Green Response in Emergencies:

A Practical Process Guide for National Societies

Creating Community-Informed, Climate Smart and Environmentally Sustainable Emergency Responses

Swedish Red Cross

IFRC

Croix Rouge Libanaise

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society BDRCS

Green Response Green Response

This document was designed to be read in a digital format. Please consider environmental impact: printing a 20-page document produces 1kg of carbon emissions versus 0.3 g to read it digitally.

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The evolution of the humanitarian sector with regards to environmental practices is expected to increase over the coming years. In light of this, the authors welcome sharing of additional good practices and practical examples to include in future revised versions.

Please also report any inaccuracies or broken hyperlinks. See the Swedish Red Cross Sustainability Platform for contact details.

Cover photo: BDRCS solar powered water supply station. Photo credit: Moynul Hasan Monju
Design: Sabina Helmola

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Key terminology

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA): Community engagement and accountability is a way of working that recognises and values all community members as equal partners, whose diverse needs, priorities, and preferences guide everything we do. We achieve this by integrating meaningful community participation, open and honest communication, and mechanisms to listen to and act on feedback, within our programmes and operations. Evidence, experience, and common sense tells us when we truly engage communities and they play an active role in designing and managing programmes and operations, the outcomes are more effective, sustainable, and of a higher quality (IFRC).[1]

Climate Smart: In the IFRC network, being climate-smart means using climate information across timescales in designing and/or adjusting all our programmes and operations. In doing so, programmes and operations ensure that, at a minimum, they do not place people at increased risk in the future considering likely new climate extremes and growing vulnerabilities.

Emergency Response: Actions taken directly before, during, or immediately after a disaster or crisis to save lives, reduce health impacts, ensure public safety, and meet the basic, urgent subsistence needs of affected people. This includes providing safe water, sanitation, food, health care, and shelter.

Environment: defined as all living things and natural materials. It is all of the external conditions affecting the life, development and survival of an organism, including people. The environment is the naturally produced physical surroundings on which humanity is entirely dependent in all its activities.[2] The environment around us is not only our home and surroundings, but everything that keeps us alive. From the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, our shelter, and more, it helps us to survive.

Environmental impacts: The impacts which our activities have on the environment. These impacts can be both positive and negative, however reference to environmental impacts often focuses primarily on the negative impacts. Activities will also be impacted by the environment, for example natural hazards like floods or cyclones, but this is not called an environmental impact.

Environmental Information: Information about the environmental context that disaster-affected communities live in is referred to as "environmental information". This includes the environmental issues that may impact the response operation such as known sources of pollution and potential health risks, location and capacity of municipal services such as waste management and national or district rules or laws that may impact emergency response activities. It also includes environmental aspects that may be impacted by emergency response such as the role of ecosys-

1 IFRC (2022) A Red Cross Red Crescent Guide To Community Engagement And Accountability

2 OECD (2008) Adapted from OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms

tems in people's lives and livelihoods, the location of forests, woodlands and other potential energy and building material sources and the location of environmentally sensitive sites, protected areas and cultural sites.

Environmental sustainability: 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.

Green Response: defined by the IFRC Environment Policy (2019)[3] as: "saving lives and reducing suffering without risking damage to the environment or the livelihoods, assets, health and survival of affected people". The focus of Green Response is for Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) National Societies (NS) to deliver responses, projects and activities that save lives and reduce suffering in a manner that does not degrade the environment and negatively impact the lives and livelihoods of current and future generations. This is achieved by making efforts to consider and mitigate the environmental impacts of our actions before, during and after a humanitarian response. Green Response recognizes that the degradation of natural resources and ecosystems can exacerbate humanitarian crises. Environmentally sustainable response operations contribute positively to sustainable recovery, conflict resolution and resilience building. Green response is critical to being accountable to affected communities and a core part of quality response and programming.

3 IFRC (2019) IFRC SECRETARIAT ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Introduction

This Guidebook is for any National Society (NS) that would like to make their emergency response operations more environmentally sustainable and climate smart to improve the quality of the response, reduce disaster risk and provide better outcomes for crisis affected people. Many NS have already made commitments to strengthen environmental sustainability and adopt "Green Response" principles, and a growing range of technical guidance, tools and policies exist to support this. However, translating these commitments into practical change is not straightforward. Response systems involve multiple processes, tools and decision-making points, and require coordination and buy-in from a wide range of internal stakeholders. Ensuring that these changes are also community-informed adds further complexity, but is essential to ensure that greener solutions are appropriate, accepted and sustainable.

To address these challenges, this Guidebook outlines a process designed to help NS effectively embrace Green Response principles at the early stages of humanitarian response. This comes at a time where the policy and funding landscape is evolving, with an increasing number of humanitarian donors introducing environmental requirements for funded operations.[4] At the same time, many National Societies have committed to the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations. While this Guidebook is not a compliance tool, applying its process can help National Societies operationalise these commitments and better align emergency responses with emerging donor expectations and sectoral standards.

This Guidebook stems from the learning of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) and the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC), supported by Swedish Red Cross (SRC), who have been through a process of making the National Society emergency response systems "greener". The pilot learnings and examples mentioned in this Guidebook are the result of closely following the process with BDRCS from 2024 and with LRC from 2025, the experience of the SRC team in working with NS in Green Response in multiple contexts. It is also informed by global consultations with environmental focal points in IFRC and other humanitarian organisations.

This Guidebook is intended for anyone within a National Society involved in emergency response, while recognising that successful implementation requires engagement from a range of departments and leadership levels. Ultimately, the aim is not to add new parallel processes, but to progressively adapt existing emergency response systems so that environmentally sustainable and climate-smart approaches become part of how response is done. By doing so, National Societies can move beyond commitments and pilots towards institutionalised change, delivering responses that are more effective and fit for the environmental and climate realities of today and tomorrow.

4 For example DG ECHO's Minimum Environmental Requirements for EU funded humanitarian aid operations and the Common Donor Priority Actions for Greening Humanitarian Assistance

Overview of Green Response in Emergencies[5]

What is Green Response in Emergencies and why do it?

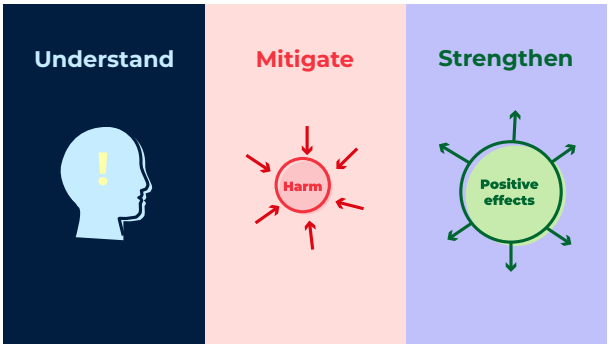
Integrating Green Response principles – including consideration of climate change-related risks – from the earliest stages of emergency response operations **reduces the risks of unintended negative environmental impact such as deforestation and water contamination, and increases the opportunity for response activities to have a positive environmental outcome that will facilitate recovery and build community resilience to future disasters.** It does this by mainstreaming environmental considerations across the response cycle, identifying potential negative environmental impacts and trying to reduce them. Critical to this approach is working closely with disaster affected communities, actively engaging with them to understand the environmental challenges they face and leveraging local knowledge to jointly design solutions to these challenges.

Green Response is often focused on improvements to broader National Society processes such as facilities management, procurement and logistics or on longer-term development projects or protracted crises. This could include, for example, the solarisation of premises, greener procurement through reducing packaging and using more durable materials, and nature-based solutions for disaster risk reduction such as vegetation for coastal protection or slope stabilisation. When environmental issues are integrated into emergency response, this is often in the later stages. The earliest phases of emergency response operations are often the most difficult to integrate environmental considerations into, which can create a situation where the later phases of a response need to work hard to undo the environmental damage done in the earliest moments. Examples of this include the spread of cholera from water source contamination, flooding caused by improper management of waste from relief items, or the over extraction of natural resources for shelter and camps, leading to deforestation, landslides and flooding. **The process in this guidebook aims to bring this timeline forward and address environmental issues in preparedness and from the start of response**, reducing the chances of unintended negative environmental impacts and allowing positive environmental initiatives to be more easily, and affordably, integrated into response activities. This saves time and resources that can be spent on saving lives and increases the opportunity for response activities to have an overall positive environmental impact that are likely to lead to a faster and more sustainable recovery for the affected community.

KEY CONSIDERATION:

Quality Green Response should be community-informed and driven, just like all other areas of Red Cross and Red Crescent work. This is critical to the quality and accountability of the response, and is also often the most challenging part, particularly in the early stages of an emergency.

The basics of Green Response



5 In this document, "Green response in emergencies" is used both as a title (of the work outlined in this document, which is time bound and focussed on a specific series of outcomes) and a process (the process of making emergency response more environmentally sustainable and climate smart – which should be an ongoing endeavour of an NS).

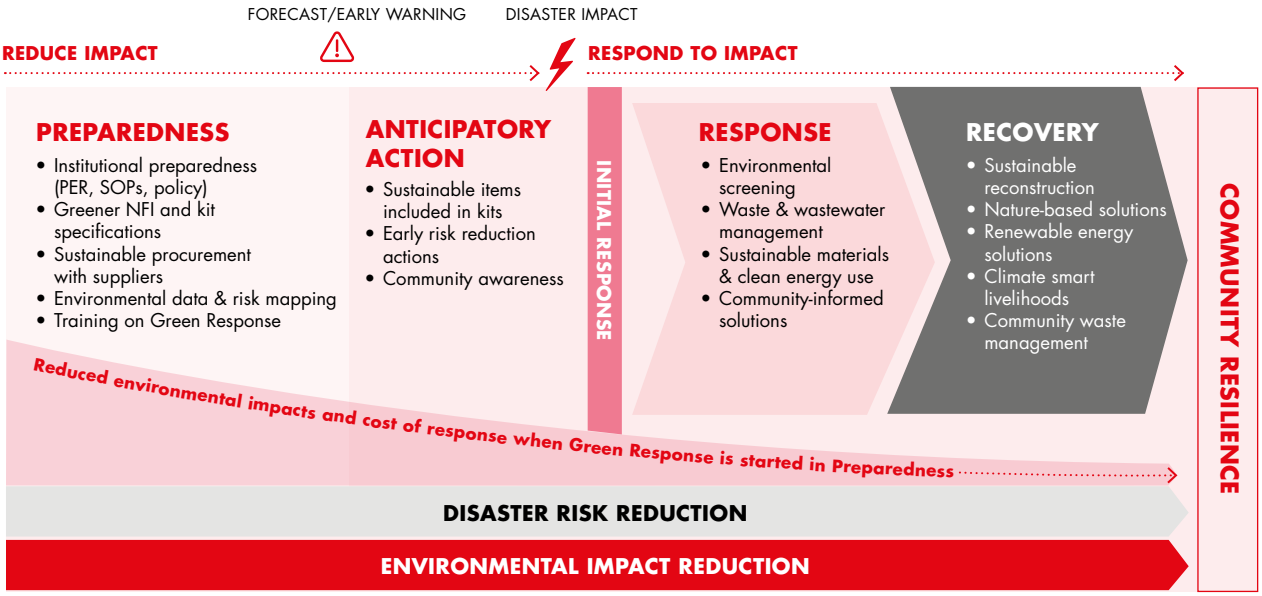


Figure 1: This diagram adapts the IFRC disaster risk management continuum to show that early investment in Green Response – particularly during preparedness – reduces environmental impacts and associated costs over time, with benefits extending through response and recovery. It illustrates how integrating environmental considerations across all phases enables more efficient and lower-impact humanitarian action overall.

The emergency response continuum typically has five phases including preparedness and anticipatory action (see *Figure 1*).[6] The most challenging phase is the Initial Response (First 72 hours) and the early days of the Response (first 2 weeks). This is the period where the major decisions are made and where many of the response actions take place – and therefore the time when the most environmental damage can be done. In the later stages of Response (14–90 days) and into Recovery (90+ days), there are typically more opportunities to mainstream environment and climate considerations. However, these opportunities are much harder to realise if the enabling conditions are not established in the first days and weeks. To build that early momentum, the groundwork must already have been put in place during the Preparedness phase. For a list of examples of actions for implementing Green Response principles into emergencies, see *Annex A*.

An overview of the phases of the response cycle and the types of activities that can be implemented at each phase follows below.[7] While Green Response actions apply across all phases of the response continuum, some are best addressed in advance through preparedness and system design (e.g. procurement choices, NFI specifications, training and institutional changes), while others relate more directly to the local environmental impacts of response operations (e.g. waste management, fuel use, wastewater). Although these dimensions overlap in practice, making this distinction can help operational teams identify where different types of actions are most relevant.

KEY CONSIDERATION:

As the response advances over time, so do the opportunities for it to be more environmentally sustainable and community driven. It is key to try to engage with the community as early as possible to lay the foundations for a strong environmental mainstreaming into response, as the more community participation the more locally appropriate and sustainable the solutions will be.

6 Note: The phases are not always neatly defined in a response, but give an approximate guide to the timeframe. It is also recognised that National Societies may define the phases of response differently, and therefore the timeline should be adjusted to the phases used by the NS. For more on the IFRC disaster management continuum see the IFRC GO Platform.

7 Note: Emergency response phases are not often as clear cut as presented by this timeline. What is done in each phase will depend greatly on the NS, the type of crisis or disaster and on other external factors.

KEY CONSIDERATION:

Because emergency response operations require rapid decision making based on limited information, it is critical that environment and climate considerations are **fully mainstreamed into the existing emergency response procedures and systems** rather than proposing new tools or systems.

Preparedness

Preparedness is critical for mainstreaming environmental dimensions into NS responses. Preparedness should be done at multiple levels to be most effective, including institutionally (e.g. via reinforcing buy in from senior management; the development of environmental policies; integration into disaster management strategies, plans and Standing Operational Procedures (SOPs) and procurement guidelines) and operationally (for example through strengthening the awareness and capacity of staff and volunteers; gathering and information on the environmental context and risks of the country – including from communities; updating assessment tools to include environmental considerations to be ready to use in response; and changing the specifications of Non Food Items (NFIs)). The combination of these factors will enable environmental concerns to be more effectively integrated into response and particularly in the early stages when it is difficult to gather primary data. The more this can be done alongside communities, the stronger the community engagement on environmental issues will be in the response and recovery phases and the better equipped communities will be to support their own environmentally sensitive response and recovery. Preparedness includes establishing a "readiness" mindset and setting up systems for early action, although most of these activities will take place once triggers for anticipatory action mechanisms are met.

KEY CONSIDERATION:

National Societies who have been through the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process may have focussed on the environmental dimensions of preparedness to some extent already. The resource Environment and Climate Considerations within the Preparedness for Effective Response, in the IFRC GO Platform list of resources, was developed to help NS highlight existing capacities in Environment and Climate and support both HQ and branches to be better prepared to integrate environment and climate into emergency response. This resource can be used by NS whether or not they are going through the full PER process.

Anticipatory Action

Anticipatory Action (AA) refers to actions taken to reduce the impacts (primarily humanitarian, but also environmental) of a forecasted hazard before it occurs, or before its most acute impacts are felt. The decision to act is based on a forecast, or collective risk analysis, of when, where and how the event will unfold. It reflects an "anticipatory mindset": acting early to reduce harm and avoid avoidable losses and be more cost efficient. The link with climate and environment is that the same principles for reducing environmental impact and strengthening sustainability and climate resilience should apply *before* the shock, not only during response and recovery. This means anticipating both humanitarian and environmental impacts (e.g. stress on natural resources), as well as environmental risks and secondary hazards (e.g. pollution, contamination, degradation), and ensuring early actions do not create unnecessary waste or emissions.

Greening AA also improves effectiveness by reducing logistics burdens and avoiding harmful items, building on actions taken in Preparedness. It should involve meaningful engagement with at-risk communities and be built into AA mechanisms such as Early Action Protocols. Examples include readiness activities such as stakeholder and community meetings and consultations on environmental hazards; pre-stocking of greener items such as more durable NFIs with less packaging; and early actions such as the distribution of anticipatory cash paired with guidance for sustainable purchasing or setting up mobile cooling centres powered by renewable energy.

Initial Response (0–72 hours)

The Initial Response Phase is the critical first 72 hours when urgent humanitarian needs are addressed and key operational choices influence the trajectory of the entire response. In this phase, it is unlikely that much primary data on the environmental context can be gathered or that communities can be engaged in any meaningful way. In this phase, the analysis of existing environmental information within the context of the disaster can take place to identify key environmental issues that will impact, and be impacted by, the planned humanitarian operation. This is where information gathered in the preparedness phase can benefit the initial response and set the scene for greater environmental integration later on. If initial assessments take place, environmental information can be collected alongside information on disaster impact and the affected community. This information should be used to inform early response decision making (as part of secondary data analysis and as soon as primary data analysis starts). Environmental focal points should be included in early response decision making.

Response Implementation (4–90 days)

This phase typically covers the period when rapid assessments and response delivery begin and then scale, creating increasing opportunities to consult and work alongside communities. Rapid assessments should integrate environmental dimensions and the results should be analysed from an environmental lens so that environmental considerations are mainstreamed into planning and the response strategy from the outset. Community consultation should start early, then deepen over time into meaningful engagement and co-design of greener interventions. Environmental screening tools[8] can be used to anticipate and mitigate the environmental impacts of planned activities, and as the response progresses there is more scope to conduct specific environmental assessments or screenings to inform longer-term response and recovery. Where in-depth or multi-sectoral assessments take place, environmental questions should be integrated, and communities and other stakeholders should help identify key environmental issues and local environmental assets to protect, with findings shared back to them.

Recovery (90 days +)

The Recovery Phase is when initial response activities evolve into durable recovery actions that address underlying vulnerabilities and support sustainable, risk-reducing outcomes. In this phase, there is more time to implement specific environmental initiatives into the overall operation, and this is also the phase where community engagement on these initiatives can be most in-depth and meaningful. Recovery programmes should work with communities to ensure that all activities contribute to addressing environmental risks and help to adapt to climate change. Programming should ensure that it is adapted based on community feedback and that there is collaboration with communities to plan for and hand over activities that will run past the duration of the programme. Documenting learning to feed into the preparedness phase is also critical, particularly for NS that are new to Green Response in emergencies.

KEY CONSIDERATION:

Several processes and systems in a National Society are closely linked to emergency response operations, even if they are not officially part of them. Enhancing the environmental aspects of these systems will boost Green Response throughout the entire NS and improve future emergency responses. Key areas include procurement, fleet management, and energy use for operations and facilities.

8 Such as the NEAT+

CEA as part of Green Response in Emergencies

Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) is crucial for effective environmental mainstreaming in emergency responses. Engaging with communities ensures that vital environmental information is collected from those affected by crises, making response activities more appropriate and encouraging support for environmentally sensitive actions. This involves understanding the environmental challenges communities face and using their knowledge to develop solutions. ***Where environmental initiatives are community-informed, this will improve quality, reduce unintended harm, and increase the likelihood that environmental gains are sustained beyond the immediate response.***

NEAT+ data collection via community consultation in Yirol state, South Sudan. Photo credit: Kristoffer Ristinmaa/SRC

All aspects of Green Response in emergencies should follow strong CEA principles. Two key elements are:

1. **Identifying environmental issues and solutions:**
   The collection, understanding and use of information about the environmental context that disaster affected communities live in – both before and after a disaster – is critical in making decisions about emergency response activities to avoid negative impacts. Environmental information exists at various levels and scales, with one of the most important sources being the impacted communities themselves. It is critical that this information and indigenous knowledge is collected and used by decision-makers in planning response activities. This should be done alongside other information gathered by the NS and using the same systems for assessing and documenting broader risks (e.g. hazards) and other pre-positioned information (e.g. on facilities and services). For example, if information is mapped using Geographic Information System (GIS) software, environmental information collected from communities and other sources can be included in this. Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (EVCA) findings can also be reviewed as part of secondary data analysis to capture community-identified environmental risks and capacities relevant to response planning, and to align with resilience priorities identified through the Roadmap to Community Resilience,[9] e.g. around natural resource management.

   Discuss issues with communities and actively seek their input on the effectiveness of solutions, considering their specific context. When working in displacement settings, this should include both host and displaced communities. This can be achieved through various community consultation methods, depending on how the NS conducts assessments and gathers information, including:

   - Rapid assessments
   - Household surveys
   - Focus Group discussions
   - Household visits
   - Interviews with community leaders and key informants

9 IFRC (2021) Road Map to Community Resilience

LOCAL AND INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE AS A FOUNDATION FOR GREEN RESPONSE

Communities hold critical knowledge about their environmental context, including:

- Flooding patterns, drainage routes, and erosion risks
- Water sources and availability, quality concerns, and seasonal variability
- Waste practices, disposal routes, and pollution hotspots
- Energy use, fuel availability, and coping strategies
- Natural resource pressures and environmentally sensitive areas/protected areas
- Changes in weather patterns

This knowledge is particularly important for response teams, when decisions are made quickly and with limited data. Consulting communities early – and in the Preparedness phase – helps avoid environmental harm, identify feasible greener options, and ensure the sustainability of solutions. Community environmental knowledge should be actively used:

- **During preparedness**, to inform contingency planning, scenario development, and pre-positioning
- **At the onset of a response**, to inform early design choices
- **Throughout implementation**, to refine and adapt response actions

KEY CONSIDERATION:

Discussing environmental issues with communities can be complex as issues are rarely labeled as "environmental". When consulting communities about their environmental concerns and realities it is often better to talk indirectly – e.g. about contaminated water, waste problems, or changes in crop patterns - rather than using the term "environment" or "climate change" which can be vague and even counter-productive.

TIP:

Information should be shared in local languages and in non-technical terms that communities can easily understand. Communication should use trusted and accessible channels such as volunteers, community leaders, local radio, SMS, community meetings, and visual materials. Messages must be adapted to different literacy levels and cultural contexts to ensure they are inclusive, relevant, and effective for all community members.

2. **Working together to make solutions more sustainable:** Community understanding, support and mobilisation in the implementation of emergency response activities can lead to less expensive, more impactful and longer-lasting outcomes. The best responses involve co-creating activities with the affected community, ensuring their priorities are reflected in the assistance they receive and the recovery they achieve. At a very minimum there should be two-way communication with the community to ensure they understand what activities are being implemented and why, and have the opportunity to provide feedback on them. Meaningful engagement will increase the suitability, acceptance and sustainability of the response activities and allow the NS to benefit from the community's knowledge and capacities.

TIPS: To ensure Green Response is genuinely community-informed, National Societies should:

- Recognise environmental behaviour change as central to improving humanitarian conditions for crisis-affected people
- Treat communities as a source of environmental intelligence, not only as stakeholders
- Integrate community environmental knowledge into preparedness, assessments, and early response
- Use participation and feedback loops to shape and adapt greener solutions: e.g. by setting up systems to allow communities to raise concerns about environmental issues and unintended impacts of the response, and using this feedback to improve response.

Ideas for specific actions to engage communities in the environmental dimensions of response are integrated into Annex A.

Women collecting water from a water point using refillable containers to minimise plastic waste. Photo credit: Moynul Hasan Monju/BDRCS

Integrating Green Response Principles into Emergency Response: The Steps

This section outlines the seven steps (see *Figure 2*) for enhancing the environmental sustainability of a National Society's emergency response. These steps, derived from the results of piloting this process in two National Societies, provide a pathway to achieving a more environmentally robust response system. Each step contributes uniquely to the overall goal. While there may be some overlap in the implementation and extent of each step, adhering to this comprehensive approach is crucial for real change to be successful. The most important prerequisite for undertaking this work is that the NS should already have a strong emergency response system in place.[10]

KEY CONSIDERATION:

The process is not always linear: for example in step 5, while updating tools, it is likely that you will still be "diagnosing" and getting more ideas of how to improve the system.

The first two steps of the process will ensure that this approach is right for the NS and that it has a positive outcome by starting with a strong foundation. The third and fourth steps are about identifying and proposing what can be adapted, and the final three steps are about making the adaptations, testing them and making sure they are sustainable. The timeline for this process will vary depending on the NS, but it is likely to take a total of 1.5 years if all steps are followed.

- Steps 1–4: approximately six – nine months.
- Steps 5–7: approximately one year. Ideally, step 6 will be conducted as part of a real-time emergency response and therefore the timeline will vary.

It is also possible to make some specific changes to tools and systems – such as adding questions to an assessment template or updating a disaster management SOP – without going through the whole process. However, conducting each step at least partially will mean that a successful outcome is more likely and that changes are integrated across the NS and do not remain in one project or initiative.

A NS that goes through this process can expect to make adjustments to their response systems, processes, and practices so that they are more environmentally sustainable and climate-smart. This may include:

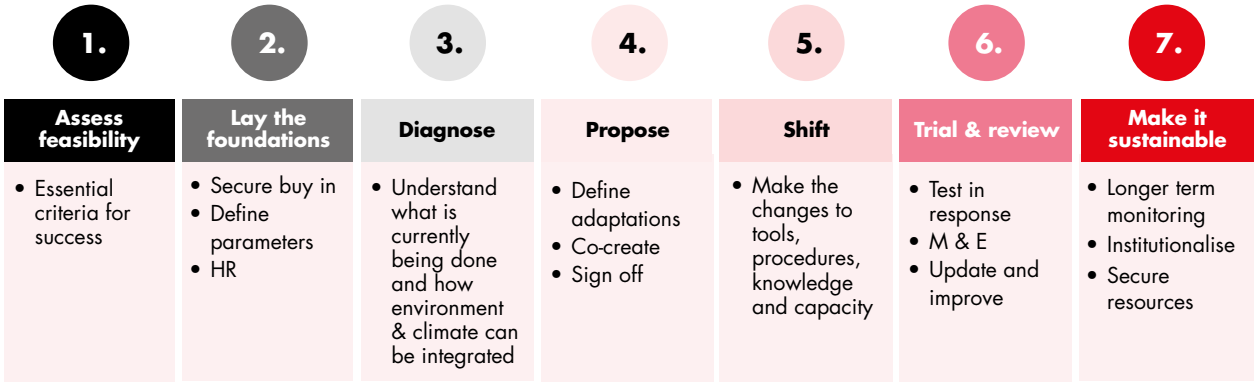


Figure 2: The steps of Green Response in Emergencies

10 See step 1 for a full list of criteria to assess feasibility of going through this process.

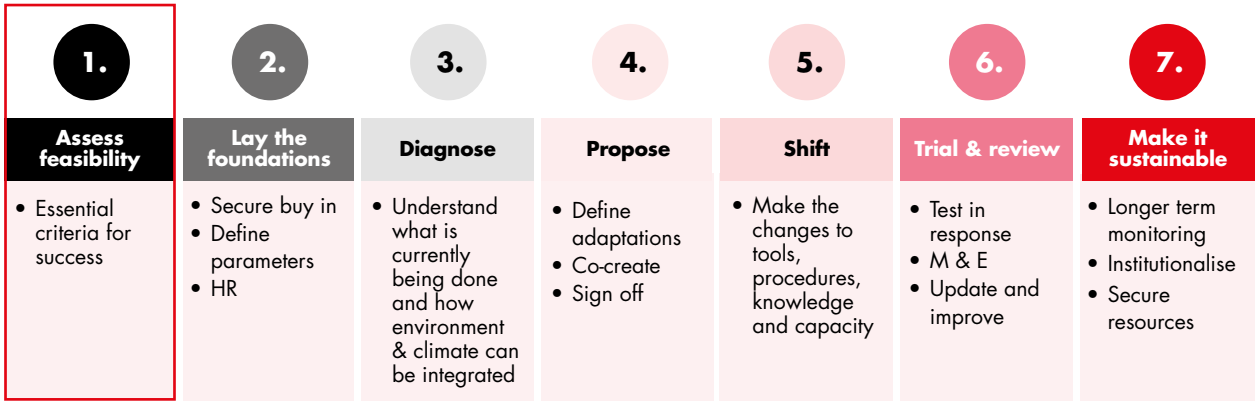
- Trained staff and volunteers with awareness of environmental risks and greener response options
- Adapted organisational processes and procedures (e.g. SOPs, reporting, decision-making processes)
- Updated tools and guidance (e.g. assessment tools, Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials)
- Revised or new training modules, toolkits, and learning resources on Green Response
- Stronger engagement with communities to identify environmental risks and shape locally appropriate solutions
- Adjustments to operational choices during response (e.g. greener NFIs, energy options, improved waste management and recycling practices)
- Integration of environmental considerations into preparedness, anticipatory action, response planning, and recovery activities.

TOP TIPS FROM PILOTS:

The following tips from the NS piloting this approach are useful to keep in mind before starting the process and are relevant to all the steps of the guidance.

- **Keep continuous dialogue going.** This is not a one-off initiative – it needs ongoing conversations, reflection, and follow-up across the response cycle.
- **Stay needs focussed.** Lead with humanitarian needs and show how greener actions solve them (e.g., energy crises create demand for renewables; drought strengthens the case for water conservation; solid waste crises make waste management unavoidable)
- **Be strategic with language.** Do not overuse terms like "green response" or "environment" if they create resistance. Use them when needed, but often it's more effective to talk about quality, safety, efficiency, dignity, cost, and meeting needs.
- **Start small to prove the concept.** Pilot a few practical changes first, then scale.
- **Anchor any new environmental dimensions of response to wider NS ambitions.** Greening the response works best when linked to broader goals (greener operations, safer programming, better efficiency, contributing to Climate and Environment Charter Commitments and donor requirements). At the same time, it can generate evidence and learning that can be used to advocate for wider institutional change.
- **Use participatory approaches internally as well as with communities.** Staff and volunteers often already have solutions (and may already be adapting to Green Response principles without naming it).
- **Show successes early and often. Share quick wins, practical examples, and visible results.** This helps shift mindsets, increases buy-in, and encourages replication across teams and sectors.
- **Expect pushback and stay persistent.** Green response advisers often hear "no" first. Keep going, keep proposing options, and keep showing feasibility. Sometimes you need to be persistent until benefits become clear.

Step 1: Assess Feasibility



What is this step and why is it important?

The first of the seven steps is to determine if this is the right moment for the NS to go through this process of making their emergency response system more environmentally sustainable and climate smart – i.e. to assess the feasibility of this process. In this step, the NS will determine if **a)** the prerequisites for success are present and **b)** gain a detailed understanding of the factors that can influence success. This step may also highlight the need for a strategy to develop the prerequisites, for example small environmental initiatives that provide evidence of impact and engage staff and management, before undertaking the more comprehensive process outlined in this guidance.

1A: PREREQUISITES FOR GREEN RESPONSE IN EMERGENCIES

The following list of prerequisites should be assessed before starting the process. Information on these can be found from consulting with management and staff, from existing institutional documents such as OCAC or BOCA assessments, NS strategies, NS Development Frameworks, and DREF operational reviews and NS evaluations from IFRC databases.[11]

PILOT LEARNING:

Even if there initially are low levels of awareness among senior management, it is possible to build this through internal advocacy, securing buy in before starting to work on this process in more depth.

- **Buy-in and support from senior management including the Disaster Management department.**[12] This is the most important requirement for success in making changes to how the response system works.

TIP:

Is there a champion within senior management that you can identify? This will help drive the process forward and make it sustainable in the long term.

11 For example on the IFRC GO platform reports section.

12 Note: This guide refers to the "Disaster Management (DM) Department" as the name of the main department in charge of disaster response and recovery in an NS.

- **A strong emergency response system and willingness to examine and adapt it:** this is critical because if the response system needs major improvement, the priority should be to focus on strengthening it before adding any new processes.[13]

- **Strong commitment to and level of awareness of Green Response** (plus environmental sustainability and climate change): there should be buy-in to the concept of environmental sustainability in the NS more broadly and knowledge of why environment is linked to the mandate of NS. Has the NS made any formal commitments to this topic, for example have they signed the Climate and Environment Charter? Does the NS have an Environmental Policy? Are they participating in the Climate Action Journey? Are they part of the Climate Champions network?

- **Good level of implementation of community engagement and accountability (CEA):** Evidence of strong community engagement across all types of programming including response.

- **Sufficient time to implement:** Making improvements and then implementing, refining and mainstreaming them is time consuming. Therefore the NS should be willing to commit time to this.

- **Sufficient human and financial resources to implement:** It is critical that funds be designated for this work and in particular for sufficient human resources to steer the process.[14]

TIP:

Approach your Partner National Societies and/or IFRC for funding.

- **The right human resources to implement:** It is critical that one of the staff members involved in the process knows the inner workings of the NS very well. Ideally there will also be a Green Response or Environmental focal point in the NS to provide environmental expertise, although this can also be brought in. Understanding how the NS works is fundamental to finding the best ways to make changes in ways that are sensitive to the realities of the NS (e.g. funding constraints, the pressures of emergency response etc.).

1B: UNDERSTAND THE SYSTEMS AND DYNAMICS OF THE NS

Understanding the dynamics and systems of the NS is crucial for assessing the feasibility of greening the response system and laying the project's foundation. This includes identifying official processes, unofficial practices, and any gaps between field reality and theoretical guidelines (e.g., SOPs).

PILOT LEARNING:

The focal points assessing feasibility would benefit from already understanding the internal dynamics of the NS. Otherwise a lot of time will be spent trying to understand dynamics that are difficult to grasp quickly and may not be fully understood e.g. by an external consultant.

The following are critical to understand:

- **Staff resources and capacities** (across the DM team, Green Response, CEA, PMER, and any other relevant departments):
  - Is there a member of staff who can lead the process and dedicate time to it? Who could this be?
  - Will other key staff[15] be able to dedicate time to this process?

13 It is up to the NS to decide if their response system is ready for this process to go ahead. How this is determined could include for example: if the NS has been through the PER process, has a DM SOP, regular procedures that are followed in response, and dedicated roles and responsibilities in the DM department.

14 See step 2 for the type of dedicated staff needed to implement this approach.

15 See step 2 for a list of recommended staff and focal points

- Who can be engaged that understands the internal dynamics of the NS?
- Is there enough internal capacity and knowledge on Green Response, or will external expertise need to be brought in?

- **Branch resources and capacities, including volunteer capacity and structure:**
  - Is there capacity in the branches to absorb additional knowledge and responsibilities?
  - Is there a local level response structure in place that can train and capacitate response staff and volunteers?

- **An understanding of where decisions are made in the NS:**
  - Who holds the authority to make decisions and sign off any adaptations made to the system?
  - Are these key stakeholder Green Response / environment and climate advocates? If not, how can their knowledge and buy in be increased?

- **How the different departments work together,** including DM, DRR, OD (for PER and Branch Development), Logistics, CEA, PMER etc.
  - Has the NS engaged in PER? If so, how well is PER linked to response (e.g. OD/NSD to DM)?
  - How well do departments collaborate and what are the possible dynamics that might hinder or promote the process?
  - Are preparedness and AA in the same department as emergency response? If not, how well do they work together and what are the potential barriers?

- **The structure of the Disaster Management Department:**
  - What roles and responsibilities exist and who is it most important to work with and have the buy-in from?
  - Are there any Green Response champions who can help support the process?
  - Who sits in the Emergency Operations Centre or equivalent? Who makes the decisions?

- **How information is collected and managed** (pre-crisis info, post-crisis info, information on NS branches, capacities, volunteers etc)
  - Are there formal information management systems in place? Or does the system rely on specific individuals?

- **Is there support for Green Response in Emergencies from partners or donors?**
  - What potential donors exist?
  - Are there PNS or other partners that could contribute funding or technical support?
  - Are there any donor requirements for environmental mainstreaming in response?

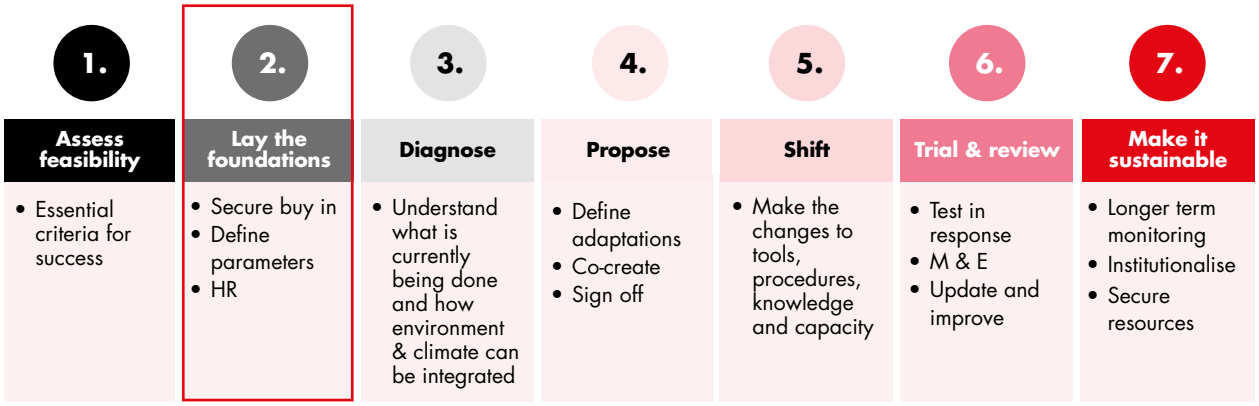
- **What is the relationship between the NS response and other (including external) stakeholders?**
  - With IFRC and PNS
  - With government
  - With private sector and donors

TIP:

This list is not exhaustive. What other NS dynamics do you think are key to the success of this initiative in your NS? Who are the key people that need to buy-in to the process to make it successful? Who/ what could require extra effort to secure endorsement? Where do the greatest champions and opportunities lie?

Livelihoods activities in the climate change-impacted northwestern district of Nilphamari, Bangladesh. Photo credit: Sajid Hasan / IFRC Bangladesh

Step 2: Lay the Foundations



What is this step and why is it important?

This second step lays the groundwork for making the NS emergency response system more environmentally sustainable and climate-smart. Strong foundations ensure a smoother process and long-term sustainability. Experience shows that adapting the overall response system and fostering genuine awareness is much easier if foundations are established early on.

2A: DEFINE THE APPROACH AND THE PARAMETERS OF THE PROJECT

Be clear on the parameters of the project from the outset and what it is aiming to achieve. Green Response in emergencies focuses on improving the environmental outcomes of the emergency response, and in particular on the early phases of the response. This also includes preparedness for response, for example, training of first responders. **The approach aims to mainstream environmental and climate considerations across the response and become part of how we operate – it is not a standalone initiative.**

Define what "Green Response in Emergencies" means for your NS. While Green Response might already be used broadly to describe the NS's overall environmental sustainability efforts, this work focuses specifically on emergency response. Key areas with significant environmental impacts, such as logistics and procurement, should also ideally be engaged with for harmonisation across the NS, depending on what the NS priorities are. If the term is unfamiliar to some stakeholders, clarify its objectives and scope at the project's start.

TIP:
For examples of ways to green the emergency response, see Annex A. These examples can be useful to bring the concept to life and secure stakeholder interest and engagement.

The individual realities of each NS will mean that the parameters of the process will differ between contexts. For clarity, define exactly what your NS will cover. Some factors to consider include:

- Why are you starting this process and what do you hope to achieve?
- What response phases do you want to focus on and how are they divided in practice?[16] Will you include recovery?[17]
- It is critical to focus on preparedness for response - how will this be done best, and who should be involved?
- How will you clearly define how this work links with other relevant areas of NS work, and what responsibilities fall to who? E.g. Procurement and Logistics, DRR, PER.[18]

16 In order to define this, the phases of response used by the NS need to be clear. See step 1.

17 The pilot did not include recovery because it was deemed more critical to focus on the earlier response phases.

18 See list of Environment and Climate Considerations within the Preparedness for Effective Response mechanism, in the IFRC GO Platform resources list. For climate considerations in PER see page 50 of the Guide to Climate Smart Programming and Operations).

TOOL:

Key messages on what Green Response in Emergencies is and why it is important – this tool can be used to explain and gain support for the concept internally.

Regardless of what parameters you decide on, ensure that they:

1. Are clear so that stakeholders understand the aim and intended outcomes.
2. Involve key stakeholders across relevant departments in the decision-making, for example working with a project group or steering committee who meet regularly.

PILOT LEARNING FROM BDRCS AND LRC:

Experience from the pilots in Bangladesh and Lebanon demonstrates that there is no single "correct" way to go through this process. While both NS worked toward the same overall objective they adopted different entry points, tackled things in a different order and had different areas of emphasis, shaped by their institutional context, operational realities, and opportunities for influence. National Societies using this guidance should expect to adapt both how and where they start, based on what will create the greatest impact and have the most traction in their own system.

BDRCS: starting with leadership, policy and system-wide foundations

BDRCS began its greening the emergency response journey by prioritising leadership engagement and institutional foundations. Early efforts focused on building shared understanding at senior and governance levels and analysing existing response mechanisms to identify entry points for change. This approach culminated in the development and approval of a Green Response Policy, which became a key enabling factor by providing a binding, organisation-wide mandate for change.

From this policy anchor, BDRCS focused on system-wide capacity strengthening and standardisation, including development of operational guidelines, training for response staff and NDRT members, e-learning modules, and exploratory work on greening logistics and supply chains, linked to other ongoing initiatives in the NS. Attention was given to understanding environmental risks linked to common hazards (e.g. floods, cyclones, heatwaves) and to reducing negative impacts such as plastic waste from relief items, while ensuring response effectiveness was not compromised.

By working "top-down" initially, while progressively strengthening staff capacity and operational tools, BDRCS sought to ensure that environmental sustainability would be mainstreamed rather than treated as a cross-cutting add-on.

LRC: building from sectoral practice and operational innovation

In contrast, LRC's pathway built on a history of Green Response practice, particularly within the WASH sector, and on lessons from large-scale emergency operations. Rather than starting with a new organisation-wide policy, LRC had embedded GR within its Disaster Management Theory of Change, where environment and CEA were already recognised as cross-cutting priorities.

LRC began by working deeply within specific operational areas, especially WASH, piloting and scaling practical solutions such as green procurement, solarisation, water and wastewater treatment, solid waste management, and digitalisation of assessments and training. The process was first applied within the Disaster Management Sector, using desk reviews, participatory workshops and targeted tool updates, with the intention of expanding to other sectors once feasibility and value were demonstrated. This expansion has begun, with efforts to green economic security and logistics activities.

This approach reflects a context where operational credibility and proof of concept were key drivers of change. By showing tangible results on the ground and linking them to service continuity, public health and community acceptance, LRC has been able to build internal buy-in, including with procurement and support functions, despite challenges related to costs and supplier availability.

Key lesson for National Societies

The BDRCS and LRC experiences underline that Green Response in Emergencies is not a linear checklist. In both cases, progress depended on identifying where change was most feasible, where influence was strongest, and how to balance ambition with operational reality. ***National Societies using this guidance are encouraged to identify the most strategic entry point(s) for their context and adapt the process to maximise impact, ownership and sustainability.***

2B: SECURE BUY-IN

Reconfirm buy-in from the NS senior management and the Disaster Management Department, including both DM leadership and programme management, as this is one of the most important criteria to ensure that the project can go ahead and be successful. Support Services Management (e.g. Logistics, Human Resources and Finance) are also important stakeholders. This could be done via group or individual briefings and presentations or more informal conversations with key stakeholders.

KEY CONSIDERATION:

To secure buy-in, emphasise the improvement of existing systems rather than creating new ones: There can be resistance to making changes to response systems. The key is to enhance the work already being done rather than creating new procedures, keeping new tools to a minimum and mainstreaming into the existing system as much as possible. For key messages to explain and secure engagement for the concept see:

TOOL: Key messages on what Green Response in Emergencies is and why it is important.

2C: DEFINE FOCAL POINTS AND STAFFING MODALITY

Various people are needed to implement Green Response in Emergencies once buy-in has been secured from senior management and the DM department. Who these people are will depend on the capacities of the NS and whether there is in-house expertise or if it is necessary to hire external consultants or additional staff. Key criteria for the staffing of the work include:

Critical HR to have:

- **A person responsible for driving the project forward (project manager):** This is the person that will be responsible for the implementation of the process and do the bulk of the work, in coordination with the other key stakeholders. They can also fill other functions below if they have the expertise. Ideally this would be someone in the DM team. It is recommended that this person have at least 50% of their working time available[19] to drive this transformation – likely for a period up to one year. This person must have:
  - Good knowledge of the NS and internal dynamics.
  - Expertise on the NS response system, tools and field reality - to ensure that the response system is improved in a way that is practical and will be implemented.
  - Support from the DM director or equivalent position of authority.
  - The ability to foster strong relationships and navigate diplomatically.
  - Curiosity and motivation to improve the quality and sustainability of the system
- **Green response or equivalent focal point:** providing the technical environmental expertise for the project.
- **DM programme manager or PMER officer:** to help understand the details of the response process and what the key tools and processes and systems used.

TIP:

If someone is not dedicated to work on this process in at least a 50% capacity, they should have sufficient time and specific tasks allocated in their job description to ensure momentum is maintained.

Nice to have:

- **External expert:** an outside (the NS) perspective to help to review the existing response system and see how it can incorporate environment and climate-smart thinking. It can be easier for an external expert to spot gaps and make recommendations. A Partner National Society could provide this expertise, or an external consultant.

19 If not implementing the full process it could be less than 50%

2D: INITIATE THE PROJECT

Hold a kick-off meeting or workshop to officially start the process and get all major stakeholders aligned. This event or meeting should:

- Explain the benefits.
- Kick-off a collaborative process between departments and stakeholders.
- Identify the role and contributions of each department and stakeholder group.
- Highlight opportunities for environmental mainstreaming in response to improve outcomes for affected populations.
- Highlight that the aim of the project is to adapt and improve existing systems and approaches, not to make big changes to response systems.
- Define the parameters of the project: for example, does the NS want to focus on the very early response, or also include recovery?[20] What departments will be involved?
- Agree to a timeline and target deadline for the process, including a date for a review of the process.
- Present specific changes that can be made and the benefits (see Annex A which includes some examples from NS).
- Identify additional NS focal points to work with or speak to for more information.

PILOT LEARNING:

Using concrete examples to illustrate the aims and adaptations likely to be made will help achieve understanding of both the process, the outputs and the benefits to disaster-affected people and the NS response.

Participants should include NS senior management and staff engaged in response, Green Response, Climate, DRR, Resilience and CEA; IFRC DM delegate or equivalent; logistics and supply chain; and relevant PNS working in/supporting response and/or Green Response.

Solar systems installed by LRC to support host communities in Aley, Lebanon. Photo credit: Lebanese Red Cross.

TIP:

Brief senior management with talking points before the meeting to ensure targeted engagement.

Consider creating a working group to take the project forward, that can be used after the end of the project to ensure that responses continue to consider environmental impact. If the NS already has an existing Green Response or environmental working group, the same group can be used.

RESOURCE: Example of Working Group ToR

TIP:

Balance formal engagement *(e.g. of key stakeholders)* ***with informal engagement*** *(e.g. of those involved in response) – formal is needed for approval and being able to proceed, and informal means people can speak more freely about how things actually work, or do not work.*

20 See step 2a

PILOT LEARNING:

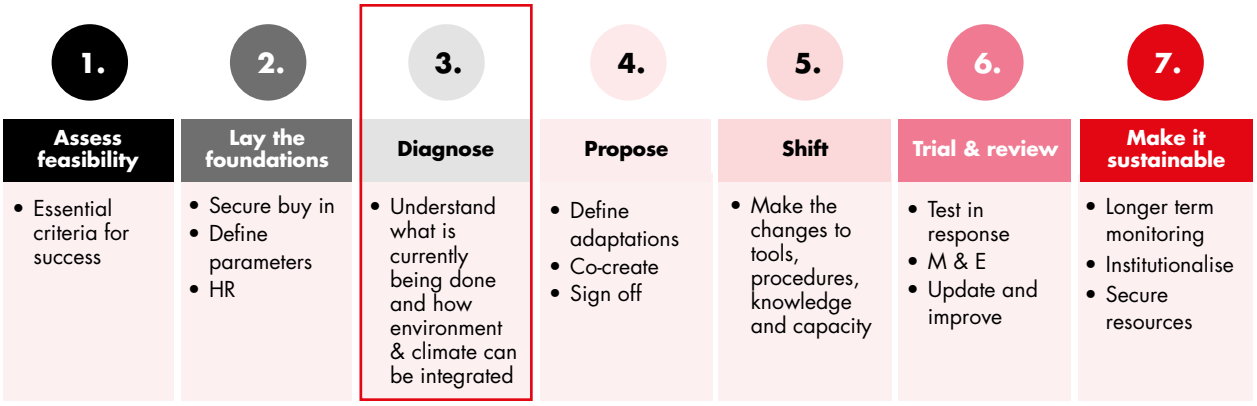
Table 1 summarises common challenges encountered in the first 2 steps during the BDRCS and LRC pilots and practical mitigation measures applied.

Common challenge encountered	Mitigation measures applied in pilots
Limited buy-in from senior management or perception that Green Response is not a priority compared to life-saving interventions.	**Internal advocacy; clear messaging** linking Green Response to humanitarian outcomes; **knowledge-sharing** sessions; presenting concrete **examples of impact** and cost–benefit analyses to demonstrate added value; presenting donor policies and requirements on environment and climate.
Limited understanding of Green Response among staff and volunteers.	**Information sessions and workshops;** integrating Green Response modules into staff **inductions and training** and job descriptions; continuous **knowledge sharing**.
Weak internal coordination and communication across departments.	**Regular follow-ups** and ad hoc **coordination** meetings; **participatory working approaches**; expanding engagement gradually across programmes to **build ownership**.
Lack of dedicated financial and technical resources.	Targeted **technical capacity building;** seeking **partner support; integrating Green Response** into existing programmes and plans to leverage existing resources.
Lack of policies and make SOPs to drive compliance.	**Development and integration of Green Response** policies, SOPs and operational guidelines; **mainstreaming environmental considerations** into existing DM tools and procedures.
Frequent changes in leadership or shifting institutional priorities.	Establishing formal policies, SOPs and working groups to **institutionalise the approach and ensure continuity** despite management turnover.
Low prioritisation from partners or competing organisational priorities.	**Strengthening advocacy and awareness** internally and with partners; **demonstrating operational relevance** and alignment with existing commitments and plans.

Table 1.

Women collecting water from a water point using refillable containers to minimise plastic waste. Photo credit: Moynul Hasan Monju/ BDRCS

Step 3: Diagnose



What is this step and why is it important?

This step focuses on understanding how the system currently works to be able to provide recommendations for improvement. This involves a detailed scoping and analysis of the NS tools, systems and dynamics in emergency response, including Green Response and CEA.[21]

PILOT LEARNING:

It is very possible that in practice, the steps laid out in this guidance may overlap - for example, LRC used a workshop to both refresh staff and volunteers on Green Response theory and practice, gather ideas for improvements, and work on environmental updates to assessment forms.

TIP:

Spend extra time understanding the early response phase. *It can be challenging to consider the environment in the first days and weeks of a response. Take time to review past responses and identify practices that can be adapted with a Green Response lens.* ***Understand how decisions are made in a response, by whom and when.***

TOOL:

Scoping questions for Green Response in emergencies: These questions can be posed to NS key informants (individually or at a workshop/meeting) to gain an understanding of NS response systems, Green Response and how the NS engages with communities. For an example of how these questions have been used in one NS for the scoping phase, see this example questionnaire.

3A: ENVIRONMENT AND DISASTER CONTEXT

Gather a basic understanding of:

1. **The main hazards affecting the country and what geographical areas are most vulnerable to them:** for example, look at the top five disasters affecting the country and map where responses have taken place over the last ten years.
2. **The main environmental challenges and vulnerabilities facing the country:** for example, deforestation, salinization, pollution and contamination, climate change impact projections and main climate risks.

This will ensure that the outputs of the process target the

21 Note: the parts of this step can be done in any order and/or ideally simultaneously. The idea is that at the end of this phase there is a good understanding of the NS response systems and practices. This step should also identify the major hazards responded to and the most disaster-affected areas, which can be prioritised for piloting and applying the updated response approach.

most disaster affected areas and include the response activities for the most common crises allowing them to be more targeted. This will also make it easier to prioritise where to pilot the approach and where to focus particular attention on understanding how the system works in the most active/disaster prone areas.

To understand the environment and disaster context of the country look for information from:[22]

- Local environmental organisations and resources
- Environmental Country Profiles (Global Shelter Cluster)
- IFRC Country Climate Fact Sheets
- RCRC Climate Centre Country briefs
- National Climate Risk Assessments (undertaken as part of the Climate Action Journey)
- Nationally tailored weather and seasonal forecasts can be provided by the national weather service (find relevant ones in WMO's list).
- National agencies responsible for meteorological and hydrological forecasting (see guide here on how to collaborate with them)
- The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) provides seasonal forecasts relevant to several sectors, such as agriculture, energy, health and water management that can help to prepare for potential periods of extreme weather conditions.
- The World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal's Climate Risk Country Profiles
- Green Response activities and reports of NS and partners
- Existing partnership with environmental organisations, if they exist
- National regulations linked to DM and environment
- Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (EVCA) reports from disaster-prone areas
- Environmental research and assessment reports developed by academic institutions.

For a summary of NS responses consult the DM team and resources such as:

- NS Emergency Response SOP (often summarises the main recent NS responses)
- IFRCGO

TIP:

Include smaller hazards like fires, and health-focussed responses like dengue. These may elicit a smaller response but occur more frequently, making their environmental impact relevant. Also consider extreme heat.

3B: NS EMERGENCY RESPONSE

To be able to make targeted recommendations about how to adapt and improve the system, conduct a review of the NS emergency response tools and systems: this includes from preparedness through to response and recovery (see step 2 on defining the parameters of the work). The aim of this is to gain a clear understanding of how response works for the most frequent disasters and crises. This includes investigating:

- What is the response process for the most common disasters?
- Who is involved and what training do they receive? (e.g. national disaster response teams – NDRTs or similar).
- Who makes decisions about a response, and where does that happen?
- What information is collected in assessments and what assessment tools are used?
- What procedural documents exist (e.g. SOPs) and are these followed?
- What are the most common response activities for each type of disaster?
- What response modalities are used?
- How common is cash/cash and voucher assistance?

22 In some contexts other organisations may already have done this analysis

The following methods are suggested to gather information and to ensure the perspectives of a range of responders from HQ staff through to volunteers are represented.

- **Desk review** of tools/systems past response situation reports, funding proposals or final reports
- **Interviews/meetings with key informants** in the DM department, emergency response teams and at branch level.
- **Field visits** to disaster prone areas to consult with branch response teams and volunteers on how response works in practice (if the person leading the process is not familiar with this, or if practices vary greatly from area to area).
- **Scoping workshop** with staff and volunteers to clarify response modalities and activities.

LRC and community members check water quality at a solar water pumping facility. Photo credit: Mandy George/SRC

TIPS

- ***Disaster Management Policies, Strategies and SOPs*** *are a good place to start as they will make reference to other tools and systems used by the NS.*
- *Some* ***tools to review*** *include:*
  - *SOPs (Disaster Management/Cash and Voucher Assistance).*
  - *Needs Assessment templates.*
  - *Monitoring and evaluation templates (e.g. Post Distribution Monitoring).*
- *Explore how and when cash and voucher assistance is used as a modality for response.*
- *Find out who in the NS works on* ***Preparedness for Effective Response*** *(PER) and how closely linked the PER process is to the response. Has the NS used the Environment and Climate Considerations for PER?*
- *Find out what kinds of national* ***disaster response teams*** *exist and:*
  - *How they work together*
  - *When they are activated and if this includes anticipatory action as well as response.*
  - *What expertise/training/briefing they receive before deployment and how it is delivered.*
  - *How much decision making responsibility they have and how engaged they are in designing/deciding upon response activities.*
  - *How they share lessons learned after the response and how they see their role in improving future response.*
- *Investigate* ***how closely the response follows the official procedures****, for example in SOPs. While tools and official procedures are important and updating them is necessary, they may not always be followed precisely during emergencies – there can be a gap between theory and reality.*
- *Understand early on how the Emergency Operations Centre (or equivalent function where the response is coordinated) works and consider how to best to inject environmental considerations[23] into the decision making process.*

23 e.g. via a green response focal point taking part in the EOC in the early days and weeks of response

3C: ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSIONS OF RESPONSE

In addition to the scoping of the NS response systems, it is critical to understand the current level of 1) environmental mainstreaming into response; 2) environmental initiatives across the organisation and 3) environmental awareness among response teams. Even if Green Response is not integrated into emergencies, there may be other environmental expertise in the NS that can be used to strengthen the environmental dimensions of the response system. and this step will help to understand where that expertise is and how to use it. This can be done at the same time as the investigation into response systems, but should also cover Green Response across the organisation. Often NS Green Response or environmental focal points do not sit within the DM department and therefore the department where this expertise is located will need to be involved in the scoping and decision making around any updates to the response system.

Speak to and involve in the discussions:

- Green Response / environmental / climate change focal point(s).
- The director of the department where that focal point sits.
- National Disaster Response Teams to assess level of awareness of Green Response.

Find out what environmental initiatives exist at both the policy and operational level, and if there are any examples of environmental mainstreaming in the preparedness and response phases.

3D: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY[24]

The scoping phase should develop an understanding of how strong the NS is in CEA, particularly within emergency response. This involves reviewing current approaches to community engagement in response operations and identifying areas for improvement. Understanding existing CEA practices is critical for effectively integrating the environmental dimension and identifying opportunities to strengthen community-informed Green Response. This should be aligned with the RCRC Movement-wide CEA commitments and minimum actions, which provide a common framework for ensuring meaningful participation, feedback, and accountability. Additionally, reviewing organisational commitments and policy guidance on CEA is essential.

For a list of suggested questions to ask in the scoping phase see:

TOOL:

Scoping questions for Green Response in emergencies.

BDRCS volunteers collecting waste as part of regular waste collection drive. Photo credit: Md. Uzzal Mia/BDRCS.

24 See the introduction for more on the links between CEA and Green Response

A solitary tree stands as a memory of the forest reserve cleared to welcome over 700,000 forcibly displaced people from Myanmar to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh in 2019.
Photo credit: Shourov Sobahan / IFRC

Step 4: Propose

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
Assess feasibility	**Lay the foundations**	**Diagnose**	**Propose**	**Shift**	**Trial & review**	**Make it sustainable**
• Essential criteria for success	• Secure buy in • Define parameters • HR	• Understand what is currently being done and how environment & climate can be integrated	• Define adaptations • Co-create • Sign off	• Make the changes to tools, procedures, knowledge and capacity	• Test in response • M & E • Update and improve	• Longer term monitoring • Institutionalise • Secure resources

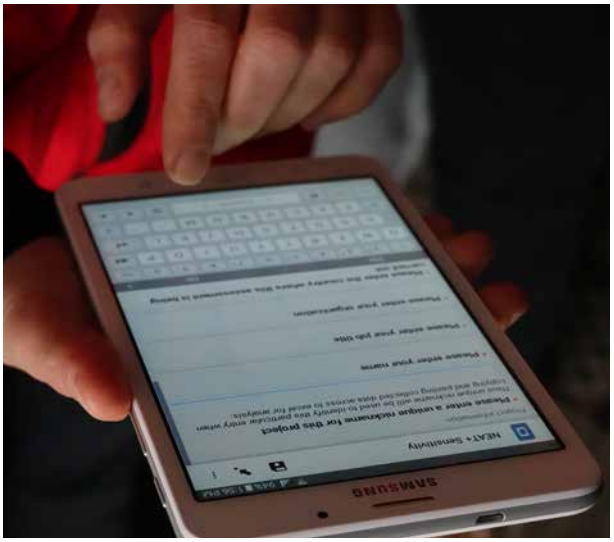
What is this step and why is it important?

This step is based on the results of step 3 and is where adaptations to the NS emergency response systems are defined and proposed. The step will work best if done in a participatory way with all major stakeholders. It is also an opportunity for training response personnel in any tools that are proposed to be added to the system, for example a tool to identify the environmental impacts of response activities. If training takes place in this step (e.g. as part of a workshop to validate changes) there will be some overlap with step 5. *Annex A* contains a list of some of the adaptations to make the response more environmentally sustainable and climate smart.

4A: DEFINE THE SUGGESTED ADAPTATIONS TO RESPONSE PROCEDURES AND TOOLS

The specific adaptations will be determined based on the findings of phase 3 scoping and the specific circumstances of the NS. Ideally these should be a mixture of updates to:

- Environmental training received by volunteers and staff and the use of specific tools.
- Process and procedures, such as SOPs.
- Tools, such as assessment and environmental screening tools.
- Training modules/toolkits/courses.
- Collection and management of environmental information



Lebanese Red Cross conducting a NEAT+ environmental screening as part of an emergency response. Photo credit: Mandy George/SRC

TOOL:

Annex A: Example actions for Green Response in Emergencies: This list of actions and examples of how they can be implemented, presented by response continuum phase, can be a good starting point to investigate whether they are currently happening in the NS and what the entry points are.

PILOT LEARNING:

Disaster Management Policies, Strategies and SOPs are a good place to start as they will make reference to other tools and systems used by the NS.

Policies and procedural documents:

- Organisational Green Response Policy and Implementation Guide.
- Emergency Response Standard Operating Procedures to include environmental considerations.
- Environmental Protection and Climate Action pledge to include Green Response in emergencies.

Emergency Response system (including implementation and monitoring):

- Green Response officer part of the Emergency Operations Centre and has responsibility for issues related to environmental sustainability and environmental impact of activities.
- Assessments and pre-crisis data collection include environmental questions.
- The impact of integrating Green Response into emergency response operations is included in the response monitoring and reporting systems.

Training and Capacity Strengthening:

- Emergency response personnel undergo environmental awareness/Green Response training and know their responsibilities to reduce environmental impact and observe and report back issues of environmental concern.
- Key emergency response, DM, PMER staff and key NDRT personnel receive training on environmental screening (NEAT+ or other).

Emergency Response Environmental Activities:

- Greening of NFIs, kits and food assistance to replace plastic with more sustainable materials, remove unnecessary packaging.
- Cash and voucher assistance includes advice on sustainable purchasing.
- Coordination across departments including procurement and logistics to green the logistics process.
- Solarisation of water extraction.
- Management of wastewater and solid waste management facilities.
- Composting in camps.

BDRCS waste collection vans transport waste from Rohingya camps to designated waste management areas. Photo credit: IFRC Bangladesh

4B: REVISE AND VALIDATE THE ADAPTATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH RELEVANT NS STAKEHOLDERS

Once specific actions have been proposed, these should be examined and validated with relevant stakeholders, for example in a workshop or a working session with key stakeholders. If changes are made incrementally, ensure they are validated throughout the process. Whatever methodology is used, knowledge should be drawn from stakeholders, including:

- Senior management and relevant staff from the departments in charge of Disaster Response, Preparedness for Response, Green Response, CEA and PMER.
- Experienced first responders in NDRTs/local response teams who are very familiar with the response systems.
- Responders at the branch level and volunteers who are involved in response at the local/branch/community level.

Different stakeholders will be most relevant to review, trial and input to different parts of the process. For example, any **revisions to procedural tools** like SOPs, policy documents, the EOC etc. most used at HQ would benefit from detailed review by staff and management from HQ teams (DM etc) and can then be presented to response teams for their inputs. Any revisions to **field response processes**, such as how communities are consulted as part of assessments about environmental issues, should be done with both HQ and field/branch staff and volunteers. It may be necessary to conduct training in any new tools to allow NS staff to assess how useful it is.

PILOT LEARNING:

A workshop held in one of the pilots combined the two types of reviews mentioned above (procedural/policy documents as well as field implementation). For some parts like training on an environmental screening tool this worked well, but for some parts like validating changes to procedural documents it would have been better to have a working session with the DM team and a more specific audience.

4C: GET FINAL SIGN OFF

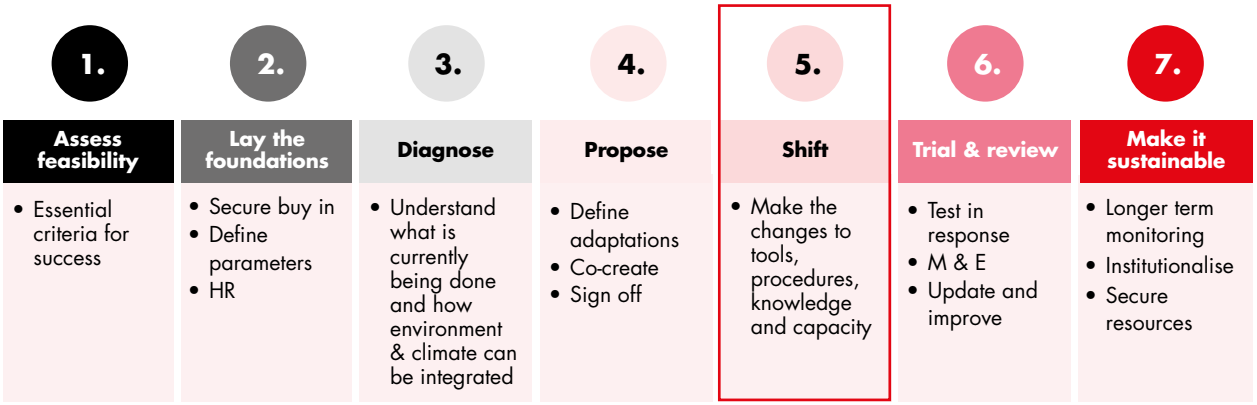
Define who needs to sign off changes made and engage the key stakeholders identified in step 2 to ensure that changes will have lasting impact. Ideally they will also be involved in the workshopping of adaptations to the system. Ensure they agree with the changes and are supportive of them being put into action.

TIP:

Start thinking about an implementation plan from this point onwards. This will be key to ensuring that the changes happen.

The Swedish Red Cross is cooperating with the Liberian Red Cross to help local communities to withstand the consequences of climate change. Armel Komena is visiting the village Martuaken and testing the quality of the water and the function of the water pump. Photo credit: Thomas Arlemo.

Step 5: Shift



What is this step and why is it important?

This step is where the bulk of the work takes place, implementing the adaptations proposed in step 4 to make the response system more environmentally sustainable and climate-smart. The actions taken in this step will vary for each NS, tailored to their strengths and identified gaps from the scoping phase. Annex A contains a list of actions to green the emergency response, serving as inspiration for this phase.

TIP:

Start with the updates that are most feasible in the short term to demonstrate impact and prove the concept. As results become visible, this can help build greater buy-in for more complex or longer-term adaptations, which can then be introduced gradually over time.

5A: UPDATE TOOLS AND PROCESSES AND SHARE WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Update the tools and processes defined and signed off in steps 3 and 4. This can be done collectively via a technical working group if one exists, or by subject matter experts internal or external to the NS. Ensure to involve the key stakeholders in the process, and share with them once finished. It is possible that the updates to some tools will not be operationalised immediately. For example, the NS may have a timeline for the revision of SOPs and contingency plans. Others may be able to be operationalised immediately, such as an updated assessment tool that can be used in the next response.

5B: BUILD CAPACITIES TO OPERATIONALISE GREEN RESPONSE IN EMERGENCIES

A critical part of rolling out the changes is ensuring that the relevant staff and volunteers have the knowledge and skills needed. Dedicated training is needed to empower and equip staff and volunteers. How this is done will depend on the NS and what other kinds of trainings exist. It is recommended that there be a range of trainings on Green Response targeted at different levels - for example an introductory module included in inductions for all staff and volunteers, and more in-depth training for response teams. Green Response can also be mainstreamed into other technical trainings for response staff, for example on assessments, M&E, and sectoral training like WASH. Types of environmental training include:

1. **Basic environmental awareness / Green Response training:** To improve how the environment is mainstreamed into response, organisation-wide awareness of environmental issues and their links to humanitarian outcomes is key. This should extend across all levels, including senior management, sector leads and emergency response teams. While individual staff can be tasked with implementing specific environmental actions, broad awareness and understanding across the organisation and within response teams is essential to ensure these actions are prioritised, integrated and sustained. This should cover:

    a. What Green Response is and why it is important.
    b. The NS' commitments to Green Response.
    c. Typical environmental impacts of our work and why they matter.
    d. What we all can do to minimise our impact.

KEY CONSIDERATION:

Changes on paper do not automatically turn into action: they require being tested in a response and they require being talked about and promoted. Be aware of the limitations of procedural documents and the disconnect that can exist between them and the reality in a response.

EXAMPLE:

Both BDRCS and LRC have designed Green Response training modules that are used in inductions for new staff and volunteers, to ensure a baseline level of understanding of what Green Response is and staff and volunteers' responsibilities to reduce environmental impact.

2. **Environmental/Green Response awareness training for response teams:** Building on a generic foundation, response teams need detailed understanding of how to mainstream environmental considerations into response, and need to feel empowered, understanding what their role is and how they can make a difference. This training can be mainstreamed into broader response team training and cover the topics in the basic training plus:

    a. How GR improves emergency response overall – including concrete examples.
    b. The role of response team members.
    c. Identifying environmental issues in the field and how to raise and act on them.
    d. How to conduct an environmental screening.
    e. Community engagement on environmental issues.

EXAMPLE:

BDRCS designed a Green Response training module that is integrated into the National Disaster Response Teams (NDRT) training. This is targeted at all response team staff and explains the basics around why and how we should minimise our environmental impact in response, and what role NDRT team members play. It encourages making both personal and professional changes to make a difference.

3. **Environmental/Green Response awareness training for response managers:** Building on foundational trainings, this training provides more in-depth knowledge of environmental issues and how to operationalise them in a response, including the use of any updated tools and processes. It should be primarily targeted at those with decision making responsibilities in emergency response operations and cover:

    a. The topics covered in previous training but in more depth.
    b. Environmental issues associated with different disaster types.
    c. National environmental legislation.

d. Environmental entry points in a response operation.
e. Mainstreaming environmental issues into assessments and response.
f. Environmental Screening, focussing on how to incorporate the results into project or activity design.
g. Monitoring and reporting of Green Response in Emergencies.

4. **Environmental expertise available to support implementation:** This expertise, whether in the form of a Green Response adviser or other technical support, is critical for identifying environmental risks and opportunities, and for improving the sustainability of the response. This person should have not only the appropriate technical expertise, but also the dedicated time to apply it as part of their role. Where in-house capacity is limited, National Societies can draw on IFRC surge mechanisms (e.g. Rapid Response personnel or Emergency Response Units), noting that some surge profiles are trained in Green Response. This competency can be explicitly requested in surge Terms of Reference or deployment requests. In addition, the "Practising Environmental Sustainability in Surge Operations" module is available as an open-access resource on the IFRC learning platform to help strengthen surge and operational capacities.

Note: *This step 5b may overlap with step 6, depending on how soon the opportunity for piloting arises.*

5C: CREATE AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Create an implementation plan to take the work forward. This can be integrated into the DM department plans, PER workplans, or a standalone plan (generally integration is recommended to help this not remain as a standalone initiative or project). This should include all the actions to be taken over steps 6 and 7.

PILOT LEARNING:

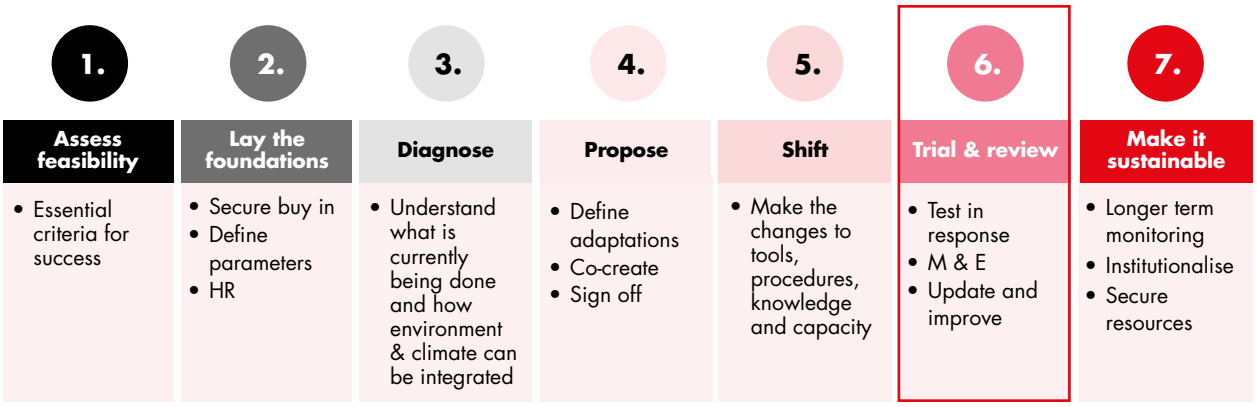
Table 2 summarises common challenges encountered in steps 5-7 during the BDRCS and LRC pilots and practical mitigation measures applied.

Common challenge encountered	Mitigation measures applied in pilots
New or greener items not always accepted by communities.	**Awareness sessions** alongside distributions; participatory engagement and feedback loops; adjusting item design and quality based on community feedback.
Government restrictions or policy constraints affecting greener options.	**Flexible and context-specific** implementation; advocacy and dialogue with authorities; creative adaptation of solutions to regulatory realities.
Challenging operational contexts (e.g. security situation, frequent disasters, large population movements).	**Flexible timelines** and phased implementation; prioritising feasible entry points; adapting solutions to operational constraints.
The need to balance urgent humanitarian needs with environmental considerations.	**Maintaining life-saving assistance** priorities while identifying incremental improvements; demonstrating that greener approaches can improve efficiency, quality and sustainability of aid.
Procurement constraints and potentially higher cost of more environmentally sustainable items.	**Advocacy with procurement teams;** demonstrating long-term benefits; piloting and rebranding greener kits (e.g. environmentally friendly hygiene kits) to justify revised specifications and costs.
Difficulty engaging communities on environmental aspects, including complex community structures and varying attitudes towards environmental issues.	**Focussing on immediate needs** and co-benefits (e.g. health, clean water, waste management); behaviour change and awareness campaigns; consulting diverse community groups beyond leaders; providing incentives where appropriate.

Table 2.

BDRCS volunteer collecting waste as part of regular waste collection drive. Photo credit: Md. Uzzal Mia/BDRCS

Step 6: Trial and Review



What is this step and why is it important?

This step is about testing the new and improved response system or activities, once updates have been made, signed off and staff and volunteers have been trained.[25] This is important because it is key to understand if the changes are realistic and if they will have a positive impact on the quality of the response. This Step focuses on learning at the response level: during or immediately following a specific response or pilot. It is concerned with whether the adaptations made in Steps 4 and 5 work in real operational conditions, and how they can be refined, ensuring that changes are operational, practical and improving response quality.

6A: PILOT TEST

How this will be done is dependent on the NS. Some actions can be conducted at any time as part of preparedness for response, for example training of staff and volunteers. Others will need to be done in an emergency or simulation exercise, like testing new environmental screening tools or assessment tools with newly mainstreamed environmental questions. In protracted contexts, the approach can be trialled at any moment deemed suitable by the NS. Doing as much as possible during preparedness leads to better outcomes during response; emergencies are not the time to train volunteers in environmental awareness. Testing can occur concurrently with Step 5 or before its completion. Focusing on one tool in an emergency, gathering feedback, and refining the approach may be more feasible than implementing multiple elements at once.

TIP:

To pilot, select one or two of the most disaster-prone areas where there is good capacity in the local branch. Put an implementation plan in place in these branches that will ensure that they are prepared to integrate environmental elements into the response when the next emergency happens. Testing the approach in a smaller emergency can be a more feasible way to try a new way of working. This process should start well in advance of the disaster with all of the recommended preparedness activities[26], including:

- *Training branch volunteers and response teams in how to make responses greener, including how to engage with communities on environmental issues, and how to observe and report environmental impacts and issues.*
- *Gathering environmental information on the local context and briefing volunteers in how to use the information.*

25 Any pilot or test should also be seen as a training opportunity.

26 See Annex A of example preparedness activities, and the Environment and Climate Considerations within the PER mechanism, in the IFRC GO Platform resources list.

- *Developing communications / information materials for top risks and prepositioning to distribute as part of anticipatory action*
- *Developing systems to quickly collect environmental information from affected communities (e.g. through updated assessment tools and methodologies).*

When the next disaster happens you can then: test any new assessment tools, community consultation methods, environmental impact screening tools and adapt the response based on these results; monitor the green elements of the response as part of overall response monitoring; and adjust the tools or approach based on the pilot learning.

6B: MONITORING THE ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE OF THE RESPONSE

This section focuses on monitoring the environmental performance of the response itself. It is recommended that the monitoring of the environmental aspects of an emergency response is conducted as part of normal monitoring and reporting procedures by the department in charge of response, with expert environmental support where needed (for example from a Green Response focal point). Being led by the response team, and using existing PMER and reporting systems, supports environmental mainstreaming and ensures it is not treated as a separate activity.

How to approach monitoring of the environmental dimensions of the response

- Ensure there is commitment from the NS to monitor environmental aspects as part of overall response monitoring
- Identify the M&E focal point in the response department and work closely with them
- Analyse the emergency response monitoring system to identify the best entry points
- Define a small number of practical indicators linked to the most environmentally significant activities (see M&E tool in box below for examples)
- Integrate these into existing systems (logframes, Situation Reports, Post Distribution Monitoring, After-Action Reviews)

TIP:

Rather than tracking everything, NS should prioritise a small number of practical indicators linked to the most environmentally significant response activities (e.g. relief distributions, WASH activities, energy use, waste generation).

Typical entry points for integration

Green Response monitoring can be integrated into:

- Response monitoring frameworks and logframes
- Post-distribution monitoring (including specific feedback on greener initiatives)
- Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions to understand changes in behaviour, knowledge, attitudes and practices
- Observation during field visits, e.g. through transect walks
- Situation reports and operational updates
- Lessons learned workshops and after-action reviews

Monitoring findings should be reviewed and acted upon during the response, not only at the end. This may include:

- Adjusting response activities
- Strengthening community engagement on environmental issues
- Refining tools before the next phase of the response

This real-time learning is critical for improving the quality of the ongoing operation and for strengthening preparedness for future responses.

TOOL:

For a list of indicators and template monitoring plan, see: Monitoring and Evaluation of Green Response in Emergencies – example indicators, monitoring framework and approach.

TOOL:

The IFRC Indicator Bank provides a repository of standardised indicators including 20 on climate and environment to support alignment across the Movement and facilitate integration into IM and PMER systems, including DREF and Emergency Appeal operations.

6C: MONITORING THE PROCESS OF GREENING THE RESPONSE

While 6b focuses on what the response is doing, this section focuses on how effectively the response system itself has been adapted to enable Green Response. It is important to track the implementation and effectiveness of the changes introduced through this process i.e. whether the system-level adaptations are actually taking place and working in practice.

This includes reviewing whether:

- SOPs and tools were updated as planned
- Staff and volunteers were trained
- New tools were actually used in practice
- Adaptations were realistic and practical

This monitoring should be built into the implementation plan and reviewed periodically. It helps identify what needs further refinement before moving to long-term institutionalisation.

EXAMPLE:

The Lebanese Red Cross integrated environmental indicators into their WASH One Programme Approach as well as into their broader Green Response activities. Indicators being used by LRC include:

Environmental Sustainability

- % reduction in CO_2 emissions compared to baseline from energy used in pumping stations, and generators)
- # of Environmentally Sustainable Infrastructure implemented in DMS (shows the number of facilities adopting renewable energies)
- % of communities reporting improved environmental conditions (e.g., reduced use of diesel, reduction in waste) – cross cutting with all environmental projects for WaSH Program

Behavioural/Knowledge Outcomes

- % of staff and volunteers who report increased knowledge on Green Response after online sessions (Pre-Post Test)

Knowledge, Documentation & Tools

- # Environmental Management Plans (EMPs) conducted
- # of documentation (Tools and Assessments) updated
- # of online Green Response sessions developed/conducted

Complementary Qualitative Measures

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with:

- DM centres → to assess changes in warehouse energy consumption, waste management.
- Program staff → to capture adoption of green response aspect in tools and assessment.
- DMS volunteers → to assess knowledge

Documentation outputs: EMPs, updated tools, CIGR guidelines

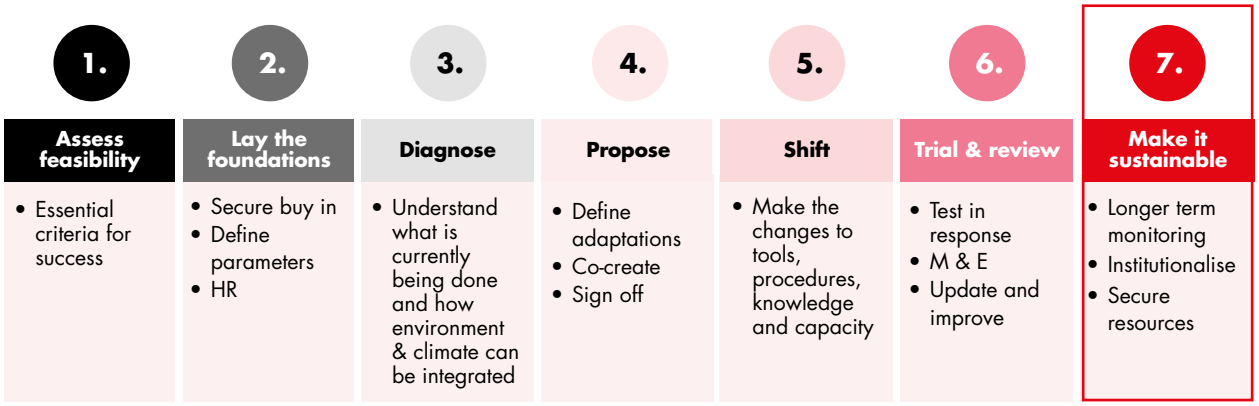
Soft evidence: KIIs, perceptions, knowledge changes

Hard numbers: CO_2 reduced, # of solutions

The changes that have been noted from this monitoring include:

- a reduction in fossil fuel use and energy savings, leading to cost savings and lower environmental impact
- mindset changes – more buy in and acceptance of environmental initiatives
- more integration of Green Response into Disaster Management activities.

Step 7: Make it sustainable



What is this step and why is it important?

While Step 6 focuses on testing and improving changes within a specific response or pilot, Step 7 shifts the focus to longer-term sustainability, asking whether Green Response has become embedded in institutional systems, culture and practice. This final but critical step is to ensure that Green Response in emergencies is fully integrated into the NS, continues to function after any pilot, and is not seen as a separate initiative or programme.

7A: MEASURING THE SUCCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF GREEN RESPONSE IN EMERGENCIES

Measuring success at this stage examines whether Green Response has influenced how the National Society plans, takes decisions and operates across multiple responses. Measuring success requires understanding changes in behaviour, decision-making, ownership and institutional practice.[27] This will help to:

- Capture lessons to feed back into preparedness and training
- Identify what worked, what didn't, and why
- Strengthen institutional buy-in by making progress visible
- Build a shared narrative around why Green Response improves humanitarian response quality

The first step is to understand what "success" looks like for your NS. This may include:

- Reduced environmental harm from emergency operations
- Stronger integration of community environmental knowledge into responses
- Increased confidence and initiative among staff and volunteers
- Green Response becoming part of "how we do things", rather than a special projector just being confined to one department
- Evidence that practices introduced during pilots are applied again in later responses

National Societies are encouraged to use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to assess success, including:

- A small set of headline indicators tracked over time
- Qualitative reflection with staff, volunteers, communities and partners
- Observation of practice during subsequent responses
- Review of whether Green Response elements are embedded in systems, tools and plans

This approach recognises that culture change, learning and ownership are valid forms of evidence.

27 Although this is included under step 7, it would be useful to begin to define what success means in steps 2 and 3, so that monitoring of the changes happening can take place as early as possible.

Evaluations

In addition to ongoing monitoring and reflection, National Societies may conduct a more structured evaluation once the process has been piloted or implemented across one or more responses. Unlike the response-level learning described in Step 6, evaluations focus on broader and longer-term questions, such as:

- How has Green Response influenced how emergency responses are designed and delivered?
- Are environmental considerations now routinely included in early response decision-making, and if so, how?
- Has community environmental knowledge been better integrated into assessments and planning? What examples exist?
- How have organisational systems, tools and training been updated and applied?
- Has there been a shift in mindset, ownership or institutional culture? If so, how?

Evaluations may draw on:

- Monitoring data collected during responses
- Review of updated tools and procedural documents
- Interviews with staff, volunteers and managers
- Focus group discussions with affected communities
- Observation of practices during subsequent responses

These evaluations do not need to be complex or externally conducted. In many cases, an internally led reflection process, supported by qualitative tools and documentation methods, will be sufficient to understand progress and identify areas for improvement.

TOOL:

Monitoring and Evaluation of Green Response in Emergencies provides example quantitative indicators, qualitative signs of success, guiding questions for reflection and documentation methods. These should be adapted to the NS context.

7B: RESOURCING AND CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINED GREEN RESPONSE

It is critical to plan for financial and HR resources to take the work forward beyond an initial pilot. Without deliberate decisions on resourcing, Green Response risks remaining dependent on individual champions or short-term funding. This planning should focus on how Green Response will be staffed, funded and supported over time, and how this can be embedded into existing systems.

Financial resourcing

National Societies should consider how Green Response in emergencies will be resourced in both the short and longer term. This includes:

- Ensuring that environmental actions are budgeted for when drafting a response plans or operational strategies
- Identifying which costs can be absorbed into existing response budgets (e.g. training, assessments, monitoring) and which may require additional resources
- Exploring how costs can gradually be mainstreamed into core funding, reducing reliance on project-based support, e.g. via a unified planning process.

When planning financially, consider that in many cases environmental actions are cost saving although they may require more up front investment at the start of a response (for example solarisation is much more cost efficient that using diesel generators).

EXAMPLE:

BDRCS's Green Response Policy includes the following: "The Green Response Working Group (GRWG) will actively advocate for the allocation of 5% of each project's budget to support green response initiatives."

Staffing and strengthening and maintaining capacity

How to maintain and continue to build capacity should have been considered in the earlier steps, but needs to be revisited when looking into the future. Consider how responsibility for Green Response in emergencies will be structured going forward once changes to the system have been made. Different models are possible, including:

- A dedicated Green Response or environmental focal point embedded in the response system
- Strengthening and maintaining the capacity of the entire response team to identify and manage environmental dimensions as part of their role
- A hybrid approach, where a focal point provides technical support while responsibility is shared across teams – this is likely to be the most successful.

There is no single correct model. Many National Societies find that their approach evolves over time, starting with a focal point or pilot role and gradually moving towards broader institutional capacity.

Planning should also address how capacity will be built and sustained, including:

- Integrating Green Response into existing training systems for staff and volunteers (e.g. inductions, NDRT training, sectoral training)
- Identifying where deeper technical expertise is needed and how this will be accessed
- Ensuring that knowledge is not lost through staff or volunteer turnover[28]

Partnerships and external support

National Societies should also consider what external support may be needed to sustain Green Response in emergencies, particularly in the early stages. This may include:

- Partner National Societies interested in Green Response
- Donors with environmental or climate priorities
- Technical partners who can provide expertise, mentoring or surge support
- Peer learning and exchange with other National Societies or via the RCRC Movement's Green Response Working Group

7c: Institutional mainstreaming

As outlined at the start of this Guidebook, making emergency response systems more environmentally sustainable and climate smart requires a robust institutional commitment to enhancing the environmental sustainability of the NS. Experience from National Societies show that the more environmental sustainability is integrated across the institution, the smoother and more credible the process of greening emergency response becomes. While many of these broader institutional measures may sit outside the direct scope of the process described in this Guidebook, they play an important enabling role, helping to legitimise, reinforce and sustain Green Response in emergencies.

Other areas for promoting environmental mainstreaming across the organisation include:

- **Setting environment and climate targets under the Climate and Environment Charter** (for NS who have signed the Charter, this can be a precursor to developing an environmental policy.)
- **Developing an environmental or Green Response policy** (see the Environmental Policy Toolkit and example of BDRCS Green Response Policy), which can provide a clear institutional mandate and reference point for integrating environmental considerations into emergency response.
- **Greening logistics and procurement systems** (see Green Logistics Guide) which directly influence the environmental footprint of emergency operations.
- **Promoting behaviour change** to support more sustainable practices among staff, volunteers and affected communities during and beyond emergencies.
- **Greening offices, facilities and operations** (see IFRC Guide: Promoting Internal Environmental Sustainability), helping to reinforce organisational credibility and demonstrate consistency between internal practice and external response.
- **Greening longer-term and non-emergency programming**, which can build experience, capacity and confidence that can later be drawn upon during emergency responses.

28 Institutional mainstreaming can help with this - see 7c.

EXAMPLE:

In parallel with greening their emergency response system, BDRCS developed a Green Response Policy and is currently developing Implementation Guidance to operationalise the Policy. This greatly assisted the process by showing commitment from senior management for Green Response, as well as highlighting the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to reduce environmental impact.

Door to door waste collection van of Gazipur material recovery facility of BDRCS. Photo credit: Md. Uzzal Mia/BDRCS

Feedback and contacts

This Guidance is intended to be updated based on new experience and learning from National Societies. To provide feedback on the guide, or to share case studies or examples that would further strengthen it, please visit Swedish Red Cross Sustainability Platform page on Green Response In Emergencies for contact details. Please also report any inaccuracies or broken hyperlinks.

Tools

The following tools support Green Response in Emergencies process. The can all be found on the Swedish Red Cross Sustainability Platform page on Green Response In Emergencies.

- Key messages for Green Response in Emergencies
- Scoping Questions for Green Response in Emergencies
- Template: Green response working group TOR
- Monitoring and Evaluation of Green Response in Emergencies – example indicators, monitoring framework and approach

Additional Resources

- IFRC Introduction to Green Response
- IFRC Green Response: Environmental Quick Guide
- IFRC Green Logistics Guide
- IFRC Guide to Climate Smart Programming and Operations
- IFRC Green Response Assessment Checklist
- Red Cross Red Crescent Movement Managing Solid Waste: Sector-specific Guidelines
- IFRC Climate Smart & Environmental Considerations in Operations Checklist
- IFRC Environmental Policy Toolkit
- Red Cross Red Crescent Guide To Community Engagement And Accountability
- IFRC Promoting Internal Environmental Sustainability Guide
- Nexus Environmental Assessment tool (NEAT+)
- DG ECHO's Minimum Environmental Requirements for EU funded humanitarian aid operations
- Green Response organisational capacity self-assessment

Annex A:
Green Response in Emergencies: Suggested Actions and Examples

There are many opportunities for integrating community-informed Green Response at all stages of the disaster response continuum. Some suggested actions, including examples, follow below. Note that not all examples will be possible for every context or NS, or at the start of the process of greening the emergency response. The examples are designed to inspire but not to constrain implementation ideas to this list. These are organised by emergency response phase, including preparedness and anticipatory action and are presented alongside an explanation of why the action is important, suggestions of how it could be implemented, and where they exist, examples. These actions can be used as inspiration for steps 3 onwards, but the list is not exhaustive.

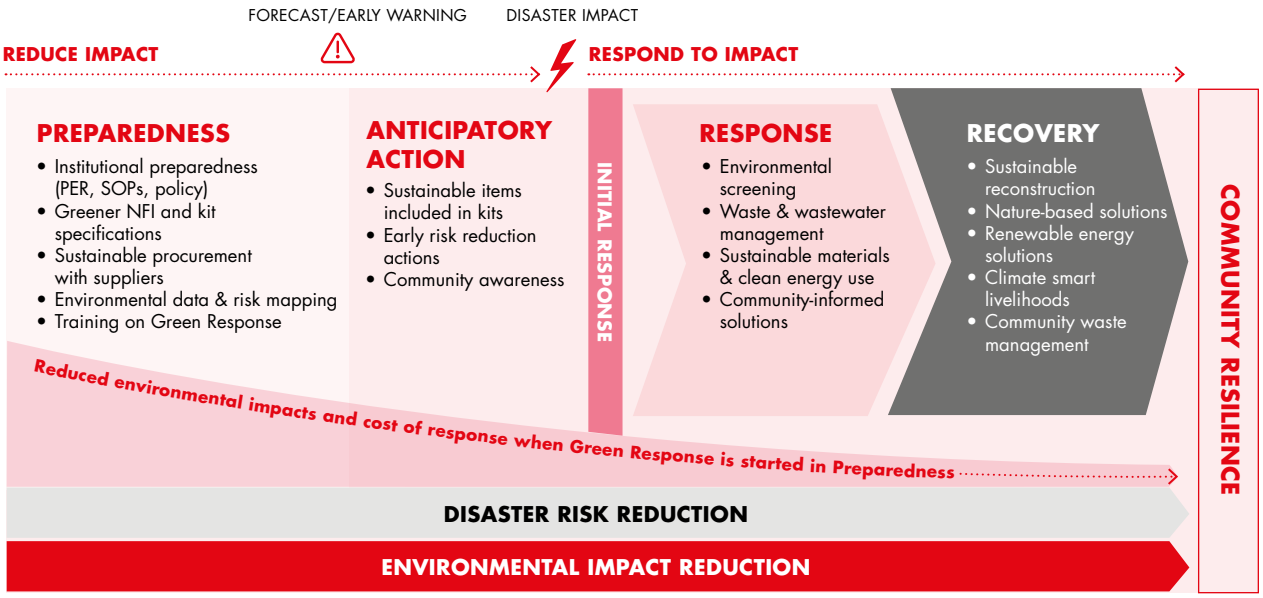
TIP:

Given that emergency response operations have constrained time frames and require rapid decision-making with limited information, it is highly recommended that Green Response processes be fully mainstreamed into the existing emergency response procedures and systems and work alongside them rather than proposing new tools or systems.

Note: *Emergency response phases are not often as clear cut as the timeline presented below. What is done in each phase will depend greatly on the NS, the type of crisis or disaster, and on other external factors.*

KEY CONSIDERATION:

As the response advances over time, so do the opportunities for it to be both more environmentally sustainable and community driven. It is key to try to engage with the community as early as possible to lay the foundations for a quality green response, as the more community participation the more locally appropriate and sustainable the solutions will be.



Preparedness

The preparedness phase is critical for integrating environmental considerations into emergency response from the earliest stages. Actions taken before a crisis enable faster, safer, and more environmentally sustainable decisions when time and information are limited. These actions should be embedded within existing preparedness systems and, wherever possible, implemented in collaboration with communities. The IFRC's Guidance on Considerations for Environment and Climate in Preparedness for Effective Response should also be consulted as a key resource for greener emergency response preparedness.

A. Operational Preparedness

These actions focus on the operational side of preparedness and what should be done in advance to ensure that environmental considerations are ready to be integrated into response operations.

Action 1: Build internal engagement with and awareness of environmental issues among staff and volunteers

Why this matters

Improving environmental outcomes in emergency response requires strong engagement, awareness, and motivation across the organisation. Staff and volunteers at all levels, from senior management to local responders, need to understand how environmental risks interact with humanitarian needs and feel that they have an important role to play in reducing environmental impacts through their work.

How it can be done

- Conduct internal advocacy and awareness-raising sessions, particularly with senior management and key departments, to build buy-in and leadership support. Emphasise the humanitarian and community resilience benefits of Green Response.
- Provide basic environmental awareness sessions for all staff and volunteers involved in emergency response. Motivate participants by emphasising that they can make a difference by reducing personal and professional environmental impact.
- Encourage staff and volunteers to share ideas and participate in decision-making processes related to Green Response.
- Create an environmental or Green Response working group to pool expertise and support the integration of environmental considerations across departments and programmes.

Useful resources

- Key messages for Green Response in Emergencies – for internal advocacy and awareness raising of the importance of Green Response in emergencies
- Green Response Working Group template TOR
- Green Response induction module for all staff and volunteers
- IFRC Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations

IN PRACTICE:

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) spent considerable time on internal advocacy with key department directors, which helped to make Green Response a priority across multiple departments. BDRCS also created a Green Response Working Group that provides technical support to integrate Green Response activities into project design and implementation, with a dedicated allocation of resources reflected in the organisation's Green Response Policy. The Policy also highlights that it is a collective responsibility *"BDRCS staff and volunteers, along with Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners operating in Bangladesh, are responsible for complying with this policy and supporting efforts to maximize the environmental sustainability of BDRCS work."*

The Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) emphasised engaging staff and volunteers in decision-making processes from the outset, encouraging them to share ideas and pilot solutions, thereby increasing motivation, ownership, and commitment to greener approaches.

Action 2: Build technical capacity to integrate environmental considerations into emergency response planning and implementation

Why this matters

In addition to general awareness, specialised technical capacity is required to ensure environmental considerations are consistently understood and effectively applied in emergency response planning, design, and decision-making.

How it can be done

- Deliver targeted Green Response training for key Disaster Management staff and National Disaster Response Team members
- Mainstream environment and climate content into existing emergency response and NDRT trainings, complemented where possible by more in-depth stand-alone sessions
- Ensure training covers links between environmental issues and disaster scenarios, the environmental impacts of response activities, and practical ways to minimise them
- Clarify roles and responsibilities of team members for integrating environmental considerations during response planning and implementation
- Provide training on the use of environmental screening tools and how to apply their results in operational decision-making

IN PRACTICE:

BDRCS integrated a short environmental module into NDRT training, linking environmental risks directly to humanitarian decision-making and volunteer observations during deployment.

Useful resources

- Example of BDRCS NDRT Green Response Training module
- Environmental screening tools for humanitarian response (e.g. NEAT+)
- Guidance on integrating environmental considerations into emergency response planning
- Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre Training Kit
- Green Response Environmental Quick Guide
- Guide to Climate Smart Programming and Operations

Action 3: Identify and prioritise environmental and climate-related risks in disaster-prone areas

Why this matters

Pre-identifying environmental sensitivities, including from communities, allows responders to factor them into early decision-making when primary data is limited, reducing the risk of unintended environmental harm and improving response design.

How it can be done

- Consult environmental organisations, research institutes, and government departments for existing risk information
- If there is longer-term programming where EVCAs are conducted, community risk profile information may already exist
- If the NS has been through the PER process, consult results related to the analysis and planning (point 6) activity, which supports the identification of risk affected branches to focus preparedness efforts on
- Integrate environmental risks into existing risk mapping, hazard analysis, or GIS systems, prioritising the most disaster-prone areas
- Assign a focal point responsible for collecting, managing, and updating environmental risk information. This person can also be responsible for briefing response teams on these environmental issues before deployment (see Initial Response action 4)

Useful resources – for a full list, see section 3a of the Process Guidebook

- Global Shelter Cluster Environmental Country Profiles
- IFRC Country Climate Fact Sheets
- RCRC Climate Centre Country briefs
- National meteorological and environmental agency datasets
- IFRC EVCA guidance and tools
- PER guidance on the IFRC GO Platform

IN PRACTICE:

LRC incorporated environmental risk discussions into community consultations during preparedness activities, helping to identify locally relevant concerns such as waste management challenges and energy access during crises.

Action 4: Update contingency plans to incorporate environment and climate considerations

Why this matters

Emergency response activities can unintentionally cause environmental harm. Anticipating these impacts in advance and integrating them into contingency planning allows mitigation measures to be integrated into planning before the response begins.

How it can be done

Update contingency plans to include:

- Likely environmental impacts associated with planned response modalities (e.g. distributions, shelter materials, site planning, energy use);
- How hazards may exacerbate environmental risks such as contamination, erosion, or ecosystem damage
- Mitigation measures
- Coordinate with technical and environmental actors to validate anticipated risks and feasible mitigation options

Useful resources

- National environmental risk and hazard impact information
- Green Response Quick Guide | IFRC
- See environmental and climate risk information sources listed under Action 3.

Action 5: Develop IEC and communication materials on key environmental risks

Why this matters

Clear and accessible communication helps communities understand environmental hazards and take preventive actions before disasters occur, reducing risk and supporting more sustainable response and recovery.

How it can be done

- Develop IEC materials on priority environmental risks and safer practices identified during preparedness
- Disseminate these materials through preparedness campaigns, anticipatory action, and community networks
- Ensure materials are accessible to all groups, including vulnerable populations
- Align messaging with wider risk communication and CEA approaches

Useful resources

- Red Cross Red Crescent Guide To Community Engagement And Accountability
- Public Awareness and Public Education for Disaster Risk Reduction | IFRC
- PAPE E-Library
- Environment and Climate Change Behaviour change communication messages|IFRC
- Anticipatory Action communication toolkits
- National environmental risk communication materials

BDRCS waste management community awareness raising campaign. Photo credit: Md. Uzzal Mia/BDRCS

Action 6: Develop systems to quickly collect environmental information after disasters

Why this matters

Early integration of environmental data into assessments allows quicker identification of risks such as pollution, natural resource pressure, or waste accumulation that could have a negative impact on communities and undermine response effectiveness.

How it can be done

- Review existing rapid assessment/pre-crisis data assessment tools to identify where an environmental lens can be applied – either through adding questions or through the analysis of the data.
- Add targeted environmental questions where key gaps exist
- Establish a clear process and responsible person for analysing assessment data from an environmental perspective
- Specific environmental screening tools can also be used – to prepare to use these, responders should be trained in their use and how to use the data they generate, working together with any NS Green Response or environmental focal point.

Useful resources

- Green Response assessment checklist | IFRC
- Environmental screening tools for humanitarian response, for example NEAT+

IN PRACTICE:

- **BDRCS** reviewed its pre-crisis assessment tools to ensure environmental issues, such as waste generation and resource pressure, were included.
- **LRC** reviewed its WASH emergency response assessments and integrated questions on waste management, recycling, grey water reuse.

Action 7: Integrate environmental considerations into relief item procurement and distribution systems

Why this matters

Distributions can generate significant waste, emissions, and resource pressure if environmental considerations are not integrated into how items are selected, transported, and used.

How it can be done

- Select items with minimal packaging, higher durability, and lower environmental impact where feasible
- Consider distribution modalities (in-kind, cash, vouchers) that may reduce transport and packaging impacts
- Optimise pre-positioning, distribution and logistics actions to reduce fuel use and emissions
- Provide simple guidance to communities on environmentally responsible use, reuse, and disposal of distributed items

Useful resources

- Green Logistics Guide | IFRC
- Guidance on environmentally sustainable procurement | WREC Coalition
- Procurement | Climate Action Accelerator
- Supplier engagement | Climate Action Accelerator

IN PRACTICE:

Both **BDRCS** and **LRC** have taken concrete steps to green relief items and supply chains. BDRCS reviewed commonly distributed NFIs and began integrating greener alternatives and reduced packaging options within its logistics and procurement processes – e.g. reducing plastic and using jute bags. In Lebanon, LRC focused particularly within the WASH sector, piloting greener procurement approaches such as bamboo-based hygiene kits and other lower-impact items, alongside efforts to secure vendor buy-in for more sustainable materials despite higher costs. These experiences highlighted both the feasibility of greening NFIs in active responses and the practical challenges related to market availability, cost, and supplier engagement.

B. Institutional Preparedness

These actions focus on strengthening organisational systems, policies, and procedures that enable environmental considerations to be systematically integrated into emergency response operations. The list of actions is kept brief here, to avoid duplication with the guidance presented in the Environment and Climate Considerations within the Preparedness for Effective Response mechanism, which goes into more detail on the steps to integrate environment and climate into institutional Preparedness.

Action 8: Integrate Green Response into DM strategies and policies

Why this matters

Embedding environmental and climate considerations into DM strategies and policies ensures they are consistently considered across the response continuum and shows the NS's commitment to Green Response.

How it can be done

- Include commitments to environmental sustainability and climate risk management within DM strategies, policies, and SOPs
- Reference principles such as of using climate information across timescales in designing/adjusting activities, responsible waste management, clean energy use, sustainable resource management, and sustainability in supply chains
- Ensure policies acknowledge environmental integration across all disaster response phases
- Align commitments with broader NS climate and environmental policies or strategies
- Link to relevant environmental and climate legislation and ensure any relevant legislation is incorporated into response planning e.g. around environmental impact assessments, single use plastic, solid waste management or natural resource use.

Useful resources

- Environmental Policy Toolkit (IFRC)
- NS environmental or climate action strategies and policies
- Environment and Climate Considerations within the Preparedness for Effective Response mechanism goes into more detail on the steps to integrate environment and climate into DRM Strategy, Policy and laws.

IN PRACTICE:

Four NS in the Americas have carried out a study to identify the different laws and regulations that require the NS to integrate climate and environmental actions.

Action 9: Integrate environmental considerations into SOPs, reporting, and PER processes

Why this matters

Mainstreaming environmental considerations into existing procedures and systems ensures they are routinely considered during operations and avoids creating parallel or standalone processes.

How it can be done

- Update emergency response SOPs to include environmental considerations
- Include environmental aspects within SitReps, evaluations, and lessons learned processes
- If the NS has been through the PER process, coordinate with PER focal points to integrate environmental dimensions into this process or find out what has already been done
- Ensure monitoring and reporting systems capture environmental impacts and improvements in response operations

Useful resources

- Environment and Climate Considerations within the Preparedness for Effective Response
- SitRep and reporting templates incorporating cross-cutting issues
- Green Response monitoring and evaluation guidance
- Climate-Smart Programming and Operations Guide | IFRC

Anticipatory Action

Anticipatory Action refers to early actions taken in the days or weeks before an expected hazard or crisis, based on credible forecasts and early warning, to protect people and reduce impacts. Integrating environmental considerations in preparatory readiness activities helps ensure that early actions both reduce immediate risk and avoid creating environmental harm that could undermine recovery.

Action 1: Include environmental risks in anticipatory risk analysis and scenario planning

Why this matters

Considering environmental risks (e.g. pollution, ecosystem degradation, natural resource pressure) alongside hazard impacts allows anticipatory actions to reduce humanitarian and environmental harm.

How it can be done

- Integrate environmental risks into risk analysis and scenario planning
- Identify potential secondary environmental impacts linked to expected hazards
- Use pre-existing environmental risk information gathered during preparedness
- Build environmental prompts into anticipatory action mechanisms such as Early Action Protocols and planning discussions

Useful resources

- Forecast based financing module - including chapter 5 on collecting risk, early action, and impact data)
- IFRC Anticipatory Action guidance and Early Action Protocol (EAP) resources and planning guidance, including those on the Anticipation Hub's Knowledge Hub
- Environment and Climate Country Profile Knowledge Hubs and national environmental risk and hazard impact information and datasets (for a full list, see section 3a of the Process Guidebook)
- Impact-based forecasting information from national meteorological services
- Existing EVCA reports
- Climate-Smart Programming and Operations Guide | IFRC

IN PRACTICE:

Ahead of forecasted extreme heat in 2025, **BDRCS** activated anticipatory actions to reduce the impacts of the heatwave. During the planning phase, the Green Response (GR) focal point participated in coordination meetings and identified opportunities to reduce environmental impact while improving efficiency. Instead of large-scale distribution of bottled water, the team prioritised community-managed water solutions. Existing community facilities were used as cooling centres, avoiding the need for additional temporary structures. Awareness activities were adapted by reducing reliance on printed materials and using digital channels where feasible, and by managing the use of loudspeakers to minimise noise pollution. These adjustments enabled a more community-based and environmentally sustainable approach, while also reducing operational costs and logistics requirements.

Action 2: Link anticipatory cash and voucher assistance to environmentally safer choices

Why this matters

Cash and voucher assistance can unintentionally increase environmental harm if purchases contribute to unsustainable resource use or pollution from waste.

How it can be done

- Provide guidance alongside cash on safer and more sustainable purchasing options
- Discourage purchases that may increase environmental or health risks (e.g. hazardous chemicals)
- Promote locally appropriate, efficient, or lower-impact products where relevant
- Coordinate with market assessments to understand the environmental implications of common purchases

Useful resources

- Market assessment tools incorporating environmental considerations
- CVA, the Environment and Climate Change |CALP Network
- Review of environmental impact of Cash Based Interventions and in-kind assistance and Environmental Checklist | UNHCR
- Chapter 7.1 on cash-based early actions in the Forecast Based Financing Manual

IN PRACTICE:

LRC designed a Cash and Voucher Assistance Flyer on eco-friendly purchases to use with distributions (available in English and Arabic)

wetlands, steep slopes
- Prepare site plans with drainage and waste management in advance
- Pre-agree with authorities on approved land use and environmental constraints
- Pre-position reusable or modular infrastructure materials (e.g. shelter kits, latrine slabs)
- Develop decommissioning/reuse plans before deployment

Useful resources

- Shelter Adaptations to Extreme Heat | Global Shelter Land and Site Coordination Cluster
- Guide to Climate Smart Programming and Operations | IFRC
- Guidance-Note-12-Programatic-Response-to-Extreme-Heat | Shelter Cluster
- Energy-efficient and renewable energy options for humanitarian operations
- Environmental screening tools for infrastructure and site-level actions

Action 3: Implement early protective actions using environmentally sustainable options

Why this matters

Protective actions taken before hazards (e.g. reinforcement of homes and infrastructure, establishment of safe spaces or cooling centres) can reduce long-term environmental impacts if materials and methods are carefully selected.

How it can be done

- Promote reinforcement and preparedness measures using safer and more sustainable materials where feasible
- Establish facilities such as cooling centres using energy-efficient solutions
- Consider renewable or low-emission energy options where operationally feasible
- Ensure temporary infrastructure does not damage ecosystems or create long-term waste issues
  - Pre-identify safe sites outside flood zones,

Action 4: Integrate environmental considerations into anticipatory action training and readiness activities

Why this matters

Training responders and community actors on environmental considerations ensures that early actions reduce risk without creating unintended environmental impacts.

SEE PREPAREDNESS ACTION 1

Initial Response (0–72 hours)

In the first 72 hours of an emergency response, opportunities for extensive environmental analysis or community engagement are limited. The priority is therefore to use pre-existing environmental data and information gathered in the preparedness or AA phases, integrate environmental considerations into early decision-making, and begin gathering key observations that can inform greener adjustments and more detailed interventions later on.

Action 1: Use existing environmental information to inform early response decision-making

Why this matters

Early decisions on response design, modalities, and locations can have significant environmental implications. Using pre-existing environmental and climate information helps avoid unintended harm and sets the foundation for greener adjustments later in the response.

How it can be done

- Review environmental risk information gathered during preparedness and anticipatory action, for example through pre-crisis data collection, data from longer term programming or EVCAs etc.
- Analyse secondary data (e.g. weather forecasts, environmental context and sensitivities) alongside impact data
- Highlight key environmental risks during initial planning and coordination discussions
- Flag any major environmental constraints that may influence operational choices

Useful resources

- Environment and Climate Country Profiles and national environmental risk datasets - for a full list of possible resources, see section 3a of the Process Guidebook
- National meteorological and environmental agency information
- Preparedness environmental risk mapping and GIS systems
- Green Response assessment checklist | IFRC

Action 2: Integrate environmental considerations into initial rapid assessments and information collection

Why this matters

Even limited early information on environmental issues (e.g. waste accumulation, contamination risks, resource pressure) can help identify priority concerns and guide safer operational choices.

How it can be done

- Include a small number of environmental prompts or questions within rapid assessment tools where feasible
- Ensure assessment findings are analysed through an environmental lens alongside humanitarian needs
- Capture environmental information in reporting systems (e.g. assessments, SitReps)
- Flag key environmental risks requiring deeper analysis in subsequent phases

Useful resources

- Green Response assessment checklist | IFRC
- Rapid Environmental Assessment Tool (REA) – although too early to conduct a full REA, the tool provides useful guidance on how to analyse the potential environmental impacts that can arise from the basic needs of affected populations post-crisis (e.g. increased resource demand because of lack of shelter and water)
- Environmental screening checklists for emergency response
- Standard reporting templates incorporating cross-cutting issues

Action 3: Include environmental focal points and expertise in early coordination and decision-making

Why this matters

Early inclusion of environmental perspectives in coordination and planning helps ensure that key risks are considered from the outset rather than addressed only after activities are already underway.

How it can be done

- Involve Green Response or environmental focal points in early response planning meetings and ensure that they, or someone in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), have clear responsibility for integrating Green Response considerations within the EOC
- Integrate this responsibility into the job description of the Green Response or environmental focal point of the NS
- Ensure environmental considerations are discussed alongside other cross-cutting issues
- Link environmental focal points with technical sectors (e.g. shelter, WASH, logistics) to inform early decisions
- Integrate environment into a Disaster Management SOP, mandate it in an Environmental Policy, and include sections in SitReps and SOPs - these will help to make this action a reality

Useful resources DM SOPs

- Environmental Policies
- GR focal point job descriptions

IN PRACTICE:

BDRCS' Green Response Policy mandates a GR focal point to be allocated to response interventions. "There will…be an assigned green response focal point for green response interventions."

Action 4: Brief response teams on the environmental context and their role in identifying risks

Why this matters

Response teams deployed in the first 72 hours are the first to observe emerging environmental issues. Early and clear briefings ensure they recognise these risks and communicate them quickly to inform decision-making.

How it can be done

- Include a short briefing on key environmental risks and sensitivities in deployment orientations
- Clarify that responders should actively look out for emerging environmental issues during field activities
- Establish simple channels for teams to quickly feed back environmental concerns to coordination and planning teams
- Reinforce that these observations complement, but do not replace, formal assessment processes

IN PRACTICE:

BDRCS is introducing a new system where NDRT volunteers will be briefed before deployment on key environmental issues and asked to report observations from the field (e.g. waste build-up, damaged ecosystems, resource pressures), which will then be fed back into operational planning.

Useful resources

NDRT orientation and deployment briefing templates

- Field observation and reporting guidance

Response (4–90 days)

During this phase, there are greater opportunities to collect primary data, engage meaningfully with affected communities, and adjust response activities based on environmental risks and feedback. Decisions taken during this period can significantly influence both the environmental footprint of the operation and the sustainability of recovery outcomes.

Action 1: Integrate environmental questions and analysis into ongoing needs assessments

Why this matters

As the response progresses, asking more environmental questions and analysing assessment data through an environmental lens helps identify risks such as pollution, resource pressure, and environmental health concerns that may affect both people and operations.

How it can be done

- Add targeted environmental questions to ongoing or sectoral needs assessments
- Analyse needs assessment findings to identify priority environmental risks and mitigation measures
- Consult environmental technical experts to validate findings
- Use climate and weather information to understand evolving environmental risks in operational areas
- As specific geographical areas of intervention are identified and programming strategies are being devised, using environmental screening tools to identify the environmental sensitivities of those areas, and develop mitigation strategies to address the most serious potential environmental impacts

Useful resources

- Green Response assessment checklist | IFRC
- Environmental screening tools for humanitarian activities, such as the NEAT+ Environmental Screening Tool or the Multi-sectoral matrix of environmental risk analysis and mitigation measures (MERA)
- National meteorological and environmental agency information

Action 2: Use assessment findings to integrate environmental considerations into operational planning and decision-making

Why this matters

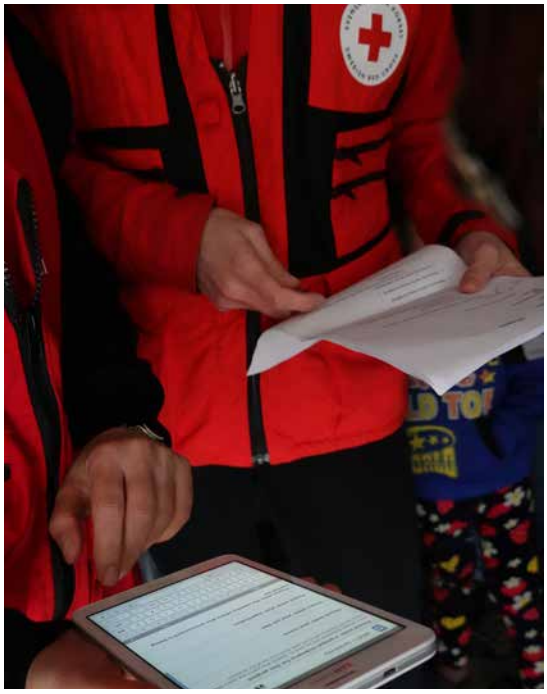
Embedding environmental considerations into routine planning processes ensures they are consistently considered rather than addressed only on an ad hoc basis.

How it can be done

- Use the findings of environmental screenings or assessments to plan mitigation activities within the response, or adjust response activities.
- Include environmental considerations in planning meetings and operational reviews
- Ensure Green Response or environmental focal points contribute to key decisions
- Consider environmental trade-offs when prioritising response options

Useful resources

- Internal planning and review templates incorporating cross-cutting issues
- Guidance on integrating environmental considerations into humanitarian programming



Lebanese Red Cross and Swedish Red Cross using the NEAT+ for an environmental screening during an emergency response. Photo credit: Mandy George/SRC

Action 3: Engage affected communities on environmental concerns and greener solutions

Why this matters

Communities can identify environmental risks, coping strategies, and locally appropriate solutions that external responders may overlook, helping ensure interventions are accepted and sustainable. Opportunities for more meaningful participation will increase over time, as this graphic illustrates:

How it can be done

- Consult communities on environmental concerns linked to planned activities
- Share assessment results and proposed green response adjustments transparently
- Use feedback and complaints mechanisms to capture environmental issues
- Co-design adjustments to activities to reduce environmental risks where feasible

Useful resources

- Red Cross Red Crescent Guide To Community Engagement And Accountability – includes resources and tools for community participation and feedback.
- Participatory consultation and co-design tools

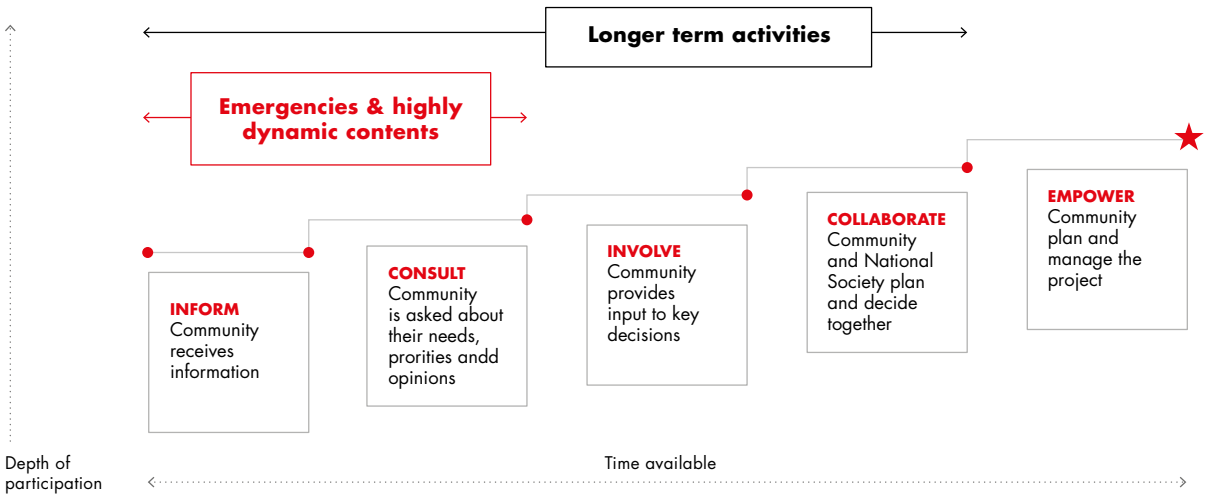
IN PRACTICE:

LRC noticed during a response that large quantities of food were going to waste. Speaking to displaced community members in Informal Tented Settlements, they understood why this was, and made adjustments to how the food was distributed, leading to less waste, and increased satisfaction among affected communities.

LRC conducted information sessions alongside the distribution of greener hygiene kits, to increase awareness and acceptance. They also later adjusted the types of items in the kits based on community feedback.

Tree planting next to river in Sudan to stabilize river banks. Photo credit: Sudanese Red Crescent Society.

LEVELS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION



Based on IAP2's Participation Spectrum, 2014

Action 4: Adapt response activities to reduce negative environmental impacts during implementation

Why this matters

Adjusting how response activities are designed and delivered during implementation can significantly reduce environmental harm (e.g. waste, emissions, natural resource pressure) while maintaining or improving humanitarian outcomes.

How it can be done

- Modify NFIs to prioritise durability, repairability, reusability and reduced packaging where feasible. Note: this needs to start in the preparedness phase to be possible in the very early parts of the response
- Select materials and technologies that lower environmental impacts (e.g. renewable or energy-efficient solutions, sustainable shelter materials)
- Implement practical measures to reduce and manage waste from distributions and operations
- Modify site planning, construction, or service delivery approaches to minimise environmental degradation and resource use
- Compare short-term quick-fix options with more sustainable alternatives and document key trade-offs in decision-making
- Promote efficient use of water, energy, and materials in operational facilities, and encourage repair, reuse, and recycling where locally feasible
- Coordinate with local authorities and actors to address waste management and other environmental impacts during implementation

Useful resources

- Green Logistics Guide | IFRC
- Guidance on environmentally sustainable procurement | WREC Coalition
- Environmental Quick Guide | IFRC

Action 5: Monitor environmental aspects of the response and adapt activities accordingly

Why this matters

Monitoring environmental aspects of response activities helps identify unintended impacts and assess whether greener adjustments are improving operational and environmental outcomes.

How it can be done

- Integrate a small number of practical environmental indicators into existing response monitoring and reporting systems
- Use field observations and community feedback to identify emerging environmental risks and impacts
- Regularly review findings and adapt activities where feasible to reduce negative environmental impacts

Useful resources

For detailed guidance on indicators and monitoring approaches see:

- *Step 6b: Operational Green Response monitoring*
- *Step 7a: Outcome and success measurement in the Process Guidance*

Egyptian Red Crescent Society emergency distribution using paper not plastic bags. Photo credit: Egyptian Red Crescent Society