

Environmental Sustainability Policy

Introduction and Context

Care for the environment forms the Fifth Mark of Mission as part of ABM/AID's mission statement, "to protect, care for and renew life on this planet".

At least three of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals relate directly to the Earth's environment (13—Climate Action, 14—Life Below Water and 15—Life on Land) but protecting and caring for the environment also cuts across many of the other goals.

A key component of *Environmental Sustainability* is reducing *Climate Change* and its impacts. Indeed, this is one of the major challenges of the 21st century.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has stated that protecting the environment and addressing human contributions to *Climate Change*, are urgent matters that cut across everything we do. He has stated that, "Our responsibility of service to the environment... is hardwired into the mission of the global Anglican Communion, into our understanding of God's holistic mission."¹

Moreover, the 2015 Papal Encyclical, *Laudato Si*, states: "The climate is a common good... *Climate Change* is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day."²

ABM and AID acknowledge that *Climate Change* is occurring, and that human activity is a significant contributor to *Climate Change*. *Climate Change* is exacerbating problems related to pestilence, floods, droughts, less predictable weather for farming and fishing, and rising sea levels in many areas of the world. Furthermore, the world's poor are being disproportionately impacted by climate change. ABM-AID's [Climate Change Position Statement](#) commits both organisations to addressing *Climate Change*.

Besides *Climate Change*, other forms of damage to the environment – such as clearing of forests and drying of water sources – are also a major cause of disasters, including landslides, floods, and droughts. Environmental mismanagement therefore causes or exacerbates many (but not all) kinds of disasters. In addressing disasters, AID is guided by its Humanitarian Response Policy and Humanitarian Response Procedures.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to clarify ABM's and AID's environmental values and to facilitate these values being reflected in ABM's and AID's work within our own organisations (including *Advocacy* and *Community and Church Education*), and AID's work in *Community Development* and *Humanitarian Response*.

Scope

This policy applies to the work of ABM and AID, both in the field and in ABM and AID's offices and activities. Some policy commitments specify that they also apply to AID's development partners.

¹ <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-writing/speeches/archbishop-justin-welbys-lecture-united-theological-college-bengaluru>, published 2019; accessed 1/9/23.

² http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html. Accessed 1/9/23.

Definitions (see “Definitions and Acronyms” at the beginning of this Compendium)

Guiding Principles

- a. ABM and AID regard consideration of the *Environment* as an integral and essential component of each activity and program that ABM and AID undertake.
- b. ABM and AID acknowledge that an activity may impact on the environment in several ways:
 - i. A direct impact: a change (physical, chemical or biological) to the environment because of the activity.
 - ii. An indirect impact: where the changes in policy or behaviour flowing from the activity are expected to affect the environment in the future or ‘downstream’.
 - iii. A positive impact: a beneficial environmental outcome, such as better health as a result of a clean water supply.
 - iv. A negative impact: an adverse environmental outcome, which may be irreversible and/or have a chain of impact on poverty such as poor health or a reduction in livelihood potential.

Policy Commitments

- 1 ABM and AID support the *Sustainable Development Goals*, including the following goals related to environmental sustainability:
 - i. Goal 2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
 - ii. Goal 7 Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
 - iii. Goal 13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
 - iv. Goal 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
 - v. Goal 15 Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage water resources, soils, forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

ABM and AID will support the Sustainable Development Goals in our own activities and will encourage partners to take the Sustainable Development Goals into account when planning and engaging in *Development Initiatives*.

- 2 ABM and AID require their partners to comply with their own government environmental laws, standards and/or policies.
- 3 To promote positive impacts on the environment and to demonstrate our commitment to minimising the carbon footprints of our own organisations, ABM and AID affirm the following institutional commitments:
 - i. We will comply with all applicable legal and other environmental requirements, including laws of partner governments and Multilateral

Environmental Agreements.

- ii. We will pursue *Climate Action*. This will be done by developing targets for minimising our carbon footprint, including in the areas of waste minimisation and greenhouse gas emission offsets, particularly of work- and governance-related travel. These will be reported against in ABM and AID's Annual Report.
 - iii. We will promote environmental awareness, including awareness of this policy, among our *Responsible People, Staff, Volunteers*, supporters, suppliers, *Contractors*, and other *Third Parties*.
 - iv. We will contribute to the environmental awareness of the Australian public. This will include *Education* and *Advocacy* about *Climate Justice*, the impacts of *Climate Change*, the pursuit of *Climate Action*, and *Environmental Sustainability* issues.
 - v. We will appoint an *Environmental Focal Person*, whose role will be to support the implementation of this policy.
 - vi. We will encourage our *Partners* to develop their own *Environmental Sustainability* (including *Environmental Stewardship* policies).
- 4 As a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct, AID is committed to promoting environmental stewardship and sustainability through *Community Development and Humanitarian Initiatives*.³
- i. To promote positive impacts on the environment, AID commits to supporting *Community Development* that is environmentally sustainable, that is "development which meets the needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Moreover, where practicable, AID commits to supporting *Community Development* that raises community awareness about causes and consequences of environmental degradation, and to supporting innovation in environmentally sustainable livelihoods. *Community Development* should result in reduced poverty and an increase in social benefit, while at the same time preserving the *Environment* and the earth's natural resources. AID will therefore support *Community Development* projects that promote recycling, conservation of soil or water, sustainable agricultural practices and energy efficiency.
 - ii. Climate action and *Environmental Sustainability* will continue to be a key focus of AID's work, and AID will incorporate *Climate Change* mitigation, adaptation, and *Disaster Risk Reduction* into its program strategies wherever possible.
 - iii. AID will require our *Partners* to consider the impacts of *Climate Change* as part of their *Contextual Analysis* during *Design* and *Planning* stages of their *Programs* and *Projects*.
 - iv. AID will include risks to *Environmental Sustainability* including *Climate Change Risks* in its regular *Risk Management* processes with our *Partner Organisations* and *Community Development* projects and *Humanitarian Responses*, including *Risks* that events attributed to *Climate Change* may pose to project implementation.

³ <https://acfid.asn.au/good-practice-toolkit/quality-principle-3/commitment-3-3/> Accessed 24/8/2023.

- v. AID will, where possible, avoid or otherwise reduce adverse impacts on vulnerable people caused by the risks of a changing climate or disasters (for example by not supporting infrastructure vulnerable to flooding, or livelihoods that are inappropriate for changing climatic conditions).
- vi. AID will create incentives that will increase rather than reduce people's ability to adapt to *Climate Change* and disaster risks, such as funding water and energy conservation mechanisms.
- vii. AID will require its partners, when planning and engaging in development work, to assess and manage potential environmental impacts of any *Development or Humanitarian Initiative*, including any risks related to *Climate Change*. Initial assessment will be required through project cycle management templates and where this assessment reveals risks of negative impacts, AID will require partners to use its Environmental Risk Screening Procedure or a similarly detailed tool to more deeply assess the nature of these potential impacts and plan steps for mitigating any risks. The identification, assessment and management of environmental impacts will consider the views and needs of different stakeholder groups, including *Those in Vulnerable Positions*.
- viii. AID will support provision of *Environmental Sustainability*, including *Climate Change*, and *Disaster Risk Reduction* training for partners.
- ix. AID commits to the principle of "Do no harm". In line with DFAT's Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy,⁴ AID will work with its *Development and Humanitarian* partners, to ensure that projects it funds will:
 - i. Protect and conserve biodiversity and natural habitats and avoid damaging or degrading ecosystem services and natural resources, including through habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation, invasive alien species, overexploitation, hydrological changes, nutrient loading, and pollution.
 - ii. Adopt a precautionary approach to the protection, conservation, management, and sustainable use of living natural resources.
 - iii. Avoid the release of pollutants to air, water, and land; if they are released, minimise direct and indirect discharges.
 - iv. Manage the generation of wastes, and where waste cannot be avoided, reduce, recover, and reuse waste. As a final option, waste will be treated, destroyed, or disposed of in a manner that is safe for human health and the *Environment*.
 - v. Avoid the manufacture, trade, and use of hazardous substances that are subject to international bans or phase-outs (such as ozone depleting substances) and not use asbestos containing.
 - vi. Where feasible, use less hazardous substitutes, for hazardous materials not subject to an international ban (such as chemical lubricants, pesticides and

⁴ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/environmental-social-safeguard-policy.pdf> Accessed 24/8/2023.

herbicides), and encourage the use of organic farming methods.

- vii. Promote sustainable management of natural resources including through cleaner production and efficient use of resources.
 - viii. Avoid impacts on natural and cultural heritage, including historical sites, landscapes and traditions and apply internationally recognised practices to manage potential impacts.
 - ix. Consider technically feasible and cost-effective options to reduce project-related greenhouse gas emissions.
- x. AID will undertake periodic assessments of its own and its implementing partners' environmental management practice, including the degree to which its own policy is being implemented and the impacts of its policy, projects and practices. AID will make the findings widely accessible.

Responsibilities for Implementing this Policy

ABM and AID boards will:

- ensure ABM and AID exercise and promotes environmental stewardship in the operations of the organisations, and that AID promotes this in all its program work;
- champion the *Sustainable Development Goals*, particularly those related to *Environmental Sustainability*;
- monitor waste minimisation and emission reduction within the ABM and AID organisations through receipt of a regular report.

ABM and AID Senior Management will:

- appoint an *Environment Focal Person*.

The Environmental Focal Person will:

- organise training in this policy and in *Environmental Sustainability to ABM and AID Workplace participants* including staff, boards and governance committees;
- report annually to the ABM and AID boards on progress towards targets on waste minimisation and emission reduction at ABM and AID;
- lead regular assessments of ABM's and AID's *Environmental Sustainability* practices, and of those of AID's partners, and report these widely, including to the ABM and AID boards.

ABM and AID Advocacy and Education staff will:

- engage in environmental advocacy and education with the Australian public and ABM's and AID's supporters (see also ABM-AID Advocacy Policy)

AID program staff will:

- work with AID's *Partner Organisations* to ensure implementation of this policy in *Programs and Projects* that are funded by AID.

ABM and AID Policy Committee will:

- review this policy at least every five years, and more frequently if needed.

Codes, Policies and Procedures Relevant to this Policy

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, especially 2, 7, 13, 14 and 15.

ACFID Code of Conduct, particularly Quality Principle 3, and Commitments 3.2, 4.2 and 8.3.

[ACFID's Climate Action Framework](#)

DFAT's Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy

[Australia's International Development Policy 2023](#)

DFAT Accreditation Guidelines, especially A2.7, B2.3, B3.3, B3.8, B4.1

ABM-AID Advocacy Policy

AID's Environmental Risk Screening Procedure

[ABM and AID's Climate Change Position Statement](#)