



SNAPSHOT

MARCH 2018

GREEN RESPONSE

The ultimate goal of Green Response is to save lives and reduce suffering without risking damage to the livelihoods, health and survival of affected people and improving the environmental outcomes of life-saving operations.

What is Green Response?

During disasters, the immediate imperative for the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) is to save lives, reduce suffering, damage and losses, and to protect, comfort and support affected people.

Whilst life-saving interventions must always remain the priority aim of any emergency response operation, the Movement recognizes that it must take action to minimize its adverse impacts on the surrounding environment and eco-systems, which does not undermine local efforts and strengthens environmental stewardship.

Emergency response can have many different impacts on the environment and ecosystems. The impact is dependent on the types of intervention undertaken and the approaches used, as well as the scale and broader context of the response, including the fragility/ strength of the environment and ecosystems. Green Response focuses on improving practices before a disaster strikes, whilst also advising and improving practices during response operations.

Green Response is a way in which we, as Red Cross Red Crescent, can approach our work that emphasizes stronger accountability towards affected populations by actively promoting alternative, more environmentally beneficial solutions in addressing needs.

In short it is about extending the fundamental humanitarian principle of 'do no harm' to the environment and ecosystems which the people we seek to assist are reliant on, recognizing that sustainability is generated through environmentally sound actions. Mainstreaming Green Response in operational contexts can facilitate a swifter recovery and builds on established mechanisms in the communities – with a further opportunity of enabling more innovative, environmentally sustainable solutions to be promoted and established. Green Response is thus not about saving the environment, but improving the environmental outcomes of life-saving operations, promoting positive possibilities whilst maintaining operational targets.

Image: IFRC, Victor Lacken. The Balukhali camp, Bangladesh, houses people who have fled violence in neighbouring Rakhine State, Myanmar. The majority of the camp population uses firewood from surrounding woodland. A recent study indicates that between 3-5 football fields are cleared every day and firewood has become an expensive commodity, causing conflict with the local population and is seen as a protection issue particularly to women and girls.

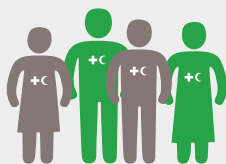


International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Why adopt a Green Response approach?



Because a community is more than the sum of its people and a degraded environment will ultimately hinder the survival and recovery prospects for the people affected by disasters, possibly increase the risk for future disasters and disrupt sustainable development.



Because as humanitarians, the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is bound by the principle of 'do no harm'. We are accountable, first and foremost towards beneficiaries and implementing partners, but also donors. Actions taken by humanitarian actors affect the communities we seek to support, as well as the global environment.



Because it is Value for Money. Environmental considerations often lead to efficiency gains more generally and it doesn't necessarily cost more to be Green, often more cost-effective in the long-term.



Because 80% of disaster relief operational costs consists of logistical efforts, a life-saving service with a huge environmental cost. The Nepal 2015 Earthquake IFRC operation's emissions from its logistics and most relief items was 11,906 ton CO₂, the equivalent of planting 1,867 hectares of mangrove forest.



Because national legal frameworks increasingly incorporate elements linked to more sustainable natural resource management and climate change action which could hinder response if not addressed beforehand.



Because adopting a rights-based approach to environmental protection, supporting DRR/CCA laws, policies and practices at national and local level and supporting the strengthening of community resilience will reduce need for response operations, thus reducing its cost and its environmental impact.

Because of existing commitments, including:

Quality and Accountability Standards articulated in the **Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance**, which states that 'All assistance should seek to minimise any potentially harmful social and economic impacts of assistance ("do no harm"), as well as take account of international environmental standards.' (Article 5.3).

The **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief (1995), Principle 8: 'Relief must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disasters as well as meeting basic needs' clearly articulates that 'We will pay particular attention to environmental concerns in the design and management of relief programmes. We will also endeavour to minimize the negative impact of humanitarian assistance, seeking to avoid long-term beneficiary dependence upon external aid.'

The **IFRC Strategy 2020**, which recognises the degradation of the environment as an exacerbating factor in community resilience, and emphasises the importance of national and community-level disaster risk reduction measures as part of climate change adaptation, whilst also aiming to improve ways of working and support to National Societies to minimize its carbon footprint and mitigate the progression of climate change. The **IFRC Secretariat Plan and Budget 2016-2020** includes the strategic aim to enhance IFRC's effectiveness, credibility and accountability by aligning policy approaches to achieves set outcomes, whilst ensuring respect for Fundamental Principles and cross-cutting issues including the environment (8.4.1.b).

The **Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability** (CHS), which emphasises the need to identify and address potential or actual unintended negative effects on the environment under the principle of 'do no harm' and calls upon organisations to ensure policies and processes for the sustainable and environmentally sound use of resources are in place and implemented (see CHS Guidance Note 3.6 and 9.6).

The **2015 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change** (the "Paris Agreement"), which IFRC has committed to contribute to the implementation of, and which calls for various measures aimed to contain rising temperatures and to deal with the impacts of climate change. The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement has further committed to support countries, at their request, in the implementation of the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**, which recognises the definitive factor of environment to either increase vulnerability or resilience within communities. The Movement has pledged to support the implementation of the **UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development** - a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change and its impacts.

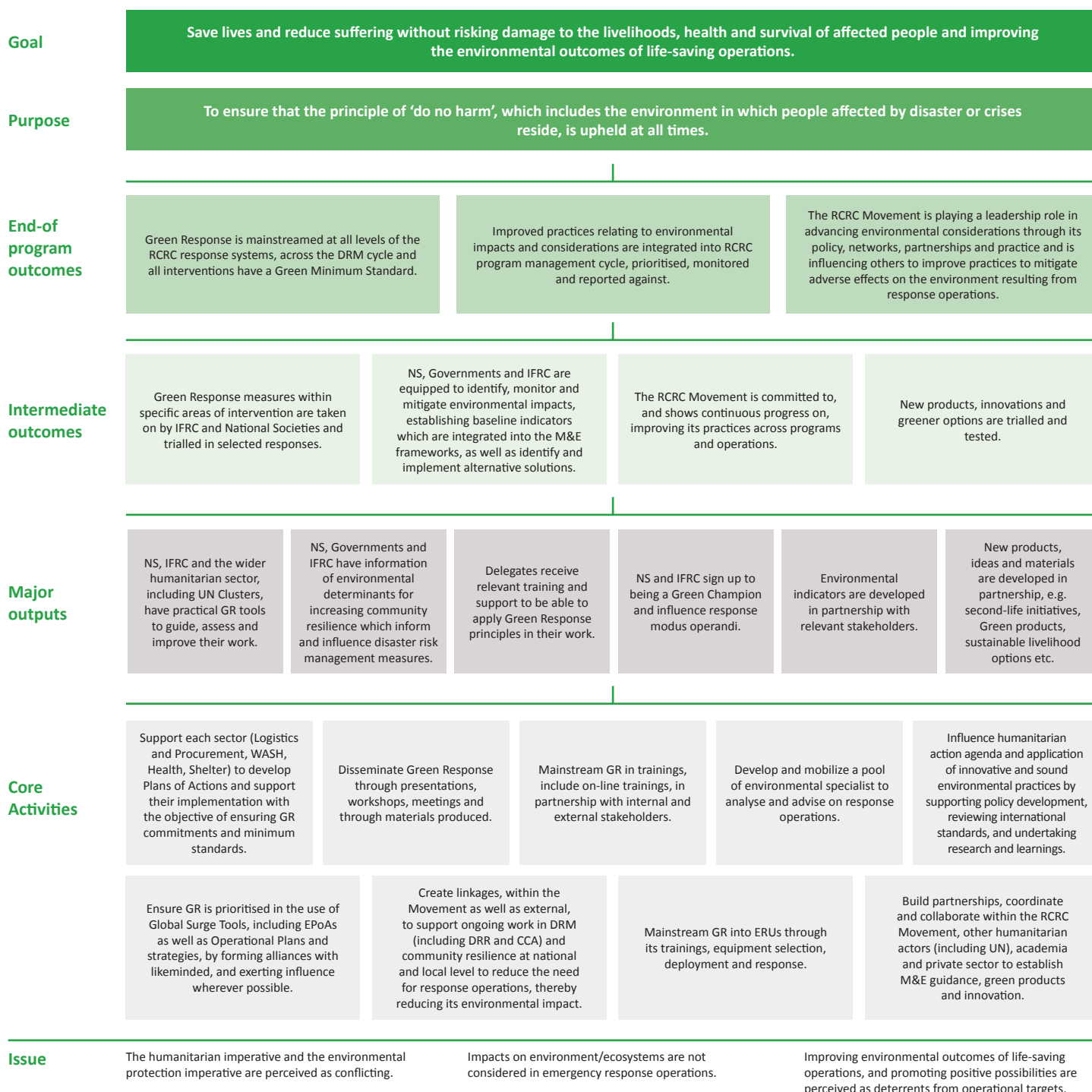
With the above mentioned global commitments to take action to combat climate change and its impacts, **the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement must consider how it will contribute, specifically looking at its unique value add as a global movement with a strong and trusted presence in the communities**, including the 190 National Societies, 17 million volunteers, and two international organisations – International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Green Response Working Group

The Green Response Working Group (GRWG), originally formed in 2014, has as its objective to progress initiatives connected to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and National Societies' knowledge, experience and mission, in order to create positive changes with like-minded partners, both internal to the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and external, adhering to the Fundamental Principles and with the goal and purpose of the Green Response. Swedish Red Cross has been requested on behalf of the IFRC Secretariat, in line with Strategy 2020 and the concept of 'shared leadership', to lead Green Response.

The GRWG leadership includes Swedish Red Cross (Chair), Australian Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross and IFRC APRO. Recognizing the benefits of a multi-sectoral approach, the GRWG's membership includes representation from and collaborations with, a wide range of sectors, including disaster risk management and resilience, legislative advocacy and policy development as well as technical leads in Relief, WASH, Shelter, Procurement and Logistics, Health, Climate Change, Livelihoods etc.

Green Response Program Logic



Green Response Key Achievements and Resources

Since its inception, the Green Response Working Group (GRWG) has been able to influence the global humanitarian agenda with regards to sustainability and environmental considerations and progress initiatives seeking to support better practices within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement's programmes and operations.

Key achievements and resources:

• Green Response for specific areas of intervention:

This includes undertaking research identifying barriers, best practices including in the wider humanitarian sector, and possible priorities for the Red Cross Red Crescent. Findings are further explored with key stakeholder workshops, which conclude with Plans of Action that identifies and prioritises key actions with allocated roles, responsibilities and resources required to Green that specific sector.

- Greening IFRC Supply Chain: Plan of Action (Dec 2016) prioritised the undertaking of a Scope 3 Standards GHG assessment for its supply chain emissions. Such an assessment was undertaken 2017/2018 which identified and prioritised measures, including establishing a GHG accounting system, which will be progressed in 2018.
- Greening Shelter and Settlements: Plan of Action (Dec 2017) focused on behaviour change, including mainstreaming and prioritizing environmental consideration into various work streams. These activities are supported by specific focal points within Shelter and Settlements, aimed to integrate Green Response into global strategies and plans, trainings and programmes.

• Greening Sanitation in Emergencies:

A discussion with WASH Specialists focusing on sanitation was facilitated in March 2016, which sought to identify ways of improving solid waste management and approaches to vector control, taking into consideration behavioural patterns and change. New and improved technologies and approaches to sanitation aiming at reducing the adverse impact on the environment are being trialled in Lebanon, India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sweden.

- Collaborating with WWF and Red Cross National Societies in the Americas to strengthen capacity in awareness, understanding and applicability of environmentally sustainable policies and practices in preparedness, response and recovery, utilizing **WWF Green Recovery and Reconstruction Toolkit (GRRT)**

• Environmental Field Advisor (EFA) deployments:

supporting Sierra Leone Red Cross and IFRC in the Ebola Response Operations (2016); and two delegate rotations supporting Bangladesh Red Crescent and IFRC in the Population Movement Operation in Cox's Bazar. These deployments are tasked with identifying and advising on key environmental issues associated with respective operations with the aim to mitigate and reduce adverse environmental impacts as a result of response activities, without unduly affecting the delivery of overall response objectives. These learnings will be further incorporated into new technologies and good practice recommendations, especially in the area of sanitation.

• Mainstreaming Green Response in internal and external policies, guidance and standards, including:

- IFRC Framework for Climate Action Towards 2020;
- IFRC Secretariat Environmental Policy; currently in early stages of development;
- IFRC Global Surge Optimization, specifically Reference Group 2: Competency Framework and Support Services in Emergencies, and Reference Group 5: Cross-cutting Issues;
- Revision of the Sphere Standards as thematic experts on environment as a cross-cutting issue working with the lead authors for the different chapters making sure environment is integrated.

• Green Response Practice Note (2013):

Utilising one large and one medium scale operation, Haiti Earthquake 2010 and Tropical Depression (TD12-E) in El Salvador 2011, this report evaluates and provides recommendations to the response support services (i.e., logistics: fleet management and procurement, and base camp modus operandi) and selected response programs (i.e., relief products, water and sanitation, and shelters) from an environmental perspective, applying the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) protocol.

• Green Emergency Response Concept and Guidelines (2016):

currently under revision

- Collaborating with ICRC on a **Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Sustainable Development in Humanitarian Action:** integrating Green Response principles, recommendations and learnings; currently under development.

If you are interested in getting involved in the ongoing work of the Green Response Working Group, please contact:

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