

AN EVALUATION OF The OCB Green Initiatives

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BACKGROUND

Green Initiatives is a funding envelope, established in 2023 by MSF Operational Centre Brussels (OCB), to support operational teams in reducing the environmental footprint of operations while maintaining and improving the quality of care. Between 2023 and 2026, the initiative funded 88 proposals, allocating a total of €10.7 million. Beyond funding individual projects, the envelope was intended to create space for environmental considerations to become part of routine operational planning and decision-making.

Combining four country case studies with a portfolio analysis, document review, and key stakeholder interviews, the evaluation examined how Green Initiatives functions as an organisational mechanism to influence operational practice, with the aim of informing decisions about its future role and design.

METHODOLOGY

-  Desk review
-  Portfolio analysis
-  Four country case studies (Yemen, Sierra Leone, South Africa, DRC)
-  Key informant interviews

GOING FORWARD

- 1. Maintain the strong connection between environmental action and operational priorities.** Green Initiatives gained legitimacy because initiatives helped solve recognised operational problems, strengthened professional practice and improved quality of care. Continuing to position environmental action as a way of improving humanitarian operations appears central to its future success.
- 2. Make climate adaptation more visible.** Although relatively few initiatives were explicitly framed as adaptation, many already strengthen operational resilience. Making these links more visible could broaden understanding of how adaptation contributes to humanitarian practice.
- 3. Strengthen organisational support.** Future progress is likely to depend on helping teams identify opportunities, access technical expertise, learn from practical examples and develop proposals. Expanding these forms of support will be particularly important if Green Initiatives is to encourage a wider range of initiatives and operational contexts.
- 4. Recognise that the role of the funding envelope is evolving.** As established initiatives become part of routine operations, its greatest contribution increasingly lies in supporting areas of environmental action where the benefits are harder to measure, implementation pathways are less established, and organisational support remains less developed. This will include encouraging less mature areas of environmental action, supporting innovation and helping new opportunities emerge. This raises a broader organisational question about how regular budgeting and operational planning should evolve if proven environmental investments are expected to become routine practice.

CONCLUSIONS

Strategic contribution and changes in practice: Green Initiatives has made environmental responsibility more visible within operational decision-making, but it has not become routine across OCB. The strongest evidence of change is in solar where initiatives have repeatedly demonstrated operational value. However, these changes remain uneven and there is not yet an OCB reflex to consistently consider environmental alternatives.

Legitimacy and co-benefits: The legitimacy of Green Initiatives has been shaped largely by its ability to deliver benefits beyond environmental footprint reduction. Initiatives gained traction when they supported priorities that teams already valued. This was visible across all case studies. Operational, medical and professional co-benefits have been central to the credibility and acceptance of Green Initiatives within OCB.

Design, governance and organisational capability: The straightforward design of Green Initiatives has helped generate participation and learning, but participation has depended heavily on organisational conditions. Engagement was strongest where teams had access to technical expertise, support networks, implementation pathways, and confidence that operations would continue long enough for benefits to be realised. The envelope has been particularly well suited to technical, measurable and infrastructure-based initiatives.

Sustainability and the future of the envelope: Green Initiatives offered space for environmental investments that struggle to compete with short-term operational priorities and annual budgeting. This has been one of its most important contributions. While repeated implementation has normalised some environmental options, these changes remain dependent on supportive conditions and have not become fully widespread. The rationale for a dedicated funding envelope remains strong, but its role is changing. Looking ahead, its value lies increasingly in creating space for less established areas of environmental action, supporting contexts where existing systems provide limited support, and helping new opportunities emerge.