# Sustainability at the IRC: Changing How We Work 2024 Report

IRC seeks to reduce our environmental impact and adopt climate-resilient operational approaches to benefit our clients, using data and metrics to track our progress.

We understand the rigor of environmental reporting, which is why we dedicated 2023 to evaluating our current state of data collection. This methodological, intentional effort at foundation-building was important to set us up for success in the long-term and ensure we maintain the highest standards of accuracy and transparency.

In this year, we have diligently identified areas for improvement and have taken proactive steps to enhance our data collection processes. We are proud of our continuous efforts to make incremental progress and provide reliable and comprehensive environmental data. This commitment not only reflects our integrity but also our determination to achieve excellence in all aspects of our work.

This report highlights what we did, what we learned, and our plans for the future.
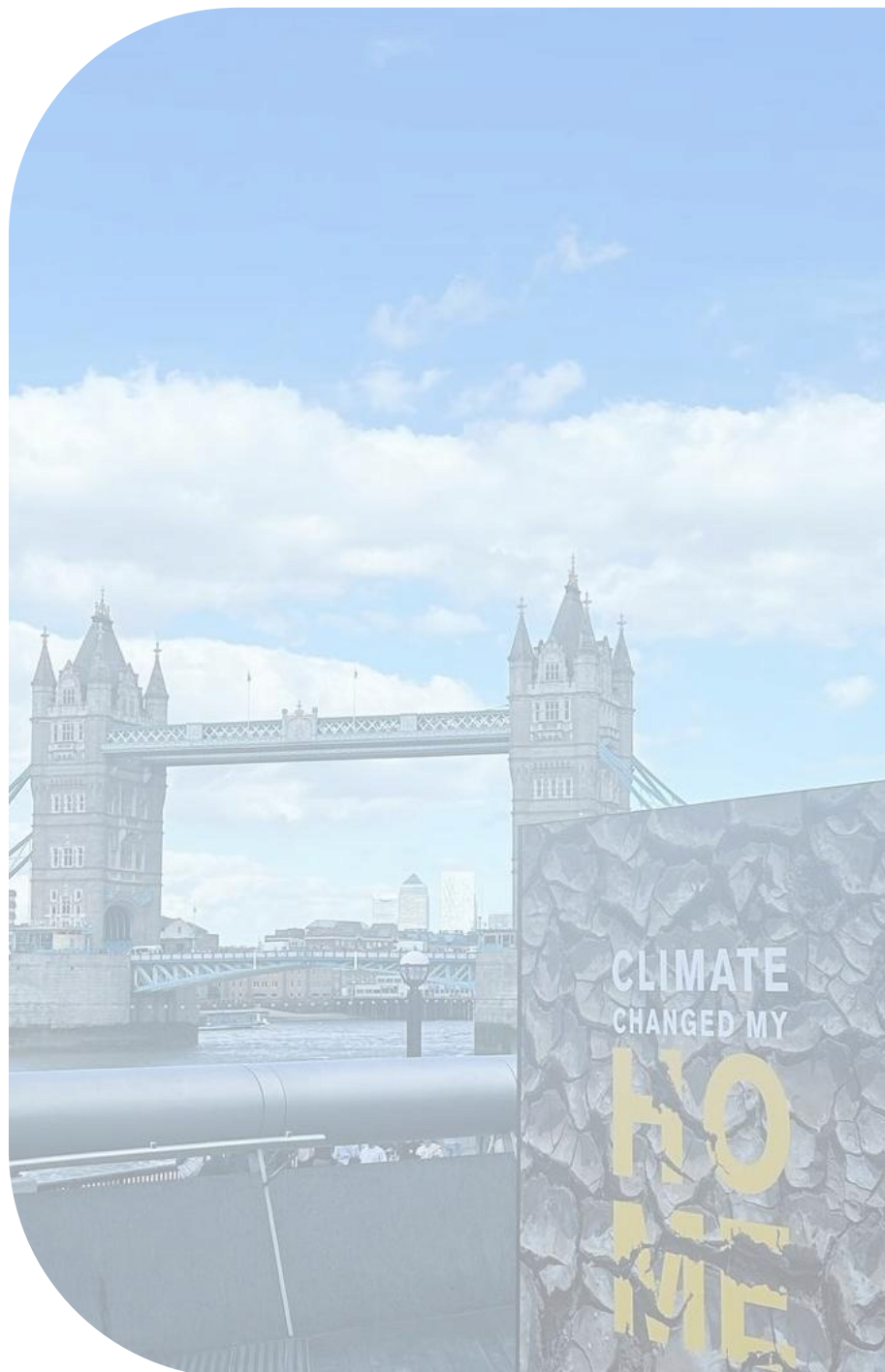
1. Emissions Measurement Groundwork

» *Committed to standard metrics*

In 2023, IRC adopted the globally-accepted GHG Protocol's framework and quantitative reporting metrics, encompassing Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions. Also in 2023, we adopted emission types and multipliers from the Humanitarian Climate Charters Carbon Calculator to make our calculations consistent with the rest of the sectors'. Using this reporting framework and universal metrics ensures we are on a credible path to get to Net-Zero by 2050. The GHG Protocol categories are:

Scope 1 Emissions	Scope 2 Emissions	Scope 3 Emissions
These include direct emissions from owned or controlled sources, which include IRC's generators, vehicles, and refrigerants.	*These are indirect emissions from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, heating, and cooling consumed by IRC.*	*These encompass all other indirect emissions that occur in IRC's value chain.*

» *Studied our emissions data collection processes**

As the first step, we examined the best ways to collect Scope 1, 2, and 3 data. IRC Operations partnered with Zeal Consulting, a team of engineering students from Columbia University to help us with this investigation. Zeal Consulting interviewed IRC departments to see what systems and data they have. The team gathered 10 data sets to help us evaluate categories of data, quality, and quantity. Another group of students - Blue Ivy Consulting - took a deeper dive at vehicle data and management practices, looking at another 6 datasets specific to fleet.

*In 2023, IRC also sought data sets that could shed light on waste, water usage and overall climate resilience of operations. That investigation is not the focus of this report, however data on these may be included in future reports.

2. Activities Baseline Measurement

>> *Investigated existing activities*

In this same time period, IRC saw value in establishing a baseline for activity. IRC's Sustainability Advisor surveyed country offices to answer "yes or no" on whether they were engaged in 52 sustainability activities within four categories: energy, vehicles, waste, and purchasing practices. This survey included programs in 37 countries, 6 HQ locations, and 3 US regions.

WHAT WE LEARNED

1. Emissions Measurement Groundwork

Due to the inherent challenges of being a humanitarian NGO of this size and structure, our existing data management systems must be enhanced in order to handle the complex requirements of GHG emissions tracking.

IRC will need to significantly upgrade its technological and support systems to baseline, monitor, and reduce its emissions in alignment with the GHG protocol and standard practice for the humanitarian sector. The Zeal consulting team shared four observations about data collection at IRC:

1. Data is isolated in different parts of the organization.
2. Many systems track data, but they don't work together.
3. Excel is used a lot for tracking data.
4. Most data is collected manually.

These are not unique challenges for the humanitarian sectors, however IRC is uniquely motivated to address them. Closing these gaps would require significant investment, from a donor or otherwise, for IRC to mature its systems and enable reliable data capture. Below is a summary of results from our data and data systems review.

IRC's known emissions

This data covers January 2023 – December 2023. This is NOT a baselining report. This is a summary of the state of known and valid data captured by IRC systems. IRC emissions will appear to grow in future reports as we improve our collection efforts. It will also appear to grow as more offices join IRC's financial system. Once a baseline has been set and we have systems in place to monitor and reduce our emissions, we can demonstrate environmental impact reductions.

Stationary Combustion

IRC has data on total financial expenditures for petroleum products which we can use to approximate emissions. First, IRC must categorize and differentiate fuel costs and whether they are for generators or vehicles IRC has the system capacity to do this once we have the labor capacity available.

Mobile Combustion

Data is available for some vehicles. Specific data on vehicle miles traveled is available in locations that use a fleet management system to track vehicles. These make up 8 (about one-fifth) of our country program locations and two (about one-fifth) of our US locations.

- CRRD: 353 MT CO2 (2023) calculated using distance travelled by 88 active vehicles within IRC's global fleet software. IRC has hundreds of vehicles however the exact number is unknown.

- RAI: 24 MT CO2 (2023) calculated using distance travelled by the 6 active vehicles in US fleet software. IRC had 64 vehicles in its US fleet at the end of 2023.

Fugitive Emissions

Data is challenging to collect or estimate. We are reviewing methodologies to collect this in the future.

Electricity

Utility data is available for some HQ locations. IRC has data on total financial expenditures to utility companies which we can use to approximate emissions. First, we must categorize and differentiate how much is spent on electricity vs. heating and cooling, since both use different fuels. IRC has the system capacity to do this once we have the labor capacity available.

IRC has specific electricity data on NYC and London locations from utility bills.

NYC: 163 MT CO2
London: 28.2 MT CO2

2023

Steam

Heat

Cooling
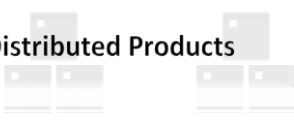
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IRC has specific heating data on NYC and London locations from utility bills.

NYC: 1,534 MT CO2
London: 28.8 MT CO2

2023

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Travels	**Most of IRC's travel emissions data ta is available. Below is data from IRC's two main travel booking websites.** **- Travel site 1 – 2,144 MT CO2 (2023)** **- Travel site 2 – 2,773 MT CO2 (2023)** **According to global procurement this is approximately 90% of our purchased travel.**
Goods and Services	IRC has total financial expenditures for goods and services which we can use to approximate emissions. IRC has the system capacity to do this once we have the labor capacity available.
Capital Goods	IRC has financial expenditures on its assets which we can use to categorize these per the Humanitarian Carbon Calculator and us to approximate our emissions. We have the ability to track major assets in the system and can explore the ability to glean climate data from this.
Distributed Products	IRC does not distribute carbon-based items as part of its programming.
Waste	We have financial information paid to waste removal providers, however there are many locations that do not pay for waste collection. In the future, IRC may consider collecting data on waste volume.
Transportation and Distribution	IRC has total financial expenditures on delivery and shipping, however this a complex calculation, since lower shipping costs do not automatically translate to lower emissions. We are reviewing methodologies to calculate this in the future.
Leased Assets	IRC is rolling out a lease management software with the top priority being lease tracking for US Government requirements, however we plan to assess its ability to track climate data and calculate emissions

WHAT WE ARE SEEKING

1 Resource

IRC is seeking resources to advance our technology to measure and reduce our environmental impact. We are pursuing funding specifically to invest in our systems and support us to track progress towards sustainability goals. Through engagements with funders, we are also bringing attention to our successes and resources we need to get to an ideal state.
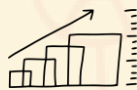
2 Technology

IRC is seeking investment in automated data collection devices wherever possible, for example, remote sensors and energy-saving devices at our sites. We have had success with this approach with respect to vehicles, as the IRC's programs that use VMS are already submitting GPS - collected data to one central dashboard, making it simpler to view activity and track emissions. IRC is moving more of its US vehicles to a VMS system which will improve vehicle data collection.

3 Partners

IRC is seeking technological partners to improve systems communication for multi-purpose and effective decision-making. This will allow us to improve our data categorization, for example, within our financial system, to better approximate our scope 3 emissions.

Efforts to model our emissions with public and peer data did not seem to give us adequate estimates for decision-making and impact tracking.

Due to inherent challenges with data sources in an organization of our complexity and size, we looked to public and peer data to help model our emissions, however, this produced results that were too inaccurate to be usable. When we tested actual data vs. modelled data for our NYC HQ Office, the error was 23.5%. This error ranged from 210% to almost 2000% for our IRC UK Office. One of the reasons why our emissions are challenging to model is because of the variation in sites where IRC operates. IRC operates 567 sites in 55 countries across six continents. Our portfolio includes many infrastructure types, energy efficiencies, and uses, energy sources, and climates that factor into a site's emissions. A second reason is that this model was built on applying peer's emission category percentages to calculate IRC's emissions. Some of the assumptions were 1) the chosen peer organizations' emissions were accurate 2) that their activities are similar enough to ours that we could extrapolate. 3) that portions of our data were accurate enough to estimate our emissions. This was not the case.

ELECTRICITY EMISSIONS

Category	2021	2022	2023 (Actual)	2023 (Modelled)	Percent Error
New York HQ Office	145	147	163	213.18	23.5%
London HQ Office			28.2	9.07	210%

HEATING EMISSIONS

Category	2021	2022	2023 (Actual)	2023 (Modelled)	Percent Error
New York HQ Office	1,559	1,471	1,543	15.74	
London HQ Office	12.51	14.50	28.8	1.38	1,986%

WHAT WE ARE DOING

IRC is partnering with Columbia University again in the calendar year 2024 to assess possibilities to improve our climate modelling. This will include more comparisons of actual vs. modelled data, integration of usable data (e.g. vehicle systems data) into our model and comparisons with more applicable peers.

2. Activities Baseline Measurement

IRC country programs are taking action on sustainability, however there is significant value in uniting these efforts with a global strategy.

IRC country programs are currently taking a decentralized approach to sustainability. After hiring its first Senior Sustainability Advisor, IRC gained more insight into these activities and global successes. Some notable statistics from 2023 that are most relevant to emissions reductions:

» 20 country programs have at least one solar installation
» 19 country programs are collecting data on vehicle movements
» 14 country programs have a fleet management strategy
» 13 country programs are doing procurement planning to reduce air shipments of goods and items

When multiple sites all seek to accomplish similar sustainability activities there can be a lot of duplication. In 2023, Operations created a Solutions Library to connect country programs with internal and external resources. Ops also facilitated climate case studies and shared successes in the organizational newsletter.

In 2023, IRC's Global Supply Chain made climate readiness a core component of its departmental strategy. IRC is seeking investment to develop its organizational climate operations roadmap. With a global roadmap in place, IRC can reduce duplication, support, track and scale up initiatives, and achieve Net-Zero by 2050.

Annex: Activities

Category	Number of Country Programs Engaging in Activity	Percent of all Country Programs Participating in Activities	Number of HQ Office Participating in Activities	Percent of HQ Offices Participating in Activities	Number of US/Europe Office Participating in Activities	Percent of US/Europe Offices Participating in Activities
Development of a sustainability, energy and/or climate action plan	4	13%	1	17%	0	0%
Installation of solar energy	20	65%	0	0%	0	0%
Purchasing renewable energy offsite (e.g., community solar)	8	26%	0	0%	0	0%
Sustainable construction	5	16%	0	0%	0	0%
Energy-efficiency upgrades	10	32%	2	33%	0	0%
Electrifying heating and cooling (e.g. heat pumps)	4	13%	0	0%	0	0%
Switching or planning to switch all back-up power from fossil fuel to renewable sources (e.g. generators to solar-powered battery storage)	10	32%	0	0%	0	0%
Considering sustainability criteria before signing new building leases	7	23%	1	17%	0	0%
Considering sustainability criteria in decisions about travel accommodations or meeting venues (i.e. hotels, conference halls)	8	26%	0	0%	0	0%
We have none of these practices on energy and facilities	6	19%	1	17%	5	100%

Category	Number of Country Programs Engaging in Activity	Percent of all Country Programs Participating in Activities	Number of HQ Office Participating in Activities	Percent of HQ Offices Participating in Activities	Number of US/Europe Office Participating in Activities	Percent of US/Europe Offices Participating in Activities
Development of a fleet management strategy	14	45%	1	17%	1	20%
Procurement planning to reduce air shipments of goods and items	13	42%	1	17%	1	20%
Use of more sustainable fuels (e.g., biofuels like biodiesel, biomass, biogas)	4	13%	1	17%	0	0%
Purchasing (or considering purchasing) electric or hybrid vehicles for IRC fleet	3	10%	0	0%	1	20%
Leasing/renting electric or hybrid vehicles for operations	3	10%	0	0%	1	20%
Incentivizing public transportation	2	6%	2	33%	1	20%
Adopting flexible work policies (e.g., hybrid home/office schedule, shorter work week)	11	35%	1	17%	0	0%
Tracking data on employee commuting	5	16%	0	0%	1	20%
Promoting shared resources (e.g., carpooling)	16	52%	0	0%	1	20%
Promoting long-lasting changes in behavioral habits (e.g., biking instead of driving)	2	6%	1	17%	0	0%
Collecting data on movements, costs, fuel type and amount and maintenance of vehicles	19	61%	1	17%	0	0%
Recommending and incorporating the most sustainable and environmentally performing vehicles into project plan	8	26%	0	0%	1	20%
We have none of these practices on transportation	2	6%	0	0%	1	20%

Category	Number of Country Programs Engaging in Activity	Percent of all Country Programs Participating in Activities	Number of HQ Office Participating in Activities	Percent of HQ Offices Participating in Activities	Number of US/Europe Office Participating in Activities	Percent of US/Europe Offices Participating in Activities
Incorporating waste management planning into supply chain and procurement [e.g. end of life planning like recycle, reuse, refurbish, compost, donation]	13	42%	2	33%	2	40%
Working with local authorities and service providers to integrate waste management into already existing systems and infrastructure.	9	29%	2	33%	0	0%
Organizing and maintaining regular solid waste management practices at distribution and transit centers	5	16%	2	33%	1	20%
Developing a waste management plan	4	13%	0	0%	0	0%
Procurement planning to reduce single-use plastics and other disposable items	9	29%	0	0%	0	0%
Liaising with suppliers for better products/sustainable solutions	6	19%	2	33%	2	40%
Composting organics/food waste	3	10%	0	0%	0	0%
Separating hazardous waste until it can be disposed	12	39%	0	0%	1	20%
Organizing reverse logistics	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%
Working with programs on right-size procurement/forecasting	15	48%	0	0%	1	20%
Providing clearly marked and fenced waste storage	6	19%	1	17%	0	0%
Removing waste regularly from public collection points	11	35%	2	33%	0	0%
Setting up an MOU with local partners/NGOs to repair/repurpose/reuse unused or disposed items or materials	2	6%	0	0%	0	0%
Reducing packaging of food and NFIs	7	23%	0	0%	0	0%
We have none of these practices on waste	1	3%	0	0%	1	20%

Category	Number of Country Programs Engaging in Activity	Percent of all Country Programs Participating in Activities	Number of HQ Office Participating in Activities	Percent of HQ Offices Participating in Activities	Number of US/Europe Office Participating in Activities	Percent of US/Europe Offices Participating in Activities
Measuring and tracking carbon emissions in operations	10	32%	1	17%	0	0%
Asking our suppliers to report the carbon footprint of the goods & services that they supply us	0	0%	1	17%	0	0%
Including environmental requirements in suppliers'/vendors'/contractors' Expressions of Interest (EOIs), Statements of Work (SOWs), tender documents, and contracts	6	19%	1	17%	0	0%
Joint procurement of goods and services with peer organisations on local, regional or global level to optimise transport use and support right-size procurement	5	16%	0	0%	0	0%
Purchasing organic, local food	8	26%	1	17%	0	0%
Prioritizing lower emissions foods (e.g. meat alternatives) at IRC related activities	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%
Procuring locally manufactured or value added goods and services	13	42%	1	17%	0	0%
Incorporating sustainable or low-carbon goods into project design	4	13%	0	0%	0	0%
Awareness raising/education about climate or green procurement	10	32%	1	17%	0	0%
Liaising with suppliers for better products/sustainable solutions	3	10%	0	0%	0	0%
Purchasing carbon offsets	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Green legacy projects	2	6%	0	0%	0	0%
Hiring designated sustainability/climate IRC staff	1	3%	0	0%	2	40%
Measuring and tracking water usage and adopting water efficiency measures	3	10%	1	17%	0	0%
We have none of these practices on climate or sustainability	7	23%	0	0%	2	40%