

# AFP Environmental Management Policy

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### 1. Introduction

Act for Peace (AfP) acknowledges creation, the natural environment and ecosystem services that support life, yet recognises that development is not sustainable if it steals from present and future generations. Poverty and environmental degradation are interwoven, and it is the poor and vulnerable who often suffer most from this degradation.

By recognising the connection between environmental degradation and the threat to life and human dignity, AfP is committed to not only mitigate against environmental degradation occurring as part of development efforts, but to ensure that policies, programs and activities 'do no harm'<sup>1</sup> and support communities to restore and improve their environments through sustainable development and preservation of their environments for future generations. In addition, AfP is committed to fostering resilience of communities in responding to disasters and adapting to the impacts of climate change, recognising that disaster and climate change have a very tangible impact on the realisation of human rights and many other aspects of development.<sup>2</sup>

### 2. Rationale

AfP and its partners, along with ACT Alliance have a common commitment to ensuring sound environmental management and the promotion of environmental sustainability across our activities for the following reasons:

- As a member of the ACT Alliance and signatory to the ACT Alliance Code of Good Practice, AfP has undertaken to "act in ways that will protect God's creation, restore the environment and respect human rights."<sup>3</sup> This includes a commitment to adapting AfP's own operations in support of global efforts to address climate change as the

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<sup>1</sup> Dfat Principle 1: Do no harm states that Care should be taken to ensure that aid investments does not lead to environmental impacts that undermine their results. Unintended or poorly managed impacts on the environment can affect people's quality of life and economic opportunities.

<sup>2</sup> Wording based on the ACT Alliance Framework Position for Climate Change Advocacy

<sup>3</sup> ACT Alliance Code of Good Practice

present world development model is threatening the lives and livelihoods of many, especially among the world's poorest people, and destroying biodiversity.<sup>4</sup>

- As an agency committed to creating a peaceful world where all people share a safe and dignified life,<sup>5</sup> AfP recognises that it's not possible to achieve this vision without a healthy natural environment. Environmental problems are development problems.
- The environment is integral to the economic prosperity of many developing countries, accounting for 36 per cent of the wealth of these nations.<sup>6</sup>
- Sustainable development cannot be defined in economic terms alone, but must begin in a commitment to care for the poor, the marginalised, and the voiceless. In this sense, through our work with partner agencies across the world, AfP strives to fulfil our obligations to respect and preserve the rights and existence of peoples, practices and the natural environment.
- AfP acknowledges the interrelationship between disasters, climate change and the environment – fostering resilience within the communities we serve allows us to reduce overall vulnerability to hazards and promote sustainable stewardship of the environment.
- AfP recognises that climate change threatens to roll back decades of development gains and force millions more people into poverty.

### **3. Scope and Purpose**

This policy commits AfP staff and partners to protect the environment as a common value and promote sound environmental management as a method that guides all of our work.

This policy incorporates:

- AfP's commitment to adapting its own operations and programming, and supporting partners to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change (i.e. by promoting carbon neutrality, by maintaining documents electronically and only printing when absolutely necessary, by recycling and by identifying environmentally friendly options in all procurement processes).
- AfP's commitment to supporting global efforts to balance the economic, environmental and social needs of current and future generations as articulated within the Global Sustainable Development Agenda.
- AfP's commitment to appropriately manage, and support partners to manage environmental impact across the project cycle – both positive and negative (i.e. by undertaking appropriate environmental impact assessments in consultation with communities).
- AfP's commitment to adopting a community-led approach to disaster risk reduction, climate change mitigation/adaptation and environmental management – recognising that climate change and disasters disproportionately affect the poor and vulnerable, and the importance of fostering resilience through its programs.

The policy should be used to inform all AfP personnel of their legal and ethical obligations in relation to protecting the environment, and the principles contained therein should be integrated into all AfP operations including across the program cycle.

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<sup>4</sup> From WCC Climate Justice guidance

<sup>5</sup> AfP Strategic Plan

<sup>6</sup> DFAT Environment Protection Policy for the Aid Program (2014)

#### 4. Applicable Standards & Guidance

As a faith-based and rights-oriented organisation working with partners, AfP has an obligation to act within the laws of the countries wherein we operate, as well as to hold duty-bearers within those countries accountable for providing environmental integrity for rights-holders. In this regard, AfP affirms and commits to upholding the rights outlined in the international human rights and international humanitarian law instruments.

As a member of the ACT Alliance and signatory to the ACT Alliance Code of Good Practice, AfP has “committed to acting in ways that will protect God’s creation, restore the environment and respect human rights” and supports the principle of “speaking out and acting against those conditions, structures and systems which increase vulnerability and perpetuate poverty, injustice, humanitarian rights violations and the destruction of the environment.”<sup>7</sup> In addition, AfP is guided by the ACT’s guidance on climate change advocacy and therefore stresses that action on climate change must be inspired by coherence with human rights principles and solidarity – be they mitigation or adaptation measures.<sup>8</sup>

As a member of ACFID and signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct (2015), AfP has similarly committed to environmental sustainability within all development operations<sup>9</sup>. The Code of Conduct requires that “signatory organisations will commit to conducting their aid and development activities in an environmentally sustainable way” and that they will also “aim to reduce the environmental impact of their domestic operations.” AfP also recognises our responsibility under the ACFID Code of Conduct to promote best practice in our international development activities, including through our commitment to protecting, maintaining and improving the environment.

| Sustainable Development Goals <sup>10</sup> |
|---|
| 1. No poverty                               |
| 2. Zero hunger                              |
| 3. Good health and well-being               |
| 4. Quality education                        |
| 5. Gender equality                          |
| 6. Clean water and sanitation               |
| 7. Affordable and clean energy              |
| 8. Decent work and economic growth          |
| 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure  |
| 10. Reduced inequalities                    |
| 11. Sustainable Cities and communities      |
| 12. Responsible consumption and production  |
| 13. Climate action                          |
| 14. Life below the water                    |
| 15. Life on land                            |
| 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions  |
| 17. Partnerships for the goals              |

<sup>7</sup> ACT Alliance Code of Good Practice

<sup>8</sup> Wording based on the ACT Alliance Framework Position for Climate Change Advocacy

<sup>9</sup> ACFID Code of Conduct

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

AfP understands its role in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Agenda which aims to equally balance the economic, environmental and social needs of current and future generations and hereby reiterates its commitment to working in partnership in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>11</sup> The sustainable development agenda calls for action by all countries – poor, rich and middle income – to promote prosperity while protecting the planet.

AfP is also guided by the Istanbul Development Effectiveness Principles,<sup>12</sup> as well as policy guidance issued by the ACT, the WCC and other relevant bodies, including UN agencies. Act for Peace supports the World Council of Churches' (WCC) policy on climate change in recognising the dimensions of the climate change crisis (ecological, social, economic, political and spiritual) and from an ethical perspective, that climate change is a matter of justice, as "those who are and will increasingly be affected are the impoverished and vulnerable communities of the global South."<sup>13</sup>

As a recipient of funding from the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), AfP is required to ensure all actual and environmental impacts relating to its projects or programs, are assessed and managed to avoid or mitigate negative impacts and promote positive impacts, in line with the principles outlined in the *DFAT Environment Protection Policy for the Aid Program (2014)*, and in support of DFAT's obligations under the *Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act)*.

This means that:

- All investments, regardless of monetary value or delivery approach, must be assessed for potential environmental impacts in accordance with the DFAT *Environment Protection Policy for the Aid Program*.
- Funding activities must 'encourage sound environmental and ecological practices'<sup>14</sup>
- AfP must ensure all actual or potential environmental impacts relating to its programs are assessed and managed to avoid or mitigate negative impacts and promote positive impacts – projects which are considered sensitive will require an initial environmental assessment (see DFAT Environment Protection Policy Good Practice Notes for further guidance).<sup>15</sup>
- AfP must ensure that environmental requirements specified in its project/program proposal are implemented, monitored and reported to DFAT.
- Through reporting requirements, AfP must advise DFAT of any potential or actual environmental impacts of its project/program and comply with all relevant environmental laws and regulations of partner countries.
- AfP should administer programming and activities in accordance with the six principles outlined in the DFAT *Environment Protection Policy for the Aid Program*: do no harm; assess and manage environmental risk and impact; disclose information transparently; consult stakeholders; work with partners and promote improved environmental incomes across the aid cycle.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

<sup>12</sup> CSO Istanbul Development Effectiveness Principles (2010)

<sup>13</sup> [Minute on Global Warming and Climate Change, 2008](#)

<sup>14</sup> Draft DFAT ANCP Manual 2015

<sup>15</sup> <http://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/safeguards-risk-management/environmental-protection/Pages/environmental-protection.aspx>

<sup>16</sup> See DFAT Good Practice Notes - <http://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/safeguards-risk-management/environmental-protection/Pages/environmental-protection.aspx>

## **5. AfP Policy Objectives and Indicators to Measure Progress toward Objectives**

AfP acknowledges our responsibility to protect God's creation by modelling sound environmental and ecological practices that mitigate against negative impacts and promote positive impacts.

The objectives of this policy are:

- AfP reduces the environmental impact of AfP domestic and international operations and adapts operations, including support to partners, to mitigate against and adapt to climate change.
- AfP promotes sustainable management and conservation of the environment in all its programs through sound environmental management practices
- AfP ensures communities are supported to identify and respond to environmental or climate hazards in order to build resilience and foster sustainable development outcomes.

## **6. AfP Approach and Focus Areas**

### **6.1 AfP Approach**

AfP will foster an understanding within its agency and with partners regarding ecological as well as social, cultural and economic sustainability as a crucial component in positive, equitable transformational change. Fostering this understanding will include awareness that programs need to consider their impact on the environment and adequate attention needs to be given to potential environmental problems or benefit, and that appropriate mitigation or enhancement measures should be considered in planning and implementing projects.

In addition, recognising our responsibilities as a rights-based organisation, and our comparative advantage of working ecumenically, AfP's approach is focused on ensuring that vulnerable communities are empowered to protect and promote their rights and design their own local solutions to environmental hazards, disaster management and mitigating against or adapting to climate change.

### **6.2 AfP Focus Areas**

In accordance with AfP obligations outlined (above) including the DFAT Policy, AfP's focus areas under this policy are:

- Reducing the negative environmental impact of our own operations as an agency and through our work with partners.
  - Undertaking awareness-raising with partners regarding the centrality of environmental management in sustainable change.
  - Climate change-related disaster risk reduction.
  - Mainstreaming environmental management in all development, humanitarian and advocacy programs.
  - Supporting global efforts toward achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in partnership with other faith-based and development/humanitarian organisations.
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Within these focus areas, actions that may be taken to uphold our commitment to sustainable development and environmental protection include:

- Reducing the impact of AfP operations including by sourcing local infrastructure, reducing transport costs, improving efficiency and supporting other efforts aimed at reducing the carbon footprint of AfP and partner operations
- Providing safe and healthy working conditions
- Protecting and conserving natural and cultural heritage through activities
- Conducting assessments and consultations with communities on possible environmental impacts or ways to promote positive outcomes
- Building resilience by promoting community-level disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures
- Establishing grievance mechanisms to receive affected parties' concerns on environmental issues
- Building the capacity of partners to develop and implement environmental frameworks as appropriate
- Harmonising efforts with other international development actors
- Complying and supporting efforts to improve partner government laws.<sup>17</sup>

### **6.3 AfP's work with partners and capacity building with partners**

It is essential that all AfP partners are aware of the opportunities and challenges arising from implementing this Environmental Management policy. This policy is high level and does not provide specific guidance or operational documents that can be utilised by program staff and partners across the aid cycle. As such, efforts to integrate the consideration of environmental impacts in all programming and reporting are necessary to institutionalise the principles outlined in this policy.

### **7. Reporting, review and relevance to other AfP guidelines and policies**

This policy should be reviewed every three years by the Environmental Management and Climate Change Focal Point. This policy supports and should be read in conjunction with the following AfP Policies: AfP Sustainability of Programs Policy, AfP Sustainability Policy, and the AfP Code of Conduct.

### **8. Conclusion**

The present policy represents AfP's current overall organisational understanding of humanitarian protection and development approaches and outlines strategic decisions made by AfP in order to promote these principles. Various tools and guidelines to help put the policy into practice already exist and/or will be developed in response to demands expressed by staff and partners.

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<sup>17</sup> Based on DFAT's *Environment Protection Policy for the Aid Program (2014)*

## Annex 1. AfP Objectives and Indicators Table

| OBJECTIVES  | ACTIVITIES  | INDICATORS  |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AfP promotes sustainable environmental management and conservation practices in all of its programs</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AfP ensures that all relevant humanitarian and development activities, regardless of value, must be assessed for environmental impacts</li> <li>▪ AfP reports any risks identified as part of Environmental assessment to DFAT in line with its obligations in the AfP-DFAT Grant Agreement.</li> <li>▪ AfP ensures all actual or potential environmental impacts relating to its project/program, whether direct or indirect, positive or negative impacts, are assessed and managed to avoid or mitigate negative impacts and promote positive impacts.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Impacts on the environment are part of standard AfP appraisals and are used to assess partner project designs.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AfP ensures communities are supported to identify and respond to environmental, natural or climate hazards in order to build resilience and foster sustainable development outcomes.</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AfP builds capacity of staff and partners to recognise the interconnection between the environment, disasters and resilience and fosters a collaborative and consultative approach to program design and implementation.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All AfP programs encouraged to undertake a community-led approach to identifying, mitigating, preparing for, and adapting to, disasters, climate change and environmental hazards where applicable.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AfP reduces the environmental impact of AfP domestic and international operations and adapts operations, including support to partners, to mitigate against and adapt to climate change</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AfP minimises impact of operations including minimising waste, encouraging efficiency, promoting sustainable travel and supporting other efforts aimed at achieving carbon neutrality.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AfP partnership agreements include specific references to promoting environmental sustainability.</li> <li>▪ AfP reduces the carbon footprint of its own operations</li> </ul>                                 |

## Annex 2. Glossary

**Climate Change Adaptation:** The adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities (IPCC, 2000). Or, a) Adapting development to gradual changes in average temperature, sea-level and precipitation; and, b) reducing and managing the risks associated with more frequent, severe and unpredictable extreme weather events (UNISDR).

**Disaster Risk Reduction:** The concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events (UNISDR, 2009).

**Environment:**

- a. ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities
- b. natural and physical resources
- c. qualities and characteristics of locations, places and areas
- d. heritage values of places
- e. social, economic and cultural aspects of a thing mentioned in (a), (b), (c), or (d) EPBC)

**Environmental sustainability:** the quality of not being harmful to the environment or depleting natural resources, and thereby supporting long term ecological balance.

**Environmental Assessment:** the term used for the assessment of environmental consequences (positive and negative) of a plan, policy, program or project prior to the decision to move forward with the proposed action.

**Hazards:** A dangerous phenomenon, event (e.g. flood, cyclone, earthquake), human activity (e.g. civil conflict) or condition that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, loss of livelihoods and services, social and economic disruption, or environmental damage. Hazards can be single, sequential or combined in origin and effects. Each hazard is characterized by its location, intensity, frequency and probability. Understanding the nature and likelihood of such hazards is critical to individual and community safety and security (UNISDR, 2009).

**Sustainable Development:** is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Vulnerability:** The characteristics and circumstances of a community, system, or asset, that make it susceptible to the damaging effects of climate change and other hazards. Vulnerability can be determined by the interplay between exposure and sensitivity to a range of interrelated social, economic, political, governance and environmental factors (Oxfam GB, 2010).

### Annex 3. Resources and Reference List

1. **ACFID Code of Conduct (2015)** - <https://acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct>
2. **ACT Alliance Code of Good Practice** - <http://actalliance.org/documents/act-alliance-code-of-good-practice/>
3. **ACT Alliance Framework Position for Climate Change Advocacy** - <http://actalliance.org/documents/act-alliance-framework-position-for-climate-change-advocacy/>
4. **DFAT Environment Protection Policy for the Aid Program (2014)** - <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/environment-protection-policy-aid-program.aspx>
5. **DFAT Environment Protection Best Practice Notes** - <http://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/safeguards-risk-management/environmental-protection/Pages/environmental-protection.aspx>
6. **Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)** - <https://www.environment.gov.au/epbc>
7. **Istanbul Development Effectiveness Principles (2010)** - <http://cso-effectiveness.org/-istanbul-principles,067-.html>
8. **UN Sustainable Development Agenda** - <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>
9. **UNSDSN 'Getting Started with the SDGs'** - <http://unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/151211-getting-started-guide-FINAL-PDF-.pdf>
10. **World Bank** Guidance on Sustainable Development - <http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/english/sd.html>