

# Climate and Environment Policy

## Policy Statement

Transform Aid International (TAI) seeks a better world for all and is committed to operating in ways that will restore, rebuild and reconcile a broken world and address the impact of climate change.

The scriptures begin with the assertion that God created the world, and it was good. This shows how much God values all of creation including humankind, who must see themselves as part of an interdependent whole. We believe that the Bible gives us authority to steward creation, and we promote the theological basis for creation care, recognising that many of our local country Partners are living at the heart of the complex interweaving of relationships between humans, God, and the earth.

We understand that climate justice requires us to put human rights at the core of decisions and actions we take to address climate change.<sup>1</sup> Historically, some countries and communities have been disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change and been denied equitable access to natural resources. Additionally, we recognise that women are often more affected by climate change than men. This gender inequality means that women are less likely to have access to knowledge, tools and finance to help them overcome climate challenges.<sup>2</sup>

We believe that we have the capacity to protect and restore the environment and reduce our impact whilst carrying out our work together with local partners. We also understand we have a role and responsibility in ensuring that our work has a minimal impact on the environment, to benefit the health and wellbeing of our society and world.

## Scope and Purpose

This Policy applies to all TAI staff, volunteers, contractors and board directors. It applies to our operations based in Australia, and to all long-term community development, humanitarian and disaster management programs and projects supported by TAI.

## Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to improve TAI's Climate and environmental performance by:

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP, Climate change is a matter of justice – here's why <https://climatepromise.undp.org/news-and-stories/climate-change-matter-justice-heres-why#:~:text=Climate%20justice%20means%20putting%20equity,relation%20to%20the%20climate%20crisis>. (Accessed 29/01/2025)

<sup>2</sup> Oxfam Australia, The disproportionate impact on communities <https://www.oxfam.org.au/what-we-do/climate-justice/> (Accessed 24/09/24)

- Complying with all applicable Australian Government policies, Commonwealth legislation, and multilateral environment agreements the Australian Government are signatories to.
- Aligning our practice to the principles and requirements of ACFID and the Climate Charter.
- Minimising the carbon footprint of our operations giving consideration to greenhouse gas emissions, environmentally friendly waste management initiatives and water usage, in accordance with our environmental management targets.
- Communicating our commitment and promoting environmental sustainability activities amongst board directors, staff, volunteers, contractors, supporters, and suppliers.
- Considering the impacts of climate change when undertaking contextual analyses as part of the planning and design, monitoring, evaluation and learning processes in our international programming.
- Recognising, respecting, and incorporating indigenous and local knowledge systems in climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, by collaborating with local communities to co-create solutions that are culturally appropriate and sustainable.

## Guiding Principles

TAI's approach to environmental sustainability is informed by *DFAT's Environment Protection Policy for the Aid program and Environmental and social safeguard policy*<sup>3</sup> and is underpinned by the following principles:

### 1. Do no harm.

We will abide by relevant environmental law and policies to “protect the rights, health, safety, and livelihoods of people including, children, women, indigenous peoples, and other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups”. We will seek to “maintain and promote the health, diversity, and productivity of the environment”.

### 2. Identify, assess and manage environmental and social impacts.

We will promote good environmental practice and outcomes by:

- Screening the environmental impact and taking adequate measures to mitigate negative impacts on environment throughout program/ project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Building the awareness and capacity of community and local partners in climate action and environmental sustainability development.
- Promoting activities that have positive impact on the environment.

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<sup>3</sup> Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2019) Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy [environmental-social-safeguard-policy.pdf \(dfat.gov.au\)](https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/environmental-social-safeguard-policy.pdf) (Accessed 5/9/2024)

- Conducting environmental impact assessment if program/project activities will have potential adverse impacts on the environment and develop plan to monitor and respond to the identified adverse impacts.
  - Withdrawing any project activities that have significant adverse impacts that cannot be managed by the project.
  - Building resilience, through disaster risk reduction and adoption of practices appropriate to changing climatic conditions.
- Building effective partnership across all levels of environmental management initiatives.

### 3. Engage effectively with stakeholders.

Active participation is one of the key principles that grounds TAI's development practice. Through our co-design process we ensure meaningful engagement and consultation with affected parties and key stakeholders throughout the project cycle; from initial engagement through to evaluation. Listening and responding to diverse voices and prioritising relationships are core elements throughout implementation. It is essential to ensure this consultation process and relationship management is "free of external manipulation, interference, coercion, or intimidation, and enable meaningful participation".<sup>4</sup> All concerns or grievances are taken seriously and are handled promptly with transparency through TAI's complaints policy and processes.

### 4. Work effectively with partners.

We are committed to a ***rights-based and locally led approach*** which means we will:

- Collaborate with local communities and empower community members, especially the vulnerable and minority groups, and other stakeholders to co-create solutions that are culturally appropriate and sustainable. This includes facilitation of active and effective participation in environmental management including but not limited to risk identification, assessment and management.
- Recognise, respect and incorporate indigenous and local knowledge systems in climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.
- Embrace the leadership of local actors and value and include the knowledge of different people groups such as children, youth, people of all genders and disadvantaged groups in environmental management.
- Encourage social inclusion and recognition of cultural practices in achieving environmentally sustainable development.
- Recognise the important role that women, men, girls and boys as well as people with disability and marginalised groups play in achieving environmentally sustainable development.

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<sup>4</sup> Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2019) Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy [environmental-social-safeguard-policy.pdf \(dfat.gov.au\)](https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020/06/environmental-social-safeguard-policy.pdf), p.7 (Accessed 5/9/2024)

- Strengthen our collective capacity to reduce climate risks and build the capacity of community and stakeholders to identify the environmental impacts, develop and implement strategies to protect the environment.
- Be transparent about the project activities, risks and impacts in a way that is timely, accessible, and culturally and socially suitable for the community.
- Ensure environmental management and disaster risk reduction is integrated across all development sectors to ensure a consistent approach and better outcomes for people and environment.
- Seek opportunities to share knowledge and work collaboratively in partnership with local government bodies, multilateral, bilateral, NGOs and private sectors to adhere to the relevant environmental laws, standards and/or policies.

## **5. Promote improved environmental and social outcomes.**

We will work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, several of which seek to ensure environmental sustainability globally. The management of environmental factors through this policy will prioritise, but is not limited to, achieving the following SDGs:

- SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, especially target 2.4;
- SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, especially targets 6.3, 6.4 and 6.6;
- SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, especially targets 12.2, 12.5 and 12.8;
- SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, especially targets 13.1 and 13.3;
- SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, especially target 14.2;
- SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss, especially target 15.1 to 15.5 and 15.9.

## **What does the policy look like in practice?**

### **Organisational Risk**

TAI identifies and manages risk in accordance with our [Organisational Risk Management Framework](#). The key categories of risk relevant for this policy are '*Business Interruption*' and '*Natural/Political disruption to international programs*'.

- The '*Business Interruption*' category will be used to evaluate the risk of climate change on business operations.
- The '*Natural/Political disruption to International Programs*' category will be used to assess both the risk of climate change impact on programs, and the risk of program interventions causing harm on the environment.

Assessment of risks associated with climate change and mitigation strategies are also included in international project risk registers, and project assessment tools to ensure the risk of environmental impacts are considered in all aspects of our work.

### **Governance**

We will work to progressively integrate climate action into relevant leadership and governance policies. The Climate Action Team is focused on identifying opportunities for continuous improvement in our environmental management action plan.

The Climate Action Team provides a focus on environmental sustainability. Members participate voluntarily and act as representatives of the various departments ensuring that there is a focus on internal operations and international programs.

### **Environmental and Sustainable Operations**

We are committed to protecting the environment when implementing programs to alleviate poverty. We have the same commitment to protecting the environment of our own workspaces and will focus on taking actions that reduce our environmental impact. This may include but is not limited to:

- Using a suitable carbon calculator to benchmark and measure our environmental impact and establish emissions reduction strategies and targets.
- Commissioning a Climate Action Team to have regular discussions about organisational environmental performance and encourage operational actions.
- Maintaining within the Climate Action Team, two environmentally focused people (programs and operations) to ensure environmental sustainability and climate change resilience is considered appropriately in all our work.
- Implementing and monitoring emission and waste reduction strategies in line with TAI's environmental management targets. (e.g. energy, water and paper usage).
- Considering ethics and environmental sustainability of supply chains when engaging vendors in accordance with the Procurement and Purchasing policy.
- Consideration of purchasing carbon offset options for international flights, when not cost prohibitive.

### **Programs**

We have a tiered approach to assessing environmental impacts, natural hazards and climate and disaster risk exposure in all programs, including through proposal assessments, risk assessments and when deemed appropriate full environmental impact assessments.

We work towards continuously improving our environmental approach and reducing our organisational footprint on climate change and environmental degradation.

Additionally, we support climate and environmental initiatives through:

- Research and innovation climate grants.

- Providing targeted funding for climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience projects e.g. sustainable agricultural practices that promote soil conservation, water management, and climate-resilient crop varieties.
- Assisting partners and local communities to consider early warning systems, climate-resilient infrastructure, and capacity-building for disaster response.
- Partner capacity building; training, webinars, cross learning opportunities
- Connecting partners to regional and global networks
- Supporting partners to work closely with the local government bodies to align climate initiatives with national and regional strategies.
- Advocate for global emissions reduction, protection of eco-systems, a just transition to renewable resources, and actions to support climate refugees.

### **Advocacy and Community Engagement**

We will:

- Document a working theology for climate and environmental care that has shared understanding.
- Share participants' stories of climate resilience, told in their own voices, to engage Australian Baptists in climate action.
- Share information about the disproportionate impacts of climate change on marginalised groups in public communications.
- Engage Australian Baptists in climate and environment-related discussion, advocacy action, and thought leadership.
- Participate in joint advocacy with other Australian Non-Government Organisations (NGOs/ANGOs) through the Church Agencies Network (CAN) and their active disaster response coalition (CAN DO) the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), Micah Australia and Integral Alliance.
- Embrace climate and environmental impact as a key reporting pillar in research and communications around Ethical Fashion and related supply chains.

### **Staff Engagement and Training**

We are committed to raising awareness of the impacts of climate change and encouraging personal responsibility for creation care. We aim to increase our understanding of the short and long term environmental and climate change risks and how best to manage them.

Awareness raising and upskilling strategies will include:

- Encouragement for all staff to complete the ACFID e-learning module *Introduction to Climate Change and Development* in ELMO.
- Regular internal communication to engage staff (e.g. posts in relevant teams' channel, posters reminding people of environmental commitments).
- Periodic awareness and information sessions.
- Professional development to upskill targeted staff with specific responsibilities for climate action and environmental sustainability.

## Monitoring and Reporting

We will periodically review and report to staff, SLT, the Board and external stakeholders on progress against internal operational targets and on program performance. This may include reviewing:

- Disaster Risk Reduction and climate action finance.
- DRR and CA specific indicators and impact measuring.
- Program risk registers including climate and environment risks.
- Progress against organisational environmental management targets.

The Climate Action Team will report risks or policy breaches to the Risk and Compliance Committee

## Responsibilities

Position/Delegated Body	Responsible for:
Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic management and operational oversight of this policy.</li> <li>• Development of organisational environmental targets.</li> </ul>
International Programs Coordinators/ IP staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring partner and program/project compliance with this policy throughout all stages of the project cycle.</li> <li>• Ongoing monitoring of each partner and each program/project.</li> </ul>
Climate Action Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommend, implement and monitor policy, program and procedure initiatives related to TAI's environmental footprint.</li> <li>• Promote awareness of climate change and environmental stewardship.</li> <li>• Conduct periodic assessments of TAI's climate and environmental sustainability practices.</li> </ul>

This policy will be available on TAI's intranet. This policy will be reviewed triennially or sooner as required.

## Definitions<sup>5</sup>

**Carbon Footprint:** the total amount of greenhouse gases (including carbon dioxide and methane) that are generated by an individual or organisation's actions.

**Climate Action:** actions taken to reduce the overall climate risks that communities, economies and ecosystems are facing across the world by addressing both the causes and the impacts of climate change. Climate action includes activities that support adaptation, environmental restoration and mitigation. These activities may relate to TAI's operations, programming or policy/ advocacy work.

**Climate Change:** The long-term shift in the Earth's average temperature and weather conditions.

**Climate Justice:** Climate justice is a concept that addresses the just division, fair sharing, and equitable distribution of the burdens of climate change and responsibility for its mitigation. A climate justice approach sees climate change as an issue of social and environmental injustice. It recognises that vulnerability to climate change can reflect existing structural injustices in society, and that climate action must explicitly address these structural power imbalances.

**Ecological sustainability:** The capacity of ecosystems to maintain their essential functions and processes and retain their biodiversity in full measure over the long term<sup>i</sup>

**Environment:** The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999 defines "environment" as including:

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

**Environmental Sustainability:** Making decisions and taking actions that minimise harm to the environment and people through the relationship they share with it, and ensuring the environment is not degraded beyond its capacity to maintain critical ecological processes.

## Related Policies and Procedures

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following: -

- TAI Purchasing and Procurement Policy
- TAI Organisational Value for Money Policy
- TAI Partnership Framework
- TAI Environmental Risk Management Table
- TAI Proposal Assessment Tool

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<sup>5</sup> Many of the definitions included in this section have been adapted from the ACFID Guidance for the development of a Climate Action Policy document.



- TAI Disaster Management Framework

## External References

- [ACFID Code of Conduct Quality Principle 3: Systemic Change, Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action \(Good Practice Toolkit\)](#)
- [ACFID From Policy to Action: Australian Aid and the Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [Australia's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999](#)
- [Australian Department of Foreign Affairs \(DFAT\) Environment Protection Policy for the Aid Program \(November 2014\)](#)
- [Australian Department of Foreign Affairs \(DFAT\) Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy](#)
- [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organisations](#)

## Document Control Information

Climate and Environment Policy	
Owner	Senior Leadership Team
Master Copy	Policy QA Coordinator
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Date last reviewed	5/4/2022 (Environment, Sustainability, and Ethical Procurement Policy) 29/04/2021 (IP Environment Policy)
Approved by Executive	7/05/2025
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Date	Version	Revision Description	Reviewed / Updated by
6/9/2024 (finalised 7/05/2025)	1	New policy created by combining the Ethical, Sustainability and Ethical Procurement Policy and the International Programs Environment Policy and integrating new ACFID Code requirements.  Moved sections that focused on procurement to Procurement and Purchasing Policy	Risk and Governance Coordinator & International Programs Officer - Governance