



Sustainability Management at the German Red Cross National Headquarters

Policy on Sustainability

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1. Preamble

With 192 National Societies, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is the largest humanitarian organisation in the world. The German Red Cross (GRC) is part of this global community and is legally bound to uphold the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntarism, unity, and universality in all its actions.

Trust has been a central resource of the GRC for more than 150 years. It is therefore in the GRC's own interest to maintain this trust and to reinforce it. In respect to this, the GRC makes information about its activities and structures publicly available.

Now and in the future, the GRC must face different challenges, such as the issue of sustainability. In the public discourse in Germany, as well as internationally, sustainability is a diverse and critical topic. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has also identified this topic as a central issue for the future. The responsible use of resources, the need to protect and preserve our environment for future generations, is part of what the Red Cross idea is all about at its core. The GRC has clearly spoken out in favour of the sustainable use of available resources.

Against this background, the GRC National Headquarters (GRC HQ) has agreed to develop a sustainability management policy. Although the concept of sustainability also includes social and economic aspects, the following policy on environmental sustainability was agreed upon and adopted for the GRC HQ as a first step.

The policy was developed by a cross-departmental internal working group and addresses five central topics that are relevant for the entire GRC HQ. These include in detail: **energy**, **travel**, **events**, **procurement**, and **waste prevention** (described in more detail below). In addition to this, all departments are required to fulfil their roles in a sustainable manner according to their individual circumstances. These can differ greatly, for example, in the administrative area compared to the operational area and are therefore not reflected in this overarching policy. The individual departments and projects describe their sustainability efforts and their own best practices, which we shall refer to here.

In the field of international cooperation, the focus is on adaptation to the challenges of climate change through cooperation with different national societies worldwide. Forecast-based financing projects, for example, enable sister national societies in high-risk countries such as Bangladesh, Mozambique, or Peru to implement early, risk-reducing measures before an extreme weather event occurs by distributing funds beforehand. In this way, the impact of climate change on vulnerable and especially endangered population groups can be effectively reduced (for more information on anticipatory disaster relief, see: www.forecast-based-financing.org). In 2020, the GRC developed the Anticipation Hub, where around 75 partners from science, humanitarian aid, development cooperation and politics, can now inform themselves and exchange information on the topic of anticipation (www.anticipation-hub.org). The topic of sustainability is also increasingly being integrated into projects in the areas of welfare, the Youth Red Cross, and GRC's role as auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field.

The GRC National Headquarters aims to promote a broad resonance for the topic of environmental sustainability in the GRC as a whole and thus commits to raise awareness of the topic. More specific

details on this and on the question of how the measures of the policy are to be monitored can also be found in the following explanations.

2. Topics

2.1. Energy

The aim is to continuously check the energy consumption, to specifically identify large consumers and to initiate measures to reduce energy consumption (e.g. replacement of inefficient lighting). For this purpose, an energy audit is carried out at the GRC HQ every four years. Furthermore, the audit serves to monitor and benchmark consumption values.

2.2. Travel

The aim of the GRC HQ's travel policy is to reduce CO₂ emissions. Therefore, every business trip must be checked to see if it is necessary or whether alternative solutions can be considered, e.g. telephone or video conferences. The necessity of a trip must be briefly justified in the travel request.

When travelling, trains are preferred to aeroplanes and cars. Domestic flights should be avoided as far as possible. The possibility of CO₂ offsets will be investigated by the GRC internal working group. If a car is necessary, car-pooling should be made use of, if possible. If a car has to be rented, the rental of an electric car should be preferred.

Job interviews should be conducted virtually, at least in the pre-selection phase, to avoid unnecessary travel.

Travel documents should only be printed out if required by law or by the donor.

2.3. Events

When organising and carrying out events, it is important to act as resource oriented as possible. For sustainable event planning, it is particularly important to minimise use of disposable products and to reduce waste. Sustainability and climate friendliness can also be regarded in the choice of venue and catering.

For example, when choosing a caterer, sustainability criteria such as the use of regional products should be considered. When looking for a venue, a good connection to the public transport network to avoid trips by taxi should be assured.

Recommendations and guidelines for sustainable event planning exist and are made available to employees for orientation, including a collection of sustainable suppliers, caterers and venues.

2.4. Procurement

In the area of procurement, not only the legal requirements should be fulfilled, but also international and national agreements, conventions and strategies on sustainability should be considered. The aim is to implement sustainability aspects firmly, bindingly, and comprehensively in the procurement process.

Sustainable procurement is understood as the consideration of economic, ecological, and social aspects as decision-making criteria in the entire procurement process.

Negative environmental impacts should be avoided in the production, delivery, use, and disposal of the goods or services to be procured, taking into account economic and operational aspects. The use of environmentally friendly products compared to conventional products is recommended.

The employees of the GRC are encouraged to examine which sustainability criteria can be implemented and realised in the individual procurement process.

In the procurement process, the following approaches should be followed:

- Consideration of sustainability in the tender specifications or in technical requirements or implementation specifications.
- Consideration of sustainability in the context of the bidder's suitability, and
- Consideration of sustainability in the award criteria.

2.5. Waste prevention

Many discarded materials can be reused through waste separation and recycling. As a result, raw materials and energy may be saved compared to the production of new materials.

In favour of waste avoidance, the five-stage waste hierarchy should be followed. It is also anchored in §6 of the German Circular Economy Act. According to this, the primary goal is to prevent waste from being generated in the first place. If this is not possible, only reusable materials should be used, and these should then actually be recycled. Remaining materials which cannot be reused or recycled should be disposed of in an ecologically sound manner.

To achieve this, the GRC HQ must critically question its consumption habits, waste production and disposal systems and optimise them step by step towards less wastage, more resource efficiency and structured waste separation.

To this end, the measures for waste avoidance, recycling and waste separation are to be continuously evaluated and improved.

3. Reporting and governance

To emphasise the binding nature of the measures, the measures laid down in the policy are monitored and accompanied by the above-mentioned interdepartmental working group. In doing so, the working group is in continuous dialogue with the departments and acts as an interface to the executive board and the second management level, to whom the implementation status is reported. In addition, it is the task of the working group to check and change the policy, if necessary.

Measures and foci for the realisation of the policy on sustainability management are to be reviewed at regular intervals depending on the degree of implementation maturity as well as future requirements. The plan of measures that is accompanying the implementation at GRC HQ is to be adjusted accordingly under the following aspects:

- Updating the objectives and recommendations for action,
- Expanding or supplementing the sustainability programme, and
- Checking the potential for enhancement in and, if necessary, adapting documents and information.

4. Communication, transparency, and acceptance

Sustainability is not just a slogan - it must be lived and exemplified on a consistent basis. The GRC HQ has a special responsibility and role model function in this regard. This applies both to the federal political and international environment as well as to the various association members within Germany. Sustainability is rightly expected and demanded from various societal groups. In this context, consistent and transparent action contributes significantly to establish the GRC as a reliable and forward-looking partner in dealing with global challenges such as climate change.

A prerequisite for this is a broad support in the entire association, which in turn requires effective, successful, and inclusive communication strategies and measures, both internally and externally. This policy on sustainability management and the associated efforts and measures are not only supported and promoted by all management levels of the GRC HQ but are also actively communicated to the GRC association, as well as to external partner organisations and supporters of the GRC. The GRC HQ has identified various stakeholders on the topic of sustainability, both within and outside the GRC HQ, which are briefly described below.

The GRC HQ and its staff are the first to be affected by the policy in their day-to-day work. At the same time, they are of central importance regarding a "living policy". Communication within the GRC in Germany should include all levels of the association, the voluntary and the full-time staff. Numerous initiatives already show that there is interest and willingness to promote a sustainable GRC.

The most important target groups outside the GRC are other National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Some of them are already working intensively in the field of climate change adaptation and environmental sustainability. Regarding anticipatory humanitarian aid GRC is already known for its expertise within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The policy will be used as an opportunity to inform the partners about the long-term, and sustainability-promoting work within and with the GRC.

Outside of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, it is the public and private donors, as well as the supporting members, who form a central pillar of the GRC's work. They also request a more sustainable handling and implementation of projects. The media and the public are also of great importance for the success of the GRC's work. The desire and demand for more climate protection is becoming increasingly evident in many different societal groups. The GRC's goal is to become visibly, credibly, and proactively involved in this discourse and to be perceived in it as an organisation that takes sustainability seriously - in its day-to-day business and across its various fields of activity and impact.

5. Imprint and contact

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