

SEPTEMBER 2024

SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN COMMUNITY

“Each link in the supply chain presents an opportunity to improve our work and impact the world we leave behind.”

– Anonymous



SSCA HIGHLIGHTS OF THE QUARTER

UPGRADED VERSION OF THE HUMANITARIAN CARBON CALCULATOR (HCC+)

The Humanitarian Carbon Calculator (HCC) was developed in collaboration with more than a hundred humanitarian organizations, experts and the [European Commission’s Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations](#) department (ECHO) and launched in early 2023. Organizations that used the HCC subsequently provided feedback, which prompted a review of the tool in the second half of 2023. Following a participatory consultation, several new features were added to the revised edition of the HCC, such as:

- the capacity to examine up to 200 entities (such as offices or projects)
- an alternative method for data input, particularly for organizations with large datasets and many entities
- the ability to identify issues in data input
- enhanced presentation of greenhouse gas (GHG) results per entity and primary subcategories
- the ability to export data to external tools, such as Microsoft Power BI or Tableau, for visualization and analysis
- new and updated emissions factors
- different techniques for allocating emissions across entities
- the ability to analyse outcomes at the super-entity level (grouping of items)
- simplified data collection (individuals across an organization can now add comments and explanations at each data input point)
- the ability to analyse emissions associated with leased/rented assets.

DID YOU KNOW

You can access all information about SSCA initiatives via the Sustainable Supply Chain page in the Logistics section of the [ICRC blogs site](#)?

In early 2024, organizations including Climate Action Accelerator and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) pilot-tested the HCC+ and, in May, it was formally introduced to the humanitarian sector. The tool, its user guide and a webinar explaining the improvements and how to use the HCC+ are available on the [Humanitarian Carbon Calculator page of the Climate Charter website](#).

Don't forget the HCC MS Teams channel dedicated to carbon accounting. Here, more than 110 staff members from different organizations exchange tips and clarify issues to do with carbon accounting. To join, contact [Juan Galvez](#).

New environmental specialist: The [WREC Coalition](#) (comprising the World Food Programme, IFRC, Danish Refugee Council and Save the Children, and coordinated by the Global Logistics Cluster) recently welcomed a new environmental specialist, Nora Steurer. Nora is based at the IFRC regional office in Budapest. Her role involves examining greenhouse gas emissions along humanitarian supply chains, promoting coordination and joint projects, and disseminating knowledge and good practice among humanitarian actors. You can contact her at nora.steurer@ifrc.org.

SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

Recycled plastics technical note

Following discussions with key stakeholders on the difficulties encountered in replacing virgin plastic with recycled plastic in the supply of essential household items (EHIs), a [technical note on recycled plastic](#) was issued. It advises organizations to ensure that suppliers report on the origin and quality of recycled material and that they verify it adequately. This helps avoid contracting suppliers who make false claims regarding recycled content – a practice that creates unfair competition and drives “good” suppliers out of the market. The QHSE Working Group recently updated the QHSE audit form to cover recycled plastic content verification and this will be piloted in the coming months.

Supplier Code of Conduct

The ICRC Supplier Code of Conduct is now in force. The document is available in five languages – [English](#), [Spanish](#), [French](#), [Arabic](#) and [Russian](#) – and our procurement teams are trained to answer any questions suppliers may have. Communication with suppliers has commenced and full implementation is expected by the end of the year.

Renewable energy in tenders

The ICRC is now piloting the inclusion of a clause in some of its requests for tenders whereby suppliers who can prove that more than 30 per cent of their production lines use renewable energy enhance their chances of winning the tender. Any other organizations that have tried this approach and would like to share their experiences are invited to [contact us](#).

Revision of other emergency humanitarian items

The ICRC and IFRC, supported by the UNHCR, are currently finalizing the revision of other emergency humanitarian items (hygiene parcels, solar lamps, blankets, etc.), having piloted user acceptability and quality. The new specifications will be shared in the next newsletter. If your organization is working on any of these items, please do [contact us](#) to share your experience.

Inflatable mattresses

The ICRC is exploring different options of inflatable mattresses for specific situations where they would only be used for a short period of time. Has any other organization researched this option? If so, please share the information to facilitate collaboration on this project.

Quality, Social and Environmental working group

In June, a two-day conference on humanitarian aid procurement and sustainability was co-hosted by the International Organization for Migration and Fordham University. The event brought together representatives from various aid organizations, academia and the private sector to explore challenges and opportunities, and discuss potential ways to improve the efficiency, sustainability and quality of humanitarian aid delivery.

The conference highlighted the complex challenges facing humanitarian aid procurement and sustainability efforts. Participants emphasized the need for continued collaboration and innovation, as well as a balanced approach to sustainability that considers cost-effectiveness, quality and environmental impact. As the sector moves forward, incorporating these considerations into all aspects of humanitarian aid delivery will be crucial for addressing global crises.

The discussions underscored the importance of a holistic approach to improving humanitarian aid procurement and sustainability. This includes harmonizing specifications across agencies, investing in local capacity-building, improving quality-control processes and fostering innovation throughout the supply chain. By addressing these interconnected challenges, the humanitarian sector can work towards more effective, efficient and sustainable aid delivery that better serves those in need while minimizing environmental impact. If you would like to know more, you can [access the full report here](#).

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Eco-design tarpaulin (UNHCR/IFRC/ICRC)

The ICRC, IFRC and UNHCR have been working together since 2021 on a new tarpaulin design with a reduced environmental impact. The project, including laboratory and field tests, has now been completed and a new specification is available. The amount of plastic used has been reduced by 14 per cent and the strength of the tarpaulin has doubled. As a result, less waste is generated and more costs are saved, because the volumes transported and stored are optimized. For more details, please check out the following resources:

- a [video](#) of the main highlights of the research and tests, key findings and benefits of the eco-design tarpaulin
- [the executive summary of the project](#), presenting its main findings and recommendations
- all [project-related files](#).



DID YOU KNOW

The average person could be ingesting up to 5 grams of plastic per week? That's equivalent to the weight of a credit card! If you'd like to know more, check out the Joint Initiative's [properties of five types of plastic packaging used in humanitarian assistance and the impact of plastic on human health, marine life and climate change](#).

Alternative Polypropylene Bag project (ICRC/UNHCR/WFP)

The polypropylene bag project has now ended, although more work is required to put the solution into practice. Further information is available in the [project report](#), review of [alternatives to polypropylene](#) and [LCA comparison](#). To simplify this information and share the lessons learned, check out this case study developed by the [Joint Initiative for Sustainable Humanitarian Assistance Packaging Waste Management](#).

FLEET AND TRANSPORT

Reducing emissions by improving carpooling

The ICRC, in line with its commitment to sustainability and cost-efficiency, is seeking to reduce its environmental footprint through optimizing its fleet resources, including by improving vehicle dispatch planning. To this end, carpooling system requirements were developed in collaboration with the National Red Cross Societies of Colombia and Costa Rica, and with the support of Fleet Forum. Market research was conducted externally but existing internal solutions with further potential were also considered. The solutions identified have been ranked and rated, and a business case featuring a scenario-based cost-benefit analysis has been developed. To learn more, please read the [final report](#).

Reducing emissions by choosing the right airline

The most efficient way to reduce transport emissions is to limit the use of air transport. Some air transport is unavoidable, such as for small medical shipments. This has prompted the ICRC to innovate and explore alternative solutions, such as minimizing the distance travelled when using air transport. The organization has developed a table of the main destinations to which air shipments cannot be avoided. This table indicates the distance from Geneva depending on the airline and its routes. Direct flights are preferable but not always feasible, so reducing the distance to be travelled is crucial when air shipment is the only option. The ICRC is currently testing the table and we hope it will soon be part of the selection process. Please take a look at the [first draft of the table](#) for inspiration and let's discuss how it can be improved further.

WAREHOUSE OPERATIONS



Dimension Weight Scanning (DWS) is now being implemented in the ICRC Logistics Support Centre in Satigny to optimize freight pricing and enhance efficiency. This system accurately measures the size and weight of packages, allowing for precise calculations of dimensional weight. These data will allow better estimation of the weight and volume of orders and shipments, both inbound and outbound. As a result, warehouse operations (space and storage arrangements) and transport planning can be optimized, leading to substantial cost savings and, ultimately, a positive environmental impact! And that's not all. The automation of data entry and improvements in inventory management as a result of integrating DWS into JDE in Satigny mean the risk of human error will be significantly reduced.

If you'd like to learn more about how DWS works, there are various online videos on the topic. You can also listen to the [interview with Justine Salomon about ways of optimizing and improving the efficiency of warehouse processes](#). In it, she explains how DWS fits into a series of initiatives to move from "push" to "pull" in the supply chain. She also outlines measures that have made it possible to ship goods by sea without increasing lead times, such as optimizing packaging by country and regularly using containers to main destinations. Thanks to the efforts made, the ICRC has been able to reduce the volume of goods sent by air by more than 5 per cent and the cost by more than half a million Swiss francs.

Dangerous goods (DG) within humanitarian supply chains

Mishandling dangerous goods can have environmental, social and economic consequences, yet, in humanitarian organizations, the issue doesn't always receive the attention it deserves. This [concept note](#) outlines the ICRC-led project to raise awareness and improve the processes of handling dangerous goods within the Movement.

In addition, a [table](#) has been compiled for warehouse teams with information on handling, storing, packing and disposing of the main categories of dangerous goods. Its purpose is to explain the minimum standards for managing dangerous goods in ICRC warehouses and it will also be useful to certain National Societies for their Emergency Response Units.

We are currently mapping the supply chain process, which is part of dangerous goods management, creating standard operating procedures and developing online training for different target groups involved in the dangerous goods supply chain.

If your organization is working on something similar or is interested in this topic, please [share your knowledge with us](#).

Solar energy system maintenance

The ICRC began installing solar energy systems in many of its facilities years ago, so it is crucial that our teams understand basic maintenance procedures. To this end, we have produced a [guide](#) (available in English, French and Arabic) to maintaining solar energy systems.

TURNING SUSTAINABILITY IDEAS INTO REALITY

- On Innovation Day, held at the beginning of the year, the ICRC Innovation Team presented the SSCA to donors. To find out more about innovation at the ICRC, including with regard to projects linked to climate change and sustainability, please visit the [Inspired web page](#).
- Don't forget our [repository of best practices](#). Further entries have been added and the list now contains information on more than 40 ways to make our supply chain more sustainable. Don't hesitate to share your feedback on how these practices can be improved, or to use the [template](#) to share your own successful practices with others.
- Check out these five case studies developed by the [Joint Initiative](#) documenting the experiences of organizations that have tried to make their humanitarian assistance and packaging more environmentally sustainable. The studies were developed to help and inspire others by documenting the steps taken by the organizations involved to bring about change and rise to the challenges they encountered. Each case study ends with a series of key takeaways or recommendations for organizations interested in replicating the good practices documented.

The five case studies are:

1. [How ShelterBox removed single-use plastic from its shelter kits.](#)
2. [How WFP introduced plastic-free shops in a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.](#)
3. [How the ICRC transitioned from using plastic bags to cardboard boxes for hygiene kits in its detention programme in Afghanistan.](#)
4. [Steps taken by ACTED to reduce carbon emissions and plastic waste in its Lebanon programme.](#)
5. [How UNICEF is bulk-distributing long-lasting insecticide-treated nets rather than using individual plastic packaging.](#)



TRAINING

The IFRC learning platform has a new set of training courses to explore: [Environmental Sustainability Essentials and Beyond](#). This learning series starts with a course on sustainability practices within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, before moving on to the essentials of sustainability and, subsequently, how it's practised at the IFRC. Some context-specific courses are also available. The **Introduction to the Quality, Social and Environmental (QSE) assessment** can also be found on the platform.

The Logistics Cluster's WREC project has compiled a [curated list of training options](#) in the field of environmental sustainability in humanitarian supply chains. The aim is to inform field-based practitioners of opportunities to gain knowledge in such crucial areas as waste management, green procurement, decarbonization and the circular economy.

WHAT'S NEW IN THE FIELD: ACROSS THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Red Cross and Red Crescent conference

In March 2024, a conference on humanitarian logistics drew together 120 participants from the National Societies of 38 countries, as well as the ICRC, IFRC, key partners from academia, and the private and humanitarian sectors. The aim was to map out a future in which supply chain efficiency, innovation, sustainability and global collaboration converge. The conference focused on three main themes: supply chain efficiency, digitalization of supply chain management and environmental sustainability. The event also provided opportunities for showcasing and networking. The conference resulted in a commitment on the part of the participants to enhance cooperation, innovation and sustainability in the humanitarian supply chain. For more information, please email scm.geneva@ifrc.org.



In the [last newsletter](#), we introduced [The Green Logistics Guide](#), which aims to support National Societies in adopting green practices. It contains a wealth of hints, tips and good practices adapted to the needs of National Societies at the start of their sustainability journey. The guide is now available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic. To find out more, check out this [webinar](#) and [presentation](#).

Green Response quarterly meetings

Two quarterly meetings were held under the Green Response banner in 2024.

1. The first meeting heard how the Liberia National Red Cross Society is incorporating environmental screening (Neat+ tool) into the electronic voucher and cash assistance process. During this meeting, an update on the Sustainable Supply Chain Alliance, focusing on green procurement and environmental responsibility in humanitarian operations, was also provided. [Click here to learn more.](#)
2. During the second meeting, the Nigerian Red Cross Society gave a briefing on its new climate and environmental strategy, and opportunities for the Movement in the voluntary carbon market. The meeting also heard how the Sudanese Red Crescent/Swiss Red Cross are continuing efforts to include climate and environmental projects in their operations. The recent market assessment by the WREC Coalition (coordinated by the Global Logistics Cluster) with IFRC Bangladesh on sustainable procurement was also presented. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Remember Walter Fallas Bonilla from the Costa Rica Red Cross, the 2021 fleet manager of the year? In this [video](#), he explains the steps his National Society has taken to enhance fleet management and thus reduce carbon emissions and waste.



HAVE YOU MISSED PREVIOUS SSCA NEWSLETTERS?

- [Sustainable Supply Chain Community Newsletter, September 2023](#)
- [Sustainable Supply Chain Community Newsletter, March 2023](#)
- [Sustainable Supply Chain Community Newsletter, September 2022](#)
- [Sustainable Supply Chain Community Newsletter, February 2022](#)
- [Sustainable Supply Chain Community Newsletter, July 2021](#)

Any questions, suggestions, or feedback can be sent directly to the SSCA project manager cgarciaduro@icrc.org.