

Shelter Sector Guidance

Guidance on minimising packaging through green procurement

Packaging is one of the main sources of waste related to humanitarian responses. Packaging is vital for shipping and storage but the type of packaging used has consequences for waste production as well as transportation and storage space requirements. Including packaging specifications for the procurement of NFIs, both locally and internationally, can help minimise waste and improve transport and storage efficiency.

An example of a Kitchen Set with specifications for reduced packaging can be found on the IFRC ICRC Standard Products Catalogue [KITCHEN SET, Type A - Standard products catalogue IFRC ICRC \(redcross.int\)](#). In this example the kitchen set components are not individually packed and all necessary internal sub-packaging is made of unbleached paper. The packaging is kept to the smallest possible volume.

The first vital step is to **add an Environmental Responsibility component to the tender and the tender evaluation**. The tender should clearly state a preference for minimal packaging. The potential supplier must submit a detailed description of their packaging and an explanation of their packaging choice. The greater the effort made by the potential supplier to reduce the total amount of packaging and to improve the type of packaging, the higher this component of the tender will be scored. For example, the potential supplier may earn points by:

- Using reusable packaging that they will take back and use again
- Avoiding unnecessary internal packaging
- Showing how they have reduced the volume of the package
- Using packaging which avoids single-use plastic
- Using packaging that is readily recyclable in the local context

The following is a set of general criteria that can be used in procurements to minimise packaging waste:

1. Preference is always given to reusable packaging that the supplier will take back.
2. When single-use packaging is unavoidable preference is given to non-plastic packaging.
3. When single-use paper or cardboard packaging is used, preference is given to packaging that consists of at least 50% recycled material.
4. Single-use plastic packaging may only be used when alternatives are unavailable.
5. When single-use plastic packaging is unavoidable, preference is given to packaging that consists of a minimum of 50% recycled material.
6. When single-use plastic is unavoidable, preference is given to packaging that is made of only one type of plastic (not composite or bonded) that can be locally recycled.
7. Visibility labels should also avoid plastic and be biodegradable where possible (stamps are preferable to stickers)

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