



Environment Policy

Managed on behalf of the ED and Board by: Head of Program

Approved by the Board on: 2 March 2024

1. Purpose

ActionAid Australia's is committed to becoming an environmentally proactive organisation and to operating in an environmentally sustainable way across all facets of the organisation. ActionAid Australia is committed to climate justice and to working with others to support the systemic change required to create a more just and sustainable future for all. To that end, ActionAid Australia engages in campaigning to ensure Australia delivers its fair share of global finance to low-income countries and phases out of public and private investment in fossil fuels and industrial agriculture. It also promotes and supports programming to enable affected communities to adapt to the damaging impacts of climate change on their lives and livelihoods.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the following people:

- ActionAid Australia staff, contractors, consultants and volunteers;
- ActionAid Australia Board of Directors; and
- Partner organisations.

3. Definitions

The environment as defined in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* includes: (a) ecosystems and their constituent parts including people and their communities; (b) natural and physical resources; (c) the qualities and characteristics of locations, places and areas; (d) heritage values of places; and the social, economic and cultural aspects of a thing mentioned in (a), (b), or (c).

An impact is defined as any direct or indirect activity which has a positive or negative effect on the environment. A **significant negative impact** is any activity which has potential to disrupt ecosystems or that is large scale or of a permanent or long-term nature.

An environmental mitigation plan is a series of sub-activities that are implemented within the major activity to minimise the impact on the environment. These should include the phases of planning and design, implementation and completion for each activity.

Natural resources are substances that exist naturally on the earth and were not made by human beings. There are renewable and non-renewable natural resources.

Renewable resources include land, soil and biological resources such as trees, plants, seeds, livestock, fisheries, wildlife, water and all genetic materials. Non-renewable resources include metals, minerals and fossil fuels.

Climate Change is a long-term change in the earth's climate and weather patterns. Climate Change and global warming are terms often used interchangeably to describe the accelerated increase in the Earth's global average temperature as a result of human activity. Climate change affects how people interact with the environment.

Food Security is when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.

Carbon Footprint is the amount of carbon dioxide or other carbon compounds emitted into the atmosphere by the activities of an individual, company, country, etc.

Agroecology: is a sustainable farming that works with nature. Principles of agroecology have been defined by the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) High Level Panel of Experts. (<https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca5602en/>)

4. Policy Objectives

ActionAid Australia has the following objectives in relation to the environment and, as a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct, meets its environmental commitments as follows:

- become an environmentally friendly and low carbon-emitting organisation, supported by the development of an effective system to monitor the environmental impact of ActionAid Australia's so that improvements can be made over time;
- support and promote campaigns that hold Governments and companies accountable for their greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impact, and strive to influence them to adopt more effective and robust climate mitigation strategies and practices;
- promote rights-based programming that supports people living in poverty and exclusion, particularly women, to effectively adapt to the impacts of climate change and increase access to climate finance;
- ensure that all our rights-based programming and campaigns contributes to systemic change and promotes environmental stewardship and sustainability – Quality Principle 3: Sustainable Change;
- support the development of relationships with suppliers who have environmentally sustainable products and ways of operating;
- fundraise from agreed industry sectors and avoid extractives industries and those that are 'red listed' in ActionAid's Global Corporate Engagement Framework; and
- as part of our engagement with the Australian public, raise awareness of individuals and companies' choices and behaviours that create negative impacts (including environmental and climate change impacts) on people

living in poverty and exclusion communities and seek to change these behaviours in order to mitigate their negative impacts.

5. Legislative Framework and Standards

ActionAid Australia abides by the Australian Government's main legislative framework for the environment, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy (the Department) administers the EPBC Act.

Other multi-lateral agreements to which the Australian Government is a signatory, and which are relevant to ActionAid Australia's work are:

- Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse emissions (2007);
- International Convention to Combat Desertification (1994);
- Convention on Biological Diversity (1992);
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992);
- Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (1989);
- Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (1985) and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (1987);
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) (1973); and
- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (1971).
- The Paris Agreement legally binding international treaty on climate change (2015)

The Sustainable Development Goals (2015), while non-binding, are also relevant as an agreed global agenda for advancing development in ways that protect people and the planet.

The Australia Government Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) requires recipients of funding to comply with their Environment Protection Policy for the Aid Program 2014 and their Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy 1 January 2018.

6. Guiding Understandings and Principles

The following understandings and principles guide all aspects of ActionAid Australia's work:

- Climate change and natural resource limits mean that people living in poverty and exclusion, especially women, are experiencing more intense shocks, more hunger and confronting new violations of their rights.
- The world's finite natural resources are rapidly becoming privatised and commoditised and consequently many of the poorest and most marginalised people, particularly women, in communities are experiencing expulsion, exclusion and deprivation.
- The planet's increasing dependency on commercial crops and export-oriented agriculture often undermines food security and takes a heavy toll on the environment and climate.

- The connections between climate change, natural resource limits, and people's lack of access to and control over productive resources (including land and food) on the one hand, and human rights violations resulting in poverty, vulnerability, hunger and deepening gender inequality on the other, are clear.
- Climate change is being accelerated by human-induced global warming as a result of the burning of fossil fuels, historically attributed to high-income countries. These countries must rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions to mitigate the impacts of climate change on people living in poverty and exclusion.
- The ability of communities, particularly women, to be resilient and claim their rights is essential if they are to successfully adapt to climate change, have secure sources of food and lead a life of dignity.
- ActionAid Australia (in collaboration with the global ActionAid federation and other partners) has a role to play in supporting the empowerment, standing in solidarity with, and building the resilience of communities, particularly women, affected by climate change and food insecurity.
- ActionAid Australia can also play an important role in holding the Australian Government and Australian companies to account for their impacts on the environment and for taking strong action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change as well as provide their fair share of financing for adaptation, mitigation and loss and damage.
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- Supporting the leadership of women living in poverty and exclusion in achieving climate justice is important in our work, given the disproportionate impact of climate change on women's lives and their exclusion from decision making processes.
- Given the multiple causes of climate change which cut across national boundaries, ActionAid Australia has a role to play in working with the Australian public to raise awareness of climate change issues and in helping Australians to make more informed choices in order to minimise their environmental impact on communities affected by poverty and exclusion.
- ActionAid Australia has a role to play as a good global citizen in making more informed choices, including transitioning to greater reliance on digital technologies, that will minimise its own environmental impact and carbon footprint.

7. Policy in Practice

Organisational Culture and Behaviour

1. ActionAid Australia's Living our Values Hub will develop an Environmental Action Plan that will manage and measure progress towards reducing ActionAid Australia's carbon footprint and environmental impact. This Action Plan will include at a minimum travel protocols, energy and paper usage protocols, material and waste disposal, procurement, and awareness-raising and education activities. The Leadership Team will approve and champion this Action Plan.

2. ActionAid Australia will continue to support initiatives under the ActionAid International Carbon Reduction Policy, as part of the ActionAid federation's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint.

International Development Programming

3. All ActionAid Australia supported international development programs/projects will be screened for their potential environmental impact as described in the Programs Manual, which will include:
 - conducting an initial environmental and social impact assessment as part of the project design, and including measures to mitigate negative environmental effects;
 - ensuring that an environmental standards clause is written into all Project Agreements;
 - monitoring compliance with the principles outlined above in its monitoring and evaluation visits;
 - promoting agroecology as an Ecosystem Based Approach and supporting the integration of this method into projects.

ActionAid Australia Activities

4. All initiatives in Australia supported by ActionAid Australia, such as campaigning, fundraising, communications, and volunteer events and projects, will give consideration to reducing any potential environmental impact. This will be done as part of existing team planning processes. Initiatives will be managed in line with the ActionAid Australia Environmental Action Plan, and projects which have significant negative environmental impacts will not be supported by ActionAid Australia.
5. ActionAid Australia will also seek to develop relationships with suppliers that share its environmental values and approach to becoming environmentally sustainable.
6. ActionAid Australia will not accept funds from the extractives industry and other identified industry sectors that are 'red listed' in its Global Corporate Engagement Framework.

8. Policy Monitoring and Review

The Head of Programs is accountable to the Executive Director and Board for managing and maintaining this policy. All members of the Leadership Team are accountable for ensuring that their teams understand and adhere to this policy in their day-to-day work. When compliance issues surface, the Leadership Team members will work with staff members to address these issues promptly.

Any updates/revisions to the policy must be endorsed by the Executive Director and Leadership Team before being submitted to the Board for their approval.

Changes to Policy

Nature of Changes	Date of Approval by Board
Policy first developed	22 November 2012
Policy updated and key changes are: (a) ActionAid Australia senior management titles, names of authorities and guiding documents updated so current; (b) including principles around women's leadership and engagement with the Australian Government and corporations; (c) ensuring environmental standards are included in contracts with country partners.	12 May 2017
Updated in line with the changed titles for new organisational structure and in line with the periodic policy review in September 2018	8 December 2018
Reviewed to align with evolving practice, broader finance demands, and update titles and responsibility for carriage of the environmental action planning	2 March 2024