Background

The WREC project seeks to reduce the adverse environmental consequences of humanitarian logistics through awareness, practical guidance, and real-time environmental expertise. As part of this project, the Global Logistics Cluster actively collaborates with humanitarian partners and those leading complementary initiatives to ensure that information to support a more environmentally sustainable humanitarian logistics response is available and contextualized for field-level practitioners’ use. As such, the WREC, in partnership with the Joint Initiative on Sustainable Humanitarian Assistance Packaging Waste Management, has brought together their shared partners to discuss recent developments with regards to green procurement during the Green Procurement: Tendering Criteria and Item Specifications webinar which took place on 27 June 2022. This webinar – which was the first in a series - aimed at sharing information and gathering feedback from partners as to the implementation and usefulness in the field of those tools and guidance already developed by partners at the global level. Breakout sessions were included in the agenda to allow for workshop participants to engage with presenters, and each other, to share experiences with using green procurement initiatives in various contexts. The Global Logistics Cluster WREC Project Team has compiled the following Note for the Record to reflect the discussions in the groups. This feedback is also being used to tailor the WREC Project Team activities in support of field-based practitioners’ access to information, tools, and access to trainings on green procurement activities. Partners are encouraged to reach out to the WREC Project Team with any questions, comments, case studies, or additional feedback at any time by emailing: Global.WREC@wfp.org.

Attendees: 125 participants from 55 organizations (via webinar)

Recording available here.

Moderator: Katherine Ely (WREC, GLC)

Session 1: Problem Statement (presented by Sophie Fouilhé, Purchasing Manager for Humanity and Inclusion)

To begin the workshop, Humanity and Inclusion shared feedback from their field-based experience regarding the problem of greening logistics activities as it relates to Procurement for field-based practitioners and global colleagues alike. Highlights from the presentation include:

- There is no one-size-fits-all approach to green procurement, contextual analysis and tailored solutions are required in each instance;
- We need to work towards changing the mindset of procurement practitioners to overcome the “standard” approach to purchasing and instead look at the long-term effects of relief items as a cause for potential further disasters (due to environmental degradation as a result of waste generation and GHG emissions);
- Capacity of field teams is limited, training and awareness raising of environmental sustainability is needed;
- Coordination among working groups to bring together relevant training and tools is also needed;

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Support from donors is required to ensure purchasing of more sustainable, and potentially more costly, relief items is approved and prioritized to improve environmental sustainability.

*Note: no breakout session was conducted following the problem statement presentation.*

An informal pool was launched via Mentimeter to collect the participants’ feedback on the following statement:

**What are the main challenges in the implementation of sustainable procurement practices, according to you?**

The most popular answers included: lack of capacity, resources, training, willingness to bear costs of implementation. The full range of answers is available in the word cloud below.

**Session 2: Packaging sustainability criteria list for tender contracts (presented by Christian Grønnerod, Head of Supply Chain for Danish Refugee Council)**

During this session of the workshop, DRC provided an overview of the sustainability criteria for packaging developed as part of the Joint Initiative for Sustainable Humanitarian Packaging Waste Management and provided users with guidance on the usage in field settings. The criteria are available on the WREC website [here](https://logcluster.org/wrec/green-logistics). Highlights from the presentation include:

- The list of sustainability tendering criteria is the result of collaboration amongst the Danish Refugee Council, Save the Children, The International Committee of the Red Cross, the UN Refugee Agency, the World Food Programme as part of the Joint Initiative. The objective of the criteria summary is to provide guidance to the humanitarian community with regards to the definition of specifications which can be used to reduce the environmental footprint of relief goods during the tendering phase of the humanitarian supply chain;
- Three main types of criteria have been identified: technical, administrative, and transport criteria;
Feedback from the webinar’s participants was sought to validate the list and identify challenges and best practices used by humanitarian organizations when defining tendering and packaging criteria during procurement processes.

Session 2 breakout: tendering criteria

The objective of this session was to collect initial feedback from humanitarian partners regarding the list of criteria and their applicability in various field locations. Within the breakout groups, participants were asked to comment and contribute on the following key questions:

- Is there something missing from these criteria?
- Do these criteria make sense?
- How feasible is it to implement the sustainable tendering criteria?
- Should some criteria be prioritized over others?
- Share successes or challenges within your group

Session 2 Breakout Discussion Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the use of virgin plastic in packaging – as a minimum, 50% should be recycled</td>
<td>Introducing such criteria can be challenging, depending on the context where an organization runs its procurement processes;</td>
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<tr>
<td>When using cardboard, 50% of the content should be recyclable and not laminated</td>
<td>Might take quite a lot of time locally to educate suppliers locally vs. internationally;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have other materials (non-plastic) been considered as alternatives (yes/no)</td>
<td>Collective action is the way forward in procurement for the humanitarian sector. Vetting suppliers and implementing a databank which can offer scalable solutions to other organizations is needed to harmonize green procurement requirements and share knowledge on criteria which are applicable to local markets;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Were alternatives possible? If not, why not (one phrase)</td>
<td>Working with local suppliers to build capacity would help identify which criteria are realistic and which are not;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A pilot in the field might be a good solution to fine-tune the criteria and understand their potential.</td>
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<td>Green Procurement: Tendering Criteria &amp; Item Specifications Webinar</td>
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<td>June 27, 0900-1100 EST / 1500-1700 CET</td>
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| Note for the record |

- Prioritise designs without need for colour. If not possible, natural colors only
- Have alternatives to shrink wrap been considered (yes/no)
- Were alternatives possible? If not, why not (one phrase)
- Is organic ink prioritized?

| All participants agree that those criteria can work upstream but are likely to be challenging downstream. Focus should be put more on downstream: on reusing/recycling the packaging materials to create value on local markets and avoid uncontrolled waste disposal; |
| The composition of cardboard materials has been included amongst the criteria of some organizations, and would be worth adding it to the list; |
| Some organizations (e.g. UNHCR) introduced green labels on packaging to provide guidance on the end-of-use of packaging materials in the field. |

| Have alternatives to plastic packaging tapes been considered (yes/no) |
| Were alternatives possible? If not, why not (one phrase) |
| Prioritise designs which do not use sub-packaging and where not possible, degradable materials (paper, cardboard, starch-based plastics) only |

| Referring to the donors’ criteria can help organizations to prioritize packaging criteria (for example some donors require grantees not to use Single Use Plastics in their operations); |
| The trade-off between biodegradable and non-biodegradable materials should be analysed further as there are divergent opinions in scientific research. As humanitarian organizations, the functionality of our materials / items is a priority; |
| Repurposing at the location of distribution should be at the core of the underlying considerations in the definition of packaging criteria (e.g. some beneficiaries might use cardboard boxes for fuel/energy purposes); |
| Looking into standard requirements in preparedness processes can be useful (i.e. the Global Shelter Cluster looked into that for items such as: blankets, tents, and plastic sheeting); |
| The 4-R principle (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover) should guide the definition of the criteria, allowing to understand if packaging it’s needed or not in the first place. |

| Can the packaging be used again several times for the same purpose? (yes/no) |
| Can it be redesigned and reused for different purpose? (yes/no) |
| Has disposable material been avoided? (yes/no) |

| Recycling considerations are missing from the criteria – they only refer to ‘reuse’; |
| These particular criteria seem to be feasible to implement but would require specific training for all staff (proc and requisitioners); |

[https://logcluster.org/wrec/green-logistics](https://logcluster.org/wrec/green-logistics)
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- Has the solid waste management footprint been considered?
- Suggestion: consider analysis of local context (needs, challenges, and opportunities) before procuring to establish what packaging will be more useful for beneficiaries in that area – sturdy and reusable or easily recyclable?
- Worth mentioning ‘returning’ options as some take back schemes would allow returning the packaging to the suppliers, which can then reuse or recycle the materials;
- Need to ensure fairness considering the different disposal capacities in local markets. A mandatory criterion can lead to the exclusion of suppliers from procurement processes;
- ‘Can it be redesigned or reused’: is it a question for the procuring entity or for the vendors?

- Will the production methods of packaging prevent unsafe and unhealthy working conditions?
- Is child labour avoided?
- It would be important to provide an internationally recognized definition of ‘child labour’, as the national policies aren’t harmonized on the subject;
- There are many layers in a supply chain, can be challenging to collect accurate information from the direct manufacturer and verify if child labour is actually avoided or not;
- Is the manufacturers’ disposal of scrap materials considered in the list of criteria?
- Could these criteria be challenged by donors if we put too much emphasis on the carbon footprint of procured goods and services?

Session 3: Product Specifications (presented by Jovana Popovic, Sustainable Procurement Advisor, ICRC – Sustainable Supply Chain Alliance)

The ICRC provided an overview and purpose of the sustainable procurement criteria now available in their item catalogue publicly accessible and then provide partners with some practical lessons learned from the field. Take away points from the discussion:
- A standard product catalogue has been developed by the Sustainable Supply Chain Alliance. It was developed to reduce the emissions linked to the procurement of food and relief items;

https://logcluster.org/wrec/green-logistics
Product Information Sheet is available [here](https://logcluster.org/wrec/green-logistics);

The introduction of the product catalogue has already led to improvements in terms of environmentally friendly products and procurement practices by ICRC and national stakeholders (e.g. use of stainless steel over plastics for kitchen sets, components no longer individually packed);

To identify both internal and external solutions towards the adoption of more environmentally friendly products, the organization is carrying out through a pilot project in Yemen (e.g. replacement of plastic shampoo bottles with solid shampoo) and has been collecting feedback from suppliers with regards to the new products being requested or possible improvements applicable to existing products to increase their life span and durability;

Life cycle considerations, end-of-life, and total cost of ownership are amongst the main considerations guiding the elaboration of the ICRC product catalogue;

Development of procurement guidance is planned for 2022/2023;

A platform for knowledge sharing on sustainable procurement has also been established for direct communications between ICRC, IFRC, and National Societies.

**Session 3 breakout: Product Specifications**

This interactive session aimed at understanding which organizations developed sustainable procurement guidelines or item specifications, and which challenges are foreseen with using a centralized item specification catalogue. The discussions revolved around the questions:

- Does your organization have sustainable procurement guidelines or item specifications available?
- Do you currently utilize any online resources to improve sustainability in item specifications?
- What challenges do you foresee with using a centralized item specification catalogue?

**Session 3 Breakout discussion feedback**

**Existing sustainable procurement guidelines or item specifications**

The purpose is to capitalize on a network of practitioners in the field, linking people in local areas to make sure that common specifications can be adopted across organizations and make sure that good practices in sustainable procurement can be shared and applied in similar contexts.

**Discussion points**

- Several humanitarian organizations are in the process of adopting sustainable procurement guidelines for Non-Food Items (NFIs), warehousing services, and/or supply chain services. Most partners have developed procurement procedures following the no-one-size-fits-all principle, basing purchasing
processes on the local market product availability and taking into consideration the shipping modality (i.e. by land, sea, air).

- To introduce the sustainable procurement guidelines, most agencies chose to embed a sustainable policy in their general procurement manual, dedicating specific sections to specific goods and services.
- Many participants reported that bringing on-board the suppliers and putting aside time and resources to develop the sustainable procurement policies represents a major challenge.
- Some agencies are in the process of developing specific product evaluation criteria for different product/services categories.
- Within the UN system, different agencies are at different stages of the process and there’s room for collaboration and knowledge sharing. The definition of common standards, requirements, and definitions is envisaged: the UN Sustainable procurement indicators could represent valid guidance; however, those indicators should be referred to at the beginning of a procurement process to be effective.
- It would be advisable to add a common ‘sustainability label’ to the organizations’ specifications available online, to help other entities understanding if the resource refers to sustainability specifications specifically.
- Having a common database to conduct a vendor check and registration would help streamlining sustainable procurement across the humanitarian community.

Challenges

- A coordinated effort to share knowledge across NGOs and organizations is needed, especially as it relates to:
  - Management of purchases outside of long term agreements (LTAs)
  - finding a balance between the need for sustainable criteria and the limitations in products/services on local markets,
  - tackling tertiary packaging due to the lack of international guidelines,
  - verifying specifications,
  - following up on international and national standards’ updates
- Maintaining a central repository of specifications would also be challenging due to the differences in local procurement contexts and organizational policies.

- Many partners noted that procuring organizations don’t have direct control over product specifications available on the local market and there are many challenges with collecting accurate information from the suppliers about the product’s adherence to sustainability criteria. There is a need to support local suppliers to build capacity on environmental issues however the lack of resources for the local procurement teams represents an obstacle to the implementation of capacity building activities.
- One of the challenges in the adoption of sustainable procurement items specifications consists in finding the buy-in to get the countries on board and drive local markets towards the introduction of sustainable product specifications, process that should be accompanied by adequate national policies.

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• A common database with Life Cycle Assessment information on specific products, accessible for humanitarian organizations, would help streamlining sustainable procurement processes.
• On NFI’s it’s important to work closely with requisitioning units to ensure that a list of sustainability criteria is easily accessible and well understood.

Session 4: National Sustainable Supplier Policy (presented by Jim Ridgwick, Director of Procurement - *Save the Children International*)

SCI shared an overview and initial developments of the Supplier Policy and where it could be applicable to other humanitarian organizations across contexts. Key points raised included:

• The Supplier Sustainability Policy is one of the components of Save the Children International’s broader Supply chain Sustainability Strategy, a multi-year strategy aimed at elevating social, economic, and environmental sustainability to the core of decision making for the organization and its suppliers.
• An umbrella approach was adopted to simplify compliance requirements, consolidating existing policies and supplementing them with the UN Code of Conduct.
• Key components of the Policy include: SCI core vision and values, reference to the Global Compact, and international labour conventions.

**Session 4 breakout: National Sustainable Supplier Policy**

The session aimed at brainstorming around the existing Supplier Policies across the humanitarian community and at collecting feedback on SCI approach. General questions included:

• Have you implemented something similar in your organizations?
• What challenges do you foresee with implementing sustainability in supplier policy?
• How do you envisage monitoring supplier compliance with a sustainability policy?

**Session 4 Breakout discussion feedback**

**Discussion points**

• Several organizations implemented a Supplier Policy, while others are working on building awareness across staff and stakeholders, engaging with suppliers and presenting targets in terms of sustainable procurement – many are looking into packaging and possibly fuel consumption as priorities.
Most of the participants agree on the need to adopt a community-based approach, advocating for the adoption of baseline principles in Supplier Policies across NGOs and organizations and cross-sharing knowledge over national suppliers and local markets’ capability.

In terms of monitoring suppliers’ compliance, some participants highlighted the importance of implementing sustainability questionnaires, which can represent a valid tool to verify if the suppliers follow specific codes of conduct principles in their business (e.g. the UN code of conduct).

Local procurement: need to establish clear communication channels to collect accurate information and have more visibility on local suppliers.

Defining KPIs against the pillars of National Supplier Policies can help measuring suppliers’ performance.

Challenges

- One of the challenges consists in getting supply teams to engage with suppliers; once the supplier policy is signed, some teams just wish to hand over to programming staff.
- Organizations require resources and funding to train staff on supplier engagement to promote new policies and have a supplier capacity strengthening mechanism.
- It is a major challenge to monitor compliance – the possibility to involve MEAL teams could be explored.
- In some countries (such as Italy) there are minimum environmental criteria specified by law which should be applied in purchase processes – such requirements sometimes don’t match with organizational needs. This applies to various national contexts and is applied differently.

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