

Supporting Local Partners in Greening Operations

A step-by-step guide on how to help PIN's local partners in making their transport, offices, and procurement more eco-friendly



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This guide was prepared for the staff of People in Need (PIN) country programmes who are interested in **helping local partners in making their offices, transport, and procurement more eco-friendly** (i.e. “greening” their operations). It is part of PIN’s efforts to decrease the environmental footprint of its humanitarian and development operations. This guide will help you understand:

- Why should we help our local partners operate in a more eco-friendly manner?
- What has been our experience so far?
- What are the key steps in providing such support?
- How much does it cost?
- What resources can you take advantage of?
- Who can support you in such efforts?

It only takes **20 minutes to read this guide**. The guide applies to supporting a wide range of local partners – non-governmental organisations, government institutions, and the private sector. It is based on lessons PIN learned while supporting local partners in four countries. We encourage you to take maximum advantage of the shared good practices while adjusting the way you support your partners to their needs and the local context.

Please keep in mind that this guide was prepared for PIN staff who are already familiar with the greening agenda and want to share their know-how with their local partners. If the topic of greening operations (i.e. making them more eco-friendly) is something new to you, please explore first [PIN’s guidance in Confluence](#) or the various greening resources PIN offers at its [Civil Society Now website](#).

If you are not employed by PIN but wish to utilise this guide or any referenced PIN resources for your non-commercial greening initiatives, you are welcome to do so, provided that the original source is clearly acknowledged. If you do not have access to any of the linked resources, please contact petr.schmied@peopleinneed.net.

The guide was prepared in early 2025 by Petr Schmied, PIN’s Environment and Climate Advisor. If you have any comments or questions about the guide, please send an email to petr.schmied@peopleinneed.net.

WHY SUPPORT PARTNERS IN GREENING OPERATIONS?

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Among the first questions that may come to mind when looking at this guide are: Why should we invest in helping our partners to be more environmentally friendly? Is this really a priority? It is an important point, so let's have a look into some of the reasons that might motivate us:

- First of all, many **partners are interested** in such support. They care about the impact they have on the natural environment.
- PIN is committed to the "**do no harm**" principle. A large share of our work is implemented by the local partners. If we are serious about reducing the environmental harm our projects cause, we also need to help partners operate in a more eco-friendly manner.
- Strengthening the capacities of the local partners is **among PIN's key strategic priorities**.
- PIN has a **wealth of experience** with greening our operations. By sharing it with partners, we can further increase our impact.
- Many greening measures can help us and our partners **reduce expenditures**, which makes our work more efficient.
- Reducing the environmental impact of NGO activities is a growing **priority for donors** - it increases our competitiveness.

As you can see, there are many good reasons for helping our partners adopt practical measures that make their operations more eco-friendly. PIN's experience has shown that this can be done with a very modest budget. The costs are often so low that they can be included easily in the project budgets (see details in chapter [Costs](#)).

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In 2024, PIN conducted a pilot project focusing on helping 10 partner organisations in Mongolia, Nepal, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Moldova to decrease the negative environmental impact of its operations. In early 2025, PIN conducted an internal review of our experience and used the key lessons to prepare this guide. Below, you can find several **snapshots of what our colleagues and the supported partners said about the provided support**:

- *“The experience with supporting our partners was valuable, and we received fantastic feedback. They appreciate PIN's support, and as part of it, I felt proud of our organisation.”* (Selma Rahimic, PIN's Green Operations Officer)
- *“It was fulfilling to see the partners take ownership of their environmental goals and make real, lasting changes that align with their values and contribute to a greener future.”* (Khulan Gansukh, PIN's HR and Administrative Officer)
- *“We appreciated PIN's holistic approach. They provide not only practical tools and resources but also ongoing guidance and support to ensure successful implementation.”* (PIN's partner Community Self Reliance Centre)
- *“Our experience with PIN's support was highly positive. Their guidance and practical tools helped us initiate meaningful steps toward greening our operations.”* (PIN's partner NGO Clinica Juridica Nord)



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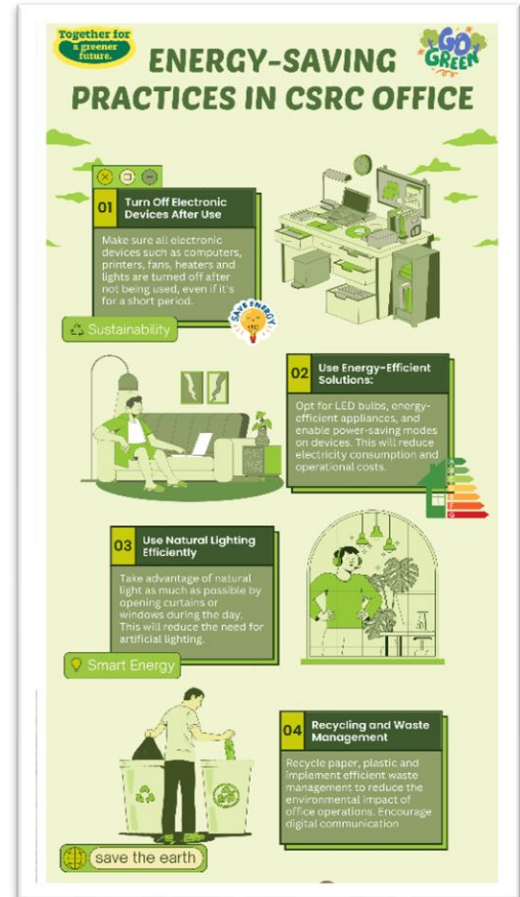
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Key lessons were:

- **Lots can be achieved even with a limited budget:** Partners appreciated that PIN initiated the topic and triggered (or accelerated) the process of making their offices, transport, and purchases more eco-friendly.
- **Follow-up support is vital:** It is easy to plan various greening measures but more difficult to implement them properly.
- **Timing matters:** Organise the initial workshop and key follow-up support at a time when partners are less busy (e.g. not during the end of a year).
- **Partners' focal points:** Ensure that each supported partner appoints a focal person PIN can collaborate with and who moves the agenda forward.
- **Communicate the value of the greening work plan:** Explain how it works and what its benefits are, show examples, and help partners use it systematically to track progress and plan further work.
- **Clarify the priorities:** Keep explaining that greening operations is primarily about adjusting the way organisations operate (travel, make purchases, use energy, organise events, etc.) and much less about purchasing new eco-friendly items.
- **Agree on realistic deadlines:** These targets should help the collaboration progress effectively.
- **Take advantage of partners' existing experience:** Approach the collaboration as a mutual sharing of know-how, not as "PIN teaching partners".
- **Ensure that everyone is engaged:** Partners need to involve all of their staff in the process of greening operations, not only the few staff that collaborate with PIN.



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This guide was prepared to make it much easier for you to support your partners in greening their operations. We broke down this process into **9 key steps you can follow**. For each step, we offer practical guidance, tips, and resources. Use them to make your work easier and avoid mistakes. At the same time, feel free to adjust them to your context and to what your partners need the most.

Step 1: Clarify Your Resources

Supporting partners in greening their operations requires the following resources:

- The time needed to go through the steps presented below: The total time requirements can range between 6 to 15 working days, depending on how many partners you support and how much assistance you will provide.
- The expertise of someone who has a good technical understanding of the various greening measures, such as your Envi Focal Point.
- Additional costs include:
 - Expenses related to organising an introductory workshop. If you organise it in PIN or partners' office, the only costs should be the travel expenses and refreshment.
 - Costs related to introducing various greening measures: Approximately 70% of the effective greening measures require no or only very limited investments. This means that even if you have zero budget available, you can still make a difference. Other costs (e.g. related to inexpensive office supplies – such as efficient light bulbs, rechargeable batteries, license for e-signatures software, or reusable cups) can be included in the budgets of the projects you implement with your partners. Only about 10% of greening measures are so expensive that they cannot be supported by PIN's project budgets.

Knowing how much time and money you can dedicate helps you decide how many partners you can support and what type of support you can offer. Keep in mind: Lots can be achieved even with a modest budget (e.g. a hundred USD). Most of the office supplies, workshop, and other costs can also be easily included in the project budgets – you just need to plan for it. Remember that including such types of low-cost support can **contribute to your funding proposal being more competitive**.

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Step 2: Understand the Most Impactful Measures

Before you start helping partners, you should have at least a basic understanding of which measures are most effective in making organisations' transport, offices, and procurement more eco-friendly. Take advantage of [PIN's guidance on the most impactful greening measures](#) available in the 'greening' part of Confluence. Reading the guidance will take 2-3 hours of your time and will give you a good overview of the most meaningful actions your local partner can take. If you need to know more about any of the measures, talk to your Envi Focal Point.

Step 3: Engage Partners

At this point, you should be ready to offer your support to relevant partners. You should **approach primarily partners that:**

- Have a genuine interest in making their operations more eco-friendly
- Have the right motivation – not simply to gain financial or material support
- Are willing to invest the required time - join workshop(s), engage colleagues, plan concrete measures, and implement them
- With whom you are implementing (or plan to implement) a joint project so that you can tap into the project budget if needed

Consider arranging a face-to-face or online meeting to introduce the range of support on offer and explain what would be needed from partners to make this happen. Some partners may drop out along the way, so it is better to cast a wide net initially. **Be very clear and realistic about what support PIN can (and cannot) provide.** Most likely, you will be able to:

- Help partners understand what 'greening operations' is about
- Recommend inexpensive and meaningful greening measures, explain any costs, including how to include them in project budgets
- Help partners develop a clear work plan, including details on how they will implement the most feasible and impactful measures
- Provide technical support with implementing the prioritised measures
- Support partners in communicating externally the results of their greening efforts

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Step 4: Assess Partners' Needs

Next, meet with staff from each organisation individually to understand what they are most interested in and identify the key strengths and weaknesses when it comes to making their offices, transport, and procurement more eco-friendly. Take advantage of PIN's [rapid assessment template](#) – review it and adjust it to your context. If a partner expresses any needs you cannot address (e.g. financial support), clarify it immediately. Conclude the meeting with a clear agreement on what support PIN will provide and what the partner is committing to. Ask each partner to appoint a specific staff responsible for the greening agenda. Discuss the timing and next steps.

Step 5: Organise an Introductory Workshop

The next step is to organise an introductory workshop for all participating partners that will give them a good understanding of how they can make their operations more eco-friendly. The following partners' staff should join: senior management staff, as well as any staff responsible for office management, logistics, and procurement. The workshop should **cover the following topics**:

- What is the environmental impact of organisations' operations?
- Why should we reduce the negative impact?
- What measures can make our operations more eco-friendly?
- How can you integrate 'greening operations' into your organisation?
- What support is available to you?

Such a workshop is likely to last about **six hours**, depending on how many people join and how much discussion there is. You can use [pre-prepared workshop slides](#) (read the guidance below each slide), which you should adjust to your context and partners' needs. Ensure that PIN's Envi Focal Point joins the workshop, as they have the most experience with greening operations.

As a result of the workshop, the participants should be motivated to make their operations more eco-friendly, understand which measures they can adopt, be aware of where they can find guidance on implementing such measures, and know what next steps they should take.

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Step 6: Help Partners Develop a Clear Plan

The next step is to help partners develop a clear work plan where they list the measures they want to implement and for each measure they specify who will implement it, how, where, by when, expected costs, and sources of funding. Having and regularly using such a plan (e.g. during review meetings) significantly increases the chances that the agreed measures are implemented, as the plan details concrete responsibilities and deadlines. It also helps track progress on implementing the planned measures. A template of such a work plan is available [here](#). PIN's country programmes use a very similar template, so if you need examples of completed work plans, contact Envi Focal Points. Provide your partners with the template and support them in preparing their plan for making their offices, logistics, and procurement more eco-friendly. Practically, this should involve three key actions:

- 1) First, ensure that partners read the [offered guides](#) or watch [webinar recordings](#) that explain the various measures related to waste management, saving energy, eco-friendly transport, sustainable procurement, and water conservation. This step is crucial – if your **partners understand the various measures they can take**, they are much more likely to design a meaningful plan.
- 2) Help partners conduct a more in-depth review of which meaningful measures they currently (do not) follow using a [checklist available at this link](#). This easy exercise will enable them to **focus on addressing the key gaps**.
- 3) Next, support partners to **prepare an effective work plan**. This might involve reviewing the template with them to ensure they understand it well, showing them examples of completed work plans, preparing a part of the plan together, providing feedback on a drafted work plan, and discussing with them how they will use it (e.g. who will review and update it, how often, etc.).

The plans should also include measures a partner wants to implement but currently doesn't have the required funding for. In such a case, the plan can specify how the organisation intends to secure the funding (e.g. include it in the budget of a newly designed project). When reviewing the drafted work plans, focus primarily on how realistic they are and whether they focus on the most effective measures. **Help partners avoid the following common mistakes:**

- Proposing measures that look nice, but have very limited environmental impact. Always ask: How much energy / fuel / water / waste will this measure save? Help partners focus on measures that save the most resources at the lowest costs.
- Implementing 'greening measures' that are only about buying new eco-friendly products and services. Often, much bigger changes can be achieved by changing the way staff travel, use energy, deal with waste, etc.

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Step 7: Provide Follow-Up Support

Often, it is easy to make plans but much harder to implement them. Providing partners with follow-up support is crucial for ensuring that the planned changes are implemented. You should:

- Meet with people responsible for the planned measures and discuss with them in depth how exactly they plan to implement each measure. Ask the Envi Focal Point to share their knowledge and experience with implementing similar measures.
- Provide partners with [examples](#) of stickers, posters, [policies](#) and other resources they might need. These can inspire them and save them time.
- Offer the partner the possibility of regular meetings (e.g. once every two months) where you review their progress using the work plan, discuss any challenges, clarify what support they need, and agree on the next steps.
- Discuss with partners how to include the costs of any greening measures in their funding applications.

Step 8: Communicate Results

Adopting greening measures is important, but it is not enough – we also need to show the results to donors, key partners and colleagues. Once a substantial part of the measures is implemented, organise an online meeting with partners and PIN's Communication Officer to discuss how and with whom they will share their achievements. Share examples of how PIN communicates its greening work on its [website](#), social media, and in the [project proposals](#) and reports.

Step 9: Review the Experience

Before you conclude your support to partners, ask them for feedback on the provided support. Take advantage of the [pre-prepared questions available at this link](#), which you can adjust to your needs. Use them for an anonymous online survey or during a face-to-face or online meeting with the partners. This last step will help you understand what has (not) worked, what you should do differently next time, and what additional support partners may need.

THE COSTS OF GREENING PARTNERS' OPERATIONS

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Greening operations is primarily about reducing the consumption of resources, such as electricity, fuel, water, and single-use items. In many cases, this should lead to **reduced expenditures** – i.e. organisations should be spending less money on electricity, transport, and office supplies.

Many of the measures involve minimal (if any) costs other than staff time. Encourage partners to focus on them first. Such measures include, for example: training staff on eco-friendly operations, discussing and agreeing on how to reduce avoidable travel, using heating / air-conditioning more efficiently, introducing a requirement to purchase energy-efficient appliances only, segregating waste, banning the purchase of single-use cups / bottles / plates (while offering alternatives), displaying reminders to switch the lights off when not needed, using digital signatures, agreeing how else to reduce printing, or how to reduce avoidable packaging.

Other measures require slightly higher investments but can still be **financed from the project budgets**, such as using energy-efficient light bulbs, renting more fuel-efficient cars, using reusable batteries, addressing any leakages of cooled / heated air in the offices (e.g. below the door, by the windows), and using water savers in the bathrooms.

Only a small part of greening measures require more substantial investments, such as installing solar panels, using battery inverters, purchasing more efficient cars, and using more eco-friendly heating or air conditioning.

It is crucial that you help partners understand that **greening operations is primarily about adjusting the way they operate** (travel, make purchases, use energy, organise events, etc.) and much less about purchasing new eco-friendly items. Such a mindset can enable partners to make their operations more sustainable even when they can invest very few financial resources. Encourage them to keep asking themselves: *“Which measures will save the most energy / fuel / water / waste at the lowest costs?”*

At the same time, discuss with the partners how they can **incorporate any costs in their project budgets**, under budget chapters such as “office equipment”, “consumables”, and “logistics”. Very few donors will object to partners purchasing efficient light bulbs, printing stickers to serve as reminders to save energy, or renting more efficient cars. **Encourage partners to track their expenditures** on transport, electricity, water, etc., to be able to see and to communicate to their donors and staff the financial benefits of investing in greening their operations.

Although the costs of supporting partners in greening their operations are very low (primarily staff time, workshops, and travel), do your best to **include PIN costs related to supporting partners in newly prepared project proposals and budgets**.

RESOURCES FOR GREENING PARTNERS' OPERATIONS

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- [Guidance on key greening measures for PIN staff supporting local partners](#) (step 2) – the link is only accessible to PIN staff
- [Rapid partners' assessment template](#) (step 4)
- [Introductory workshop slides](#) (step 5)
- [Guides on greening measures for local partners](#) (steps 5, 6, 7)
- [Recordings of webinars on key measures for PIN's partners](#) (steps 5, 6, 7)
- [Template of a greening work plan](#) (step 6)
- [Self-assessment checklist helping partners understand key gaps in their greening practices](#) (step 6)
- [Template of an environmental policy](#) (step 7)
- [Examples of greening stickers and posters](#) (step 7) – the link is only accessible to PIN staff
- [PIN website about its approach to greening operations](#) (step 8)
- [Description of PIN's greening approach for project proposals](#) (step 8) – the link is only accessible to PIN staff
- [Questions for a review of PIN's support to partners](#) (step 9) – the link is only accessible to PIN staff

If you are having difficulty accessing any of these resources or need further support, please **contact PIN's Environment and Climate Advisor** at petr.schmied@peopleinneed.net.