



UNHCR | The UN Refugee Agency

Review of environmental impact of Cash Based Interventions and in-kind assistance

Environmental Checklist



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Environmental Checklist

This checklist has been developed based on the findings of the UNHCR study on the Environmental Impacts of Cash Based Interventions (CBIs), to support multi-functional teams in charge of implementing cash assistance.

Purpose

The checklist is a rapid appraisal tool to explore the potential options for reducing the environmental impacts of CBIs.

The purpose of the checklist is to:

- **Increase understanding:** provide a basic understanding of the potential environmental impacts of CBIs;
- **Reduce impacts:** prompt teams to consider mitigating actions to reduce the environmental impacts of CBIs; and
- **Record:** provide a record of the environmental considerations included in the CBI feasibility and response analysis.

Expected User

The checklist targets multi-functional teams (MFTs) engaged in assistance delivery, including cash, supply, finance, programme, technical sectors, protection and senior management. It is expected to be completed by a nominated representative of the MFT in charge of implementing cash-based interventions, with inputs from other team members, as well as stakeholders and partners beyond. It is not expected that the user will have any particular environmental background or experience.

Application

The checklist is applicable in camp settings, but can also provide some useful lessons for urban and peri-urban settings.

It is expected to take less than half a day to complete, and should be reviewed annually. The page on supporting evidence at the end of this document is expected to help the user in filling in the checklist.

When to use

This checklist has been designed to work in harmony with the cash-based interventions toolkit. The table below shows how this checklist might fit with the UNHCR Operations Management Cycle.

Steps in UNHCR Programme Manual ¹	Input from this checklist
Assessment	✓
Planning	✓
Implementation	
Monitoring	✓
Reporting	
Audit	
Evaluation	

¹ <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/52635/unhcr-operations-management-cycle>

Checklist

1. Assessment	
<p>1.1. Consider the needs identified in the needs assessment, and which products persons of concern will purchase to meet these needs.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What <u>materials</u> are the products made of? Are there suitable natural materials, such as yarn or bamboo, which could be used? Are the products <u>produced in-country or imported</u>? Are there local alternatives which may offer the same functionality and performance? How <u>durable</u> are the products? Are there some which last longer than others? How might the <u>products be disposed of</u>? Is it likely they could be re-used or recycled? Are there some suppliers which offer <u>products which are more environmentally friendly</u>? Could this need be met by a service, rather than a good or product? <p>1.2. Have any environmental assessments already been conducted (by UNHCR or other implementing agencies)?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> If another form of environmental assessment has been conducted for the refugee site, would the environmental risks identified be increased or reduced by CBIs? How can the risks be mitigated? <p>1.3. Will any further environmental assessments be conducted?</p>	<p><i>If no environmental assessments have been conducted, and no further environmental assessments are planned, please contact the environmental team in Geneva for support.</i></p>
<p><i>Guidance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider whether products made from natural materials that require minimal processing are available in the local market. These should be incentivised. However, in doing this be aware that these materials can come with a risk of overexploitation of local natural resources and mitigations should be put into place to reduce this risk. Reduce emissions from transportation by encouraging refugees to buy locally-made products. Take into account end of life disposal for items as some products may be biodegradable (if made of natural materials) or commonly re-used or recycled (e.g. corrugated steel sheets). These should be incentivised. Consider the durability of products as it is a key environmental influencer. Without incentives or increased awareness, cash recipients are likely to minimise cost rather than valuing durability. 	
2. Planning	
<p>2.1 Is there local environmental legislation which will prevent UNHCR from providing cash, or certain types of in-kind assistance (e.g. laws preventing the use of plastic)?</p> <p>2.2 Can people of concern be included in existing government/UN Agency/partner schemes or services for water, waste, shelter or energy?</p> <p>2.3 Are there any existing schemes which aim to encourage positive environmental behaviour change in beneficiaries?</p>	

<p>a) If not, is this something which could be implemented in this context? b) Are there any suppliers which UNHCR could work with to provide access to more environmentally friendly products?</p> <p>2.4 Can the programme include training or a awareness-raising to incentivise the following behaviours? a) Purchasing goods that have durability characteristics appropriate for the use context b) Purchasing locally produced goods c) Avoiding extraction of local natural resources</p> <p>2.5 Will the programme continue to monitor environmental impacts, such as encouraging recycling and/or environmentally-friendly disposal, during implementation?</p>	
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<p><i>Guidance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Incentivise cash beneficiaries through increased information, awareness or targeted communication, to minimise environmental impacts from their purchasing choices.</i> • <i>Consider in the market assessment the potential environmental impacts of items available in local markets, as cash assistance may encourage extraction of local resources (e.g. wood), which can result in negative environmental impacts.</i> • <i>Investigate sustainable local supply chains and incentivise beneficiaries to use them, if a significant increase in demand is likely for some materials (e.g. shelter materials).</i> 	
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<p>3. Monitoring</p>	
<p>3.1 Have you observed any environmental impacts during the implementation of the programme? Consider the following common risks: a) Air pollution b) Changes to landscape and land quality c) Waste production and management d) Biodiversity loss e) Pressure on water resources</p> <p>3.2 Have any of your answers to the questions under ‘Assessment’ and ‘Planning’ changed since the assessment was previously completed?</p>	<p><i>If you have observed environmental impacts in any of these areas, please contact the environmental team in Geneva for support.</i></p>

Supporting Evidence for this Checklist

Please consider the key points presented below when filling in this checklist and considering the environmental impacts of UNHCR's programme.



Natural materials

Products which are made from natural materials are likely to have lower carbon emissions from their production. They are also likely to biodegrade and therefore reduce landfill or waste when discarded. The production of goods is typically the biggest proportion of their carbon emissions. Be aware that these materials come with a risk of overexploitation of local natural resources and this should be mitigated if their use is incentivised.



Transport emissions

Products which are imported will have travelled a longer distance to reach the local markets. This will increase their associated carbon footprint. Products which have been manufactured or produced locally will have a lower carbon footprint due to less transport.



Quality products

When making purchasing decisions, cash recipients may prioritise poorer quality goods over higher quality, longer-lasting goods as they are typically lower in price. This can lead to products deteriorating faster and creating more waste. Where possible, durable, high performance goods and products should be incentivised.



Re-use and recycling

Products that can be re-used or re-cycled at the end of their life, will produce less waste and therefore have a smaller impact on the surrounding environment.



Service provision

Typically, integrating persons of concern into existing service provision will reduce their environmental impact relative to the local community. For example, including persons of concern in municipal water supply services, will reduce excess waste from purchasing buckets, bottled water etc.



Tools

There are other environmental assessment tools for staff responding to humanitarian crises. The teams may want to consider using:

- Flash Environmental Assessment Tool (FLEAT)
- Norwegian Refugee Council Environmental Assessment Tool (NEAT)
- More in-depth Environmental Impact Assessments

More information about these and when they should be used can be found here: <https://www.eccentre.org/2017/01/01/the-joint-initiative/>

Examples

Examples of ways to incentivise positive environmental behaviours:



- Cash for carbon scheme in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh – UNHCR Bangladesh has been running a programme to provide vouchers to refugees who spend time managing the local environment and re-planting trees.
- 'Green' shelter materials comprising Interlocking Stabilised Soil Blocks used to build shelters in the Bidi Bidi refugee settlement, Uganda. This is being trialled by Mercy Corps, including training for construction workers.