

Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Adaptation Policy

Version 4.0

Introduction

As a child rights INGO, ChildFund Australia recognizes the importance of environmental sustainability and climate change action to achieve outcomes for the most marginalized and disadvantaged children. This policy aims to improve our environmental performance by:

- contributing positively to sustainable development and climate change action; and
- minimizing the negative impact of our programs and operations.

The lives, wellbeing and future of children and communities is intrinsically linked to the quality of the natural environment. The natural environment holds natural resources that provide goods and services that are critical to successful livelihoods strategies. If well applied, these livelihood strategies result in reduced vulnerability, improvements in wellbeing, more income, improved food security, and more sustainable use of the natural resource base. Natural resources come in the form of intangible public goods such as biodiversity, the atmosphere, and divisible productive assets such as land and trees.

Natural resources shape levels of vulnerability in communities, particularly rural communities, as the extent of environmental shocks that are felt by communities in the form of droughts, floods etc., is largely determined by the strength of the communities' natural resource base. ChildFund Australia recognizes that many communities are now more vulnerable than ever before given the depletion of natural resources, and an increasingly variable climate, with more severe and frequent hydro-meteorological hazards events such as tropical cyclones, floods, and droughts.

ChildFund Australia incorporates the natural environment into its work through assessing the extent to which a community faces a high level of disaster and climate risk due to depleted stocks of natural resources, among other factors. It then develops and implements plans to rectify this to protect and improve the natural environment. ChildFund Australia adopts a Do No Harm approach toward the natural environment by ensuring that any risk that the natural environment is exposed to during project implementation across all sectors is identified, assessed, and then mitigated.

ChildFund Australia understands that it contributes to the depletion of natural resource stocks due to the greenhouse gases our activities produce. The consequences of greenhouse gases being released into the atmosphere are global warming, a changing climate beyond the extent to which has been evidenced previously, a worsening of the vulnerability context in which ChildFund Australia beneficiaries live - caused by more frequent and severe natural shocks, and the depletion of livelihood assets.³

ChildFund Australia's approach to the natural environment is guided by Sustainable Development Goals 13, 14 and 15, the Paris Agreement of the UNFCCC, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Sendai Framework, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Key Principles

Rights based: Children have a right to a healthy, clean, and sustainable environment.

Respect: The education of children and adults "shall be directed to the development of respect for the natural environment."⁴

¹ Control of pest and disease, detoxification and decomposition of wastes, etc. – The Convention on Biological Diversity

² DFID - Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

³ As per the DFID Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, the livelihoods assets are human, social, financial, physical, and natural assets.

⁴ The Convention on the Rights of the Child - article 29, paragraph 1.

Sustainable development: Sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people can only be obtained through reducing and/or eliminating environmentally unsustainable patterns of operation within civil society, government, and the private sector.

Custodians: ChildFund recognizes indigenous peoples as custodians of the natural environment who have agency, and their own knowledge and traditional practices specific to natural resource management. ChildFund will “recognize and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development.”⁵

Policy Statement

In the face of environmental degradation and climate change, ChildFund Australia is committed to improving the natural environment, the natural resource stocks that it produces, adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change, and building the resilience of communities. It will do this through identifying community hazard vulnerabilities that are linked to the natural environment and putting actions in place to reduce them and ensuring that program implementation takes a Do No Harm approach, mitigating any potential harm to the natural environment. Furthermore, ChildFund Australia will monitor and manage the environmental impacts of its operations.

Policy Commitments

ChildFund Australia is committed to reducing its impact on the natural environment. The organization seeks to improve its environmental stewardship through its Sydney and Country Office **operations** by:

- reducing energy consumption through monitoring energy use and ‘switching off’ when not in use;
- reducing paper consumption through responsible printing practices and using electronic documents where possible;
- reducing water wastage
- recycling and reducing waste using co-mingled kitchen and paper recycling services; and reusing or donating office furniture rather than disposing of it;
- reducing travel through meeting online rather than in-person;
- assessing environmental impact - including manufacturing practices, recycled components and energy consumption – when procuring stationery, cleaning materials and new equipment;
- promoting a culture of climate care through communicating messages and holding events that promote care of the natural environment; and
- collaborating with and learning from other actors in the sector.

Through its **programs**, ChildFund Australia will:

- comply with the relevant environmental laws and regulations in the countries in which it operates and encourage implementing partners to do the same;
 - train staff on the guidelines associated with this policy and to comply with best practice when undertaking needs assessments, designing and implementing projects/programs and conducting environmental impact assessments;
 - build staff and local partner capacity in Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management;
 - identify, assess, and mitigate risks to the natural environment as a consequence of implementation under any of the ChildFund Australia sectors;
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- monitor and evaluate project impacts on the natural environment and take corrective measures throughout project implementation when/if necessary;
- ensure that questions on the natural environment and how it is linked to community vulnerability and exposure to hazard events are included when building the risk profile of a community;
- raise awareness around the acute impacts of environmental change on children and young people and wherever possible, include them in relevant organizational advocacy.
- raise awareness among communities on the value of the natural environment’s biodiversity; how the natural environment can be managed to achieve sustained livelihoods outcomes;
- work with partners to strengthen both parties’ natural resource management capacity; and
- empower and join young people and other likeminded entities to campaign and advocate for local and global action on Climate Change and the natural environment, using the abovementioned conventions/agreements as a basis.

ChildFund Australia will undertake periodic assessments of its own and implementing partners’ practices that relate to the natural environment every 3 years, including the degree to which this policy is being implemented and the ongoing quality of the Policy and Procedures. More details can be found in the Environment Procedures document that accompanies this Policy.

Guidance Notes

Consult the International Program Team for support documents, such as templates, resources, and checklists, to assist with the implementation of this policy.

Document Information

Document details	
Name of document	Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Adaptation Policy
Author	ER/DRR Advisor
Approved By	Board of Directors
Date of Approval	23 September 2020
Date of Effect	23 September 2020
Assigned Review Period	Every three years after Date of Approval.
Date of Next Review	01 February 2027

Version control				
Version No.	Version Date	Amendment Details	Amended By	Approved By
1.0	12/12/2007			Board of Directors
2.0	06/02/2013			Board of Directors
3.0	23/09/2020	Policy now combines organizational and programmatic environmental sustainability	DRR/ER Advisor	Board of Directors
4.0	01/02/23	Inclusion of CCA and updated principles	Global Programs Director	