

NRC Environmental Minimum Standards



Photo: Abdulkadir/NRC

Minimum standards	Red	Orange	Green	What is needed to achieve this	Notes
	1st phase of standard	If also meeting red, going beyond the 1st phase	If also meeting red and orange: activities to meet full standard		
1. Environmental issues are systematically integrated in the programme management tools.	Include environmental considerations in assessments and situation analysis (e.g. environmental stresses around camp location, existing water sources and water table levels).	Include environmental considerations in monitoring tools and evaluation frameworks.	Conduct a complete NEAT+ assessment (urban or rural) to identify and help prioritise environmental issues.	Training and awareness raising of NRC staff on environment in humanitarian issues. Support in greening existing tools.	Common across the core competency. General consensus that this can be taken forward, and the feasibility of this. Note that each four modules of the NEAT+ takes approx 1 hour to do.
2. Waste generated as part of NFI distributions is reduced and managed adequately.	Organise, at distribution sites, collection of packaging waste for safe disposal.	When possible, don't buy items packaged in single use plastic (including pre-positioned items).	When possible, assess market opportunities for the reuse/recycling/repurposing and choose packaging accordingly.	Advocacy with donors as this will incur additional costs (especially recycling) and advocacy with clusters and core pipeline when NRC does not purchase. Work with logistics to ensure the packaging is considered in the weighing of suppliers (this links to the next EMS), plus awareness/training of staff.	Not possible when NRC is not the direct purchaser.
	Consider the lifespan of items distributed as a selection criteria to avoid additional waste (avoid items that degrade quickly).	Choose recyclable or reusable NFIs when appropriate.	When possible, assess market opportunities for the reuse /recycling /repurposing and choose packaging accordingly.	Advocacy with donors + include this in budgets as this will incur additional costs + work with suppliers to increase the quality of items + awareness/training of staff.	
3. NRC's procurement include environmental considerations.	Include environmentally sustainable factors in specifications for materials and packaging purchase.	Apply a 5-10% environmental criteria when assessing suppliers/vendors/contractors in bid analysis.	Market support programming: provide support to suppliers/vendors/contractors to adopt an environmental approach or advocate for greener processes if the procurement is subcontracted.	Revision of internal procurement documents (BoQ, purchase orders, contracts, etc.). Provide guidance and examples of sustainable specifications and criteria.	This is a 1st step, many other issues to consider with regards to logistics and supply chain. Note that the Orange standard is aligned with DG ECHO's new environmental requirements.
4. Include environmental considerations in CVA and market-based approaches.	Include environmental considerations in situation analysis which informs modality selection for new programmes (e.g. availability of environmental friendly products that can be incentivised, risk of overexploitation of local natural resources).	Include environmental considerations in CVA and market-based approaches (including modality decision-making tool, markets analysis tools) (e.g. household energy needs calculated in the MEB, lifespan of purchased items assessed in post distribution monitoring).	Promote sustainable and environment conscious practices (e.g. waste disposal, purchase of plastic free items, awareness of energy efficiency and conservation practices, etc.) communicated to a range of different stakeholders, including beneficiaries.	Green existing CVA tool and promote (or adapt) the UNHCR CVA tool to help mainstream environmental issues + link up with the CALP environmental group.	Using vouchers to encourage households to buy improved stoves or firewood saving cookers has been known to help reduce deforestation in a number of contexts.
5. Distribute sustainable food products and items.	Prioritise locally produced and sourced food for distribution.	Prioritise sustainable/certified food items (e.g. certified palm oil).	Set a minimum % of locally (country or region depending on the context) sourced food and sustainable/certified food items in all food distribution programmes.	Identify and focus on food items which have high sustainability risks. Further investigation and validation may be needed for each certification accepted by NRC.	Certifications on sustainable food production can be hard to verify.
6. Household energy issues are considered in ER responses.	Encourage simple energy saving cooking techniques for distributed food (pre-soaking, sheltering cooking fires).		Consider distributing fuel efficient cookstoves if the context, usages and situation allow for it, along with behaviour change activities as an inherent part of the project.	Focus on behaviour change is needed, awareness raising/training on how to use these new energy efficient items.	
7. Sanitation activities have limited impact on soil and water contamination.	Minimum distance (30 metres by rule of thumb) between latrines and water sources is respected and the bottom of pits should be at least 1.5 metres above the groundwater table (Sphere standard 3 on excreta management).	Provide awareness to contractors on proper dislodging procedures and dangers of contamination, plus monitor where contractors desludge faecal matters to ensure that it is done in official site.		Include these considerations in contracts.	
8. The environmental impact of water supply is reduced.	Prioritise sustainable and more environmentally friendly water supply options before water trucking.	Include environmental specifications in water trucking tender selection (e.g. suitability of water source, etc.).			
	Prioritise rehabilitation over new construction where possible.				
	Carry out pumping tests to determine sustainable pumping rates for boreholes.	Consider including educational components for sustainable resource management like 4Rs (planning software activities with hardware constructions).			
9. The sustainability of shelter and WASH materials is considered.	When possible, avoid the use of unsustainable materials in shelter and infrastructure construction projects (e.g. fired bricks, low quality plastic sheeting).	When possible, prioritise the use of reused or repurposed materials adapted to the local context (e.g. second-hand materials, repurposed debris).		Support from shelter/WASH advisers in decision making, include these considerations in contracts (e.g. certificate of origins, implement verification methodology) include in the BoQ both for CVA and in kind, etc. Advocacy with donors could also be considered here if the choice of sustainable solutions incurs additional costs.	
10. Water saving techniques are applied.	Consider water saving technologies in shelters (e.g. water taps, showers, dual flush, rain water harvesting).	Grey water use activities are promoted (garden irrigation, toilet flushing, etc.).			

Minimum standards	Red	Orange	Green	What is needed to achieve this	Notes
	1st phase of standard	If also meeting red, going beyond the 1st phase	If also meeting red and orange: activities to meet full standard		
1. Environmental issues are systematically integrated in the programme management tools.	Include environmental considerations in initial situation analysis tools and in assessments (e.g. environmental stresses, local energy needs).	Systematically include environmental considerations in monitoring, reporting tools and evaluation frameworks.	Conduct a complete NEAT+ assessment (urban or rural) to identify and help prioritise environmental issues.	Training and awareness raising of NRC staff on environment in humanitarian issues. Support in greening existing tools.	Common across the core competency. General consensus that this can be taken forward, and the feasibility of this. Note that each four modules of the NEAT+ takes approx 1 hour to do.
		Include at least one environmental indicator in programme logical frameworks (eg. number of households benefiting from fuel efficient cookstoves).	Include different environmental indicators in logical frameworks and integrate environmental questions in quality assessment tools.	Draw up a list of environmental indicators adapted to NRC that teams could pick from.	
2. Waste generated as part of NFI distributions is reduced and managed adequately.	Organise, at distribution sites, collection of packaging waste for safe disposal.	When possible, don't buy items packaged in single use plastic (including pre-positioned items).	When possible, assess market opportunities for the reuse/recycling/repurposing and choose packaging accordingly.	Advocacy with donors as this will incur additional costs (especially recycling). Work with logistics to ensure the packaging is considered in the weighing of suppliers (this links to the next EMS), plus awareness/training of staff.	Common to all core competencies.
	Consider the lifespan of items distributed as a selection criteria to avoid additional waste (avoid items that degrade quickly).	Choose recyclable or reusable NFIs when appropriate.	When possible, assess market opportunities for the reuse/recycling/repurposing and choose packaging accordingly.	Advocacy with donors + include this in budgets as this will incur additional costs + work with suppliers to increase the quality of items + awareness/training of staff.	
3. NRC's procurement include environmental considerations.	Include environmentally sustainable factors in specifications for materials and packaging purchase.	Apply a 5-10% environmental criteria when assessing suppliers/vendors/contractors in bid analysis.	Market support programming: provide support to suppliers/vendors/contractors to adopt an environmental approach or advocate for greener processes if the procurement is subcontracted.	Revision of internal procurement documents (BoQ, purchase orders, contracts, etc.). Provide guidance and examples of sustainable specifications and criteria.	Common to all core competencies. This is a 1st step, many other issues to consider with regards to logistics and supply chain.
4. Include environmental considerations in market-based approaches including CVA.	Include environmental considerations in situation analysis which informs modality selection for new programmes (e.g. availability of environmental friendly products that can be incentivised, risk of overexploitation of local natural resources).	Include environmental considerations in the usage of CVA and markets-based approaches tools (including modality decision-making tool, markets analysis tools) (e.g. household energy needs calculated in the MEB, lifespan of purchased items assessed in post distribution monitoring).	Promote sustainable and environment conscious practices (e.g. waste disposal, purchase of plastic free items, awareness of energy efficiency and conservation practices, etc.) communicated to a range of different stakeholders, including beneficiaries.	Green existing CVA tool and promote (or adapt) the UNHCR CVA tool to help mainstream environmental issues + link up with the CALP environmental group.	Common to all core competencies. Note that using vouchers to encourage households to buy improved stoves or firewood saving cookers has been known to help reduce deforestation in a number of contexts.
5. Distribute sustainable food items and promote sustainable cooking techniques.	Encourage simple energy saving cooking techniques for distributed food (pre-soaking, sheltering cooking fires).	Select food for distribution that doesn't require large quantities of water and that is adapted to local usage and preferences.	Consider distributing fuel efficient cookstoves if the context, usages and situation allow for it, along with behaviour change activities as an inherent part of the project.		
	Prioritise locally produced and sourced food for distribution.	Prioritise sustainable/certified food items (e.g. certified palm oil).	Set a minimum % of locally (country or region depending on the context) sourced food and sustainable/certified food items in all food distribution programmes.	Identify and focus on food items which have high sustainability risks - for the last 2.	
6. Avoid supporting negative agricultural and food production practices and promote climate smart agriculture.	Limit or avoid support to environmentally damaging activities (e.g. pesticides, chemical fertiliser, GMO use, intensive farming).	Introduce principles of climate smart agriculture in activities and in farmers training (e.g. rainwater harvesting techniques, drought resistant seeds, systems favouring complementarities between forestry, land cultivation, livestock and fisheries, etc.).	Apply principles of climate smart agriculture using demonstration plots and provide training on sustainable farming practices.	Internal capacity building on climate smart agriculture and agro-ecology and awareness raising of staff.	
	Ensure basic needs are met to avoid resorting to environmentally negative coping strategies.		Support activities linked with the restoration of degraded environments.	Linkages with other core competency programmes is essential to ensure basic needs are met.	
7. Support livelihoods activities that have a positive impact on the environment.	Avoid supporting businesses which have environmentally damaging practices (e.g. charcoal production).	Systematically analyse environmental impact when choosing implementation approach and include environmental considerations in market assessments (e.g. availability of sustainably produced items), and in the selection of partners and businesses (e.g. extra points given to companies who include environmental considerations in their business plans).	Give priority to activities which can have a positive impact on the environment (e.g. waste valorisation/construction of environmentally friendly materials, fuel-efficient stoves or biodigesters, production of organic fertilisers, stand-alone solar systems for battery charging as an IGA, etc.).	Green market assessment tools, include environmental considerations in grant review meetings.	
	Include environmental awareness raising in business management education and self employment trainings.	Propose specific environmental training for beneficiaries/partners.			

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	1st phase of standard	If also meeting red, going beyond the 1st phase	If also meeting red and orange: activities to meet full standard		
1. Environmental issues are systematically integrated in the programme management tools.	Include environmental considerations in situation analysis and assessment tools (e.g. energy needs in assessment tools, environmentally friendly items in market assessment, environmental issues are considered in camps or settlement locations).	Include environmental considerations in monitoring and reporting tools and evaluation frameworks.	Conduct a complete NEAT+ assessment (urban or rural) to identify and help prioritise environmental issues.	Training and awareness raising of NRC staff on environment in humanitarian issues. Support in greening existing tools.	Common across the core competency.
		Include at least one environmental indicator in the logical frame.	Include multiple environmental indicators in logical frameworks and integrate environmental questions in quality assessment tools and processes.	Draw a list of environmental indicators adapted to NRC that teams could pick from.	
2. Waste generated as part of NFI distributions is reduced and managed adequately.	Organise, at distribution sites, collection of packaging waste for safe disposal.	When possible, don't buy items packaged in single use plastic (including pre-positioned items).	When possible, assess market opportunities for the reuse/recycling / repurposing of packaging waste and choose packaging accordingly.	Advocacy with donors as this will incur additional costs (especially recycling). Work with logistics to ensure the packaging is considered in the weighing of suppliers (this links to the next EMS), plus awareness/training of staff.	Common across the core competency.
	Consider the lifespan of items distributed as a selection criteria to avoid additional waste (avoid items that degrade quickly).	Choose NFIs with a long life span or ones which are recyclable or reusable when appropriate.	When possible, assess market opportunities for the reuse/recycling/ repurposing and choose items accordingly.	Advocacy with donors + include this in budgets as this will incur additional costs + work with suppliers to increase the quality of items + awareness/training of staff.	
3. NRC's procurement include environmental considerations.	Include environmentally sustainable factors in specifications for materials and packaging purchase.	Apply a 5-10% environmental criteria when assessing suppliers/ vendors/contractors in bid analysis.	Market support programming: provide support to suppliers/vendors/ contractors to adopt an environmental approach or advocate for greener processes if the procurement is subcontracted.	Revision of internal procurement documents (BoQ, purchase orders, contracts, etc.). Provide guidance and examples of sustainable specifications and criteria.	This is a 1st step, many other issues to consider with regards to logistics and supply chain.
4. Include environmental considerations in CVA and market-based approaches.	Include environmental considerations in situation analysis which informs modality selection for new programmes (e.g. availability of environmental friendly products that can be incentivised, risk of overexploitation of local natural resources).	Include environmental considerations in the usage of CVA and markets-based approaches tools (including modality decision-making tool, markets analysis tools) (e.g. household energy needs calculated in the MEB, lifespan of purchased items assessed in post distribution monitoring).	Promote sustainable and environment conscious practices (e.g. waste disposal, purchase of plastic free items, awareness of energy efficiency and conservation practices, etc.) communicated to a range of different stakeholders, including beneficiaries.	Green existing CVA tool and promote (or adapt) the UNHCR CVA tool to help mainstream environmental issues + link up with the CALP environmental group. Support country offices to green existing tools/ guidance/awareness raising/training of staff.	Using vouchers to encourage households to buy improved stoves or firewood saving cookers has been known to help reduce deforestation in a number of contexts.
5. Household energy issues are considered systematically in shelter and settlement projects.	Map out to better understand local energy needs and solutions.	Build on the mapping, incentivise energy efficiency through savings (fuel, electricity, etc.) and promote when appropriate a culture of energy efficiency.	Systematically provide qualitative and durable energy efficient items for NRC's beneficiaries (e.g. cooking/lighting) along with behaviour change activities as an inherent part of the project.	Training on how to analyse and apply the findings and support in developing energy assessment questions.	
	Systematically consider basic energy efficiency issues in shelter rehabilitation/upgrades (e.g. shading, properties of construction materials).	Systematically consider integrated energy efficiency issues in shelter rehabilitation/upgrades (e.g. thermal comfort through passive approaches).	Promote innovation in discovering new sustainable and energy-efficient shelters materials (e.g. recycling shelter insulation materials).	Training and tech support on thermal/climatic design applicable to the region.	
6. The sustainability of shelter and settlement options is considered.	Prioritise repair, rehabilitation and cash* for shelter or rental options before new construction.	Promote the use of vernacular/local shelter typologies if sustainable.	Promote innovation in investigating market-based approaches and discovering new sustainable and energy-efficient shelters materials (e.g. recycled shelter insulation).	A cost-benefit analysis is needed in Orange or Green. A simple one can be done in Red based on durability of materials versus cost and environmental impact. Orange: analyse the vernacular architecture or get support on this.	*see also CVA standard.
7. The sustainability of shelter materials is considered.	When possible, avoid the use of unsustainable materials in shelter and infrastructure construction projects (e.g. asphalt, hard wood, fired bricks).	When possible, prioritise reused or repurposed materials adapted to the local context (e.g. second-hand materials, repurposed debris or timber).	Consider the various environmental impacts of sustainable materials in order to choose the option with the least impact on the environment, while maintaining minimum shelter assistance standards.	NRC needs to define what a minimum support package is first so that level of support is not reduced to be more sustainable. Support from shelter advisers in decision making, use of the SMAC tool; work with procurement to improve specifications, include these considerations in contracts (e.g. certificate of origins, implement verification methodology) include in the BoQ both for CVA and in kind, etc. Advocacy with donors could also be considered here if the choice of sustainable solutions incurs additional costs.	

Minimum standards	Red	Orange	Green	What is needed to achieve this	Notes
	1st phase of standard	If also meeting red, going beyond the 1st phase	If also meeting red and orange: activities to meet full standard		
1. Environmental issues are systematically integrated in programme management tools.	Include environmental considerations in initial situation analysis tools and in assessments (e.g. hydric stress zones, natural reserves).	Systematically include environmental considerations in monitoring tools and evaluation frameworks.	Conduct a complete NEAT+ assessment (urban or rural) to identify and help prioritise environmental issues.	Training and awareness raising of NRC staff on environment in humanitarian issues. Support in greening existing tools.	Common across the core competency. General consensus that this can be taken forward, and the feasibility of this. Note that each four modules of the NEAT+ takes approx 1 hour to do.
		Include at least one environmental indicator in programme logical framework (e.g. number of items distributed without single use plastics).	Include different environmental indicators in logical frameworks and integrate environmental questions in quality assessment tools and processes.		
2. Waste generated as part of NFI distributions is reduced and managed adequately.	Organise, at distribution sites, collection of packaging waste for safe disposal.	When possible, don't buy items packaged in single use plastic (including pre-positioned items).	When possible, assess market opportunities for the reuse/recycling/repurposing and choose packaging accordingly.	Advocacy with donors as this will incur additional costs (especially recycling). Work with logistics to ensure the packaging is considered in the weighing of suppliers (this links to the next EMS), plus awareness/training of staff.	
	Consider the lifespan of items distributed as a selection criteria to avoid additional waste (avoid items that degrade quickly).	Choose recyclable or reusable NFIs when appropriate.	When possible, assess market opportunities for the reuse/recycling/repurposing and choose packaging accordingly.	Advocacy with donors + include this in budgets as this will incur additional costs + work with suppliers to increase the quality of items + awareness/training of staff.	
3. NRC's procurement include environmental considerations.	Include environmentally sustainable factors in specifications for materials and packaging purchase.	Apply a 5-10% environmental criteria when assessing suppliers/vendors/contractors in bid analysis.	Market support programming: provide support to suppliers/vendors/contractors to adopt an environmental approach or advocate for greener processes if the procurement is subcontracted.	Revision of internal procurement documents (BoQ, purchase orders, contracts, etc.). Provide guidance and examples of sustainable specifications and criteria.	This is a 1st step, many other issues to consider with regards to logistics and supply chain. Note that the Orange standard is aligned with DG ECHO's new environmental requirements.
4. Include environmental considerations in CVA and market-based approaches.	Include environmental considerations in situation analysis which informs modality selection for new programmes (e.g. availability of environmental friendly products that can be incentivised, risk of overexploitation of local natural resources).	Include environmental considerations in the usage of CVA and markets-based approaches tools (including modality decision-making tool, markets analysis tools) (e.g. household energy needs calculated in the MEB, lifespan of purchased items assessed in post distribution monitoring).	Promote sustainable and environment conscious practices (e.g. waste disposal, purchase of plastic free items, awareness of energy efficiency and conservation practices, etc.) communicated to a range of different stakeholders, including beneficiaries.		
5. Sanitation activities have limited environmental impact on soil and water contamination.	Minimum distance (30 metres as rule of thumb) between latrines and water sources is respected and the bottom of pits should be at least 1.5 metres above the groundwater table (refer to Sphere standard 3 on excreta management for guidance).	Provide awareness to contractors on proper desludging procedures and dangers of contamination + monitor where contractors desludge faecal matters to ensure that it is done in official site.	Advocate and push for suitable facilities for final disposal of waste with relevant stakeholders.	Include this in contracts.	
6. The environmental impact of water supply is reduced.	Prioritise sustainable and more environmentally friendly water supply options before water trucking.	Include environmental specifications in water trucking tender selection (e.g. suitability of water source, etc.).	Advocate and coordinate for a suitable water resource management plan with relevant stakeholders.		
	Prioritise rehabilitation over new construction where possible.				
	Carry out pumping tests to determine sustainable pumping rates for boreholes.	Consider including educational components for sustainable resource management like 4Rs (planning software activities with hardware constructions).			
7. The sustainability of WASH materials is considered.	When possible, avoid the use of unsustainable materials in infrastructure construction projects (e.g. asphalt, hard wood, fired bricks).	When possible, prioritise reused or repurposed materials adapted to the local context (e.g. second-hand materials, repurposed debris or timber).	Consider the various environmental impacts of sustainable materials in order to choose the option with the least impact on the environment	NRC needs to define what a minimum support package is first so that level of support is not reduced to be more sustainable. Support from WASH advisers in decision making, work with procurement to improve specifications, include these considerations in contracts (e.g. certificate of origins, implement verification methodology) include in the BoQ both for CVA and in kind, etc. Advocacy with donors could also be considered here if the choice of sustainable solutions incurs additional costs.	Common with shelter and settlement, would be useful to exchange and learn from experience.
8. Energy issues are considered in water provision activities.	Use solar pumping where technically and economically feasible.				
9. Water saving techniques are applied.	Consider water saving technologies in shelters (e.g. water taps, showers, dual flush, rain water harvesting).		Grey water use activities are promoted (garden irrigation, toilet flushing, etc.)		