to sufficient resources. Strong communication from leadership will also support perceptions of the relative importance of greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability among staff.
- Motivation and influence for change may include increased compliance requirements (including national legislation, donor policies/priorities), business strategy/competitiveness and altruism/accountability; all of the above are enablers for change and can be drawn upon as relevant.
- People are more likely to be motivated and take personal responsibility if concepts are clearly defined in organisational strategic documents, visibly endorsed by the leadership. High-level concepts and goals must also be translated and described practically to assist staff to change their ways of working across different areas, and to know how new processes and procedures will affect them.

- Having a dedicated implementation plan is good practice but environmental goals and objectives should also be integrated into organisational outcome frameworks and annual planning and reporting processes. More granular indicators can be developed at the departmental/thematic/individual levels. An implementation plan should (CFIR, 2020d):
  - Identify specific roles and responsibilities
  - Clearly describe tasks and timelines
  - Have a clear and realistic time schedule
  - Include appropriate training and guidance
  - Be communicated to all staff
  - Acknowledge staff input and opinions
  - Include periodic outcome measurement that is communicated to all staff incl. leadership; and
  - Include staff incentives
- Investment in people is crucial. Effective implementation requires significant stakeholder engagement and efforts across the organisation, as well as motivated volunteers and champions. Most importantly however, and a clear differentiating aspect of high implementation organisations, is the presence of dedicated, knowledgeable and empowered staff, formally tasked with driving implementation (see also CFIR, 2020c). Staff should have an appropriate level of authority to implement change while also recognizing the importance of forming consensus and bringing people along the implementation journey.
- Environmental considerations must be integrated across all processes, systems and tools that staff use in their daily work. Environmental industry standards and procedures, as well as humanitarian environmental resources and tools, have proven useful to organisations to adjust their ways of working. Effective integration helps avoid environmental considerations becoming an 'add-on' or a 'nice to have'.

- Funding allocation should be predictable, multi-year and realistic in relation to expected outcomes. Core-funding should be used whenever possible. Ideally, funding should include a dedicated budget for greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability across the organisation as well as dedicated budget lines in each programme/ department plan.
- Mainstreaming environmental considerations across an organisation takes time. Most of the high-implementation organisations started their change process 5-15 years ago. This also makes the case for long-term and predictable funding. While acknowledging that a significant shift in ways of working is required across the organisation, incremental changes and piloting new solutions are important and allow for more feasible and evolving ambition.
- Prioritisation is likely to remain a challenge given the competing priorities and limited funding experienced by most organisations within the humanitarian system. Implementing change should not negatively impact the organisation's ability to carry out its humanitarian mandate. However, there is increasing recognition that the two are complementary, not mutually exclusive. Prioritisation will likely become less of an issue once environmental consideration have been integrated into existing processes, systems and tools.
- Undertaking a materiality assessment enables a systematic approach for assessing and prioritising the organisation's most significant environmental impacts, and usually includes indicators and sometimes reporting systems that can be used to monitor progress. It is generally done by an external organisation and can be a significant cost. While undertaking this exercise is considered best practice, establishing a few key indicators and setting up a baseline can also be good start and allows for further up-scaling.
- It is not just about emissions. While many participating organisations had made progress on reporting and improving on their emissions relating to internal practices, they rarely included the humanitarian supply chain or the environmental impact of their programmes. All aspects of environmental sustainability should be addressed, noting that incremental improvement is a good approach.
- Establishing partnerships and drawing upon technical and funding support from in-country and international partners and donors can significantly support the change process. While donors have a key role to play in influencing change, there must be feasible expectations and ongoing support, avoiding environmental compliance becoming a 'tick-box exercise' or otherwise being to the detriment of Localisation. For the Movement, this should include supporting Operating National Societies to move beyond ad hoc project-based funding to secure long-term and predictable funding and support to build capacity, systems and integrate new solutions and ways of working.
- Organisations within the Movement face particular barriers relating to its structural and social characteristics, including to the level of autonomy/coherence among branches/ regional/sub-regional offices and departments. Organisation-wide documents expressing climate and environmental commitments and goals, supporting pilots among motivated branches/offices and enabling peer-to-peer support and learning can be helpful to address these barriers. Investing in consensus-forming activities and motivating staff through incentives/disincentives are other potentially useful measures.
- Building capacity across the Movement should include two parallel processes: dedicated environmental specialists and building environmental competence across different technical areas. Practical guidance and trainings are important and should be tailored and effectively integrated into technical trainings and tools targeting different audiences (e.g. administration and travel staff, WASH/Shelter/ Health, procurement and logistics etc.).
- All participating organisations recognised the benefits of sharing experiences and resources within the Movement, noting that these were currently ad hoc and often based on personal connections.

## Recommendations

### Recommendations for the Green Response Working Group

- To enable peer-learning and the sharing of relevant guidance, resources and tools, GRWG should consider establishing a platform and/or a sub-working group for organisations within the Movement seeking to green practices and strengthen their environmental sustainability. The platform could be hosted by the GRWG or by its Chair, Swedish Red Cross.
  - Based on comments from participating organisations, GRWG should explore opportunities and partnerships to further develop and share practical guidance and resources on how to green practices and strengthen environmental sustainability at an organisational as well as programmatic level.
  - GRWG should more strongly promote and support the inclusion of the humanitarian supply chain and programme delivery in organisational environmental impact assessment and in the establishment of environmental goals. Organisations may be missing important and potentially significant aspects of their overall environmental impact if they only focus on their internal practices such as facilities, transport and travel.
- There is currently a lack of Operating National Societies in the GRWG membership and engagement, missing opportunities for mutual exchange and support. GRWG should establish a plan for better engaging Operating National Societies in Green Response work, including facilitating opportunities to pilot new solutions, share good practices and learnings, establish partnerships, influence change and access long-term technical and funding support within the Movement and externally. It is important to acknowledge that the GRWG is a facilitator and a technical resource and not a funding mechanism.
  - GRWG should explore further opportunities to research barriers and enablers for greening practices and strengthening environmental sustainability at an operational/programmatic level, drawing upon field experiences of international and national staff recently involved in emergency response and initial recovery operations or other programme delivery.



Photo: IFRC

# 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](#), the [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?

## 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.

## 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.)?

## 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].

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## Annex A: List of interviewees

Organisation	Name
<b>The International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement</b>	
Australian Red Cross	John Richardson
Australian Red Cross	Josh Owies
Australian Red Cross	Leeanne Marshall
Australian Red Cross	Veronica Bell
Austrian Red Cross	Barbara Busch
Austrian Red Cross	Gabriela Poller-Hartig
Austrian Red Cross	Peter Kaiser
British Red Cross	Ben Webster
British Red Cross	Caroline Zastiral
Canadian Red Cross	Emma Sturrock
Canadian Red Cross	Kelsey Lemon
Canadian Red Cross	Martin de Vries
Canadian Red Cross	Nicolas Gauvin
Canadian Red Cross	Nicole Maine
Costa Rica Red Cross	Luis Guzman Brenes
Finnish Red Cross	Paula Uski
Finnish Red Cross	Ritva Lahti
Finnish Red Cross	Tiina Meurman
Finnish Red Cross	Toni Jokinen
Finnish Red Cross	Virpi Teinila
French Red Cross	Charlotte Sorin
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	Catherine-Lune Grayson
ICRC	Dikolela Kalubi
ICRC	Kathrine Vad
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)	Cristina Estrada
IFRC	Ela Serdaroglu
IFRC	Krystell Santamaria
IFRC	Martin Krottmayer
IFRC	Richard Casagrande
IFRC	Thierry Balloy
Lebanese Red Cross	Zeina Abdel Wahed
Lebanese Red Cross	Adele Elias
Netherlands Red Cross	Ingrid Alsemgeest
Netherlands Red Cross	Malika Noisette

Organisation	Name
New Zealand Red Cross	Angela Sutherland
New Zealand Red Cross	Heather Locke
Spanish Red Cross	Sara Casas Osorio
Swedish Red Cross	Åsa Ander
Swedish Red Cross	Caroline Gårdestedt
Swedish Red Cross	Sophie Gripenberg

**Environmental sustainability experts (external to the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement)**

UNEP/UNOCHA Joint Environment Unit (JEU)	Amanda George
Sweden's Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) Sustainability Office	Kristina von Oelreich
World Wildlife Fund (WWF)	Anita Van Breda

**Alliance for Empowering Partnerships representatives**

Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits, Inc.	Regina 'Nanette' Salvador-Antequisa
Global Mentoring Initiative	Smruti Patel
Humanitarian Aid International	Sudhanshu S Singh

## Annex B:

# Interview guide for organisations within the Movement

### Open questions

How would you describe what 'greening' or strengthening environmental sustainability means to your organisation?

Is it easy to describe? Are there agreed definitions or terminologies used by the organisation?

Are you, or will you be piloting green practices prior to full scale implementation?

Can you describe your plans for the pilots?

What support, such as online resources, materials, or toolkits, has been proven useful to help you green your practices?

How do you access these materials? Who do you ask if you have questions?

What costs were considered when deciding to green your practices?

Have funds been made available? Has this impacted your approach or changed activities?

How is the infrastructure of your organisation (social architecture, age, maturity, size or physical layout) affecting the greening of your practices?

Does the infrastructure facilitate/hinder greening your practices?  
How do you work around structural challenges?

Can you describe how greening practices or strengthening environmental sustainability is integrated into current processes?

How will it interact, complement or conflict with current programs or processes?

To what extent might environmental sustainability or greening take a backseat to other high-priority initiatives going on now?

How important do you think it is to green your practices compared to other priorities? How important is it to others, such as your co-workers and leaders, to green your practices compared to the other priorities?

Do you expect to have sufficient resources to green your practices?

[If yes] What resources are you counting on? Are there any other resources that you received or would have liked to receive?

What resources will be easy to procure?

[if no] What resources will not be available?

To what extent has your organisation set goals for greening its practices?

What are the goals? How will you assess progress towards goals?

How will the goals be communicated in the organisation? To whom will they be communicated?

Who will lead implementation of the greening practices/strengthening environmental sustainability across the organisation?

- How did this person come into this role? Appointed? Volunteered?
- What attributes or qualities does this person have that makes them an effective leader of this implementation?
- Does this person have sufficient authority?

Other than the formal implementation leader, are there people in your organisation who are likely to champion (go above and beyond what might be expected) greening practices?

- a. Were they formally appointed or was it an informal role?
- b. What positions do these champions have in your organisation?
- c. Do you think they will help with implementation?

Has greening your practices been implemented according to the implementation plan to date?

[If yes] Can you describe this?

[If no] Why not?

Is someone (or a team) outside your organisation (e.g. within or outside the RCRC Movement) helping you with greening your practices?

Who are they? What is their role? How did they get involved? What kind of activities will they be doing?

How helpful do you think they will be? In what ways?

Do you have any other key lessons/experiences you would like to share? Before concluding, what would you say you need to effectively green practices and strengthen environmental sustainability in your organisation? Is there something we have missed in our discussion?

Format below: List (single answer response)

What is your organisation?

National Society (please specify)

ICRC

IFRC

Where is your organisation based?

Africa

Americas

Asia Pacific

Europe

Middle East/North Africa

What is your role within your organisation?

Support operations (e.g. admin, finance, HR, legal, IT)

Technical (e.g. DM, Health, NSD)

Management

Leadership

Likert Questions

Format: Matrix

Response options: Strongly Agree/Agree/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

\*Sent to the participants post-interview\*

In your opinion, the decision to green your practices and strengthen environmental sustainability has been strongly influenced by:

- My organisation's proven ability to adapt ideas from outside to fit our way of doing things
- Pressures from outside the organisation
- Successful processes for greening practices from organisations within the RCRC Movement
- Successful processes for greening practices from organisations outside the RCRC Movement
- Other (please specify):

Relating to how complex it is to green practices in your organisation, would you agree that:

- Greening practices will take a long time, at least 10 years.
- Everyone in the organisation will be affected and will need to adjust their ways of working
- Most or all internal processes will need to be adapted
- Greening is a clear departure from previous practices and ways of working

To what extent do you agree that:

- All staff members in your organisation agree that greening the organisation have many more advantages than disadvantage
- Staff members in your organisation are receptive to change in processes.

With regards to greening practices/environmental sustainability, would you agree that Senior leadership/management:

- agree on clear goals for greening practices across the organisation
- have established timelines and deliverables
- is informed and involved in the process
- agree on adequate resources required to reach established goals
- have designated champion(s)
- set a high priority on its success
- have endorsed it in visible ways
- provide staff with information on performance measures and guidelines.

The implementation plan for greening practices

- identifies specific roles and responsibilities.
- clearly describes tasks and timelines.
- has a clear and realistic time schedule
- includes appropriate training and guidance
- Has been communicated with all staff
- acknowledges staff input and opinions
- includes periodic outcome measurements that are communicated to all staff incl. leadership
- includes staff incentives

## Annex C:

# Interview guide for external environmental experts

### Open Questions

In your opinion, why do humanitarian actors need to consider their environmental footprint?

In your opinion, what are the key challenges of strengthening environmental sustainability within humanitarian action?

What key strategies have you used to help improve practices with regards to environmental sustainability? What has worked well with this strategy? What has not worked well?

What resources, materials or supports have been proven useful to you to progress green/ environmental sustainability objectives?

What kind of changes do you think is needed in order to effectively green the humanitarian sector? Do you think the sector will be able to make these changes? Why/why not?

How complicated is it to green practices?

Consider: how long time it takes, who and what will be affected, processes needed to be adapted, number of steps involved. Does greening reflect a clear departure from previous practices?

To what extent are costs considered?

In your opinion, what is the general level of receptivity/acceptance/enthusiasm for greening practices within the humanitarian sector?

To what extent might greening take a backseat to other high-priority initiatives going on now in the humanitarian sector?

How important do you think it is to green your practices compared to other priorities?

How important is it to others, such humanitarian workers and leaders, to green practices compared to the other priorities?

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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 Gardestedt: [caroline.gardestedt@redcross.se](mailto:caroline.gardestedt@redcross.se)