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# Environmental Management Policy

January 2024

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<b>Board Ratification Dates</b>	2005	Earlier policy history held with the NCCA.
<b>Revision Dates</b>	2011, Feb 2016	
	October 2020	November 2020: Revised to reflect updated provisions in DFAT Environmental Protection and Social Safeguard Policy (2019) and updated ACFID Code of Conduct. Included new statement on 'do no harm' in relation to climate change. Operational guidance removed to Operations Manual.
	January 2024	Update of the review date as per the approved Policy Review and Reporting Schedule Nov 2023. General formatting and consistency updates.
<b>Reaffirmation Date</b>		
<b>Next Review Date and Cycle</b>	November 2025	Every five years from date of ratification or last full review or earlier if required.

## 1. Policy statement

Act for Peace is committed to “act in ways that will protect God’s creation, restore the environment and respect human rights.”<sup>1</sup> This includes a commitment to adapting Act for Peace’s own operations in support of global efforts to address climate change.

Act for Peace is an agency working to help create a peaceful world where all people share a safe and dignified life,<sup>2</sup> and recognises that it is not possible to fully achieve this vision without a healthy natural environment.

Protecting and conserving natural resources and maintaining ecosystems is fundamental to sustainable development and integral to social and economic prosperity. Initiatives that strengthen resilience of communities to adapt to climate change result in tangible positive outcomes that reduce the impact of disasters and the realisation of human rights.<sup>3</sup> Alternatively, environmental degradation can increase the vulnerability of communities to disasters and the impacts of climate change<sup>4</sup>.

Act for Peace is committed to promoting efforts to the achieve goals of the Sustainable Development Agenda<sup>5</sup>; and to ensure that safeguards to manage the risk of environmental and social impacts are fundamental component of all aspects of our work.

<sup>1</sup> ACT Alliance Code of Good Practice

<sup>2</sup> Act for Peace Strategic Plan 2016-2021

<sup>3</sup> Wording based on the ACT Alliance Framework Position for Climate Change Advocacy

<sup>4</sup> DFAT Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy V1.4 (March 2019)

<sup>5</sup> Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>

By recognising the connection between environmental degradation and the threat to life and human dignity, Act for Peace is committed to not only mitigate against environmental impact occurring as part of development efforts, but to ensure that our policies, partnerships, programs, and activities ‘do no harm<sup>6</sup>’ and support communities to restore and improve their environments through sustainable development and preservation of their environments for future generations.

In addition, Act for Peace 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>7</sup>

## **2. Objectives**

The aim of this policy is to ensure Act for Peace has in place appropriate policy commitments to inform care for the environment. Accordingly, it has three main objectives, ensuring that Act for Peace:

- Reduces the environmental impact of domestic and international operations and adapts operations, including support to partners, to mitigate against and adapt to climate change.
- Promotes sustainable management and conservation of the environment in all its programs and activities through sound environmental management practices.
- Ensures communities we work with are supported where relevant to identify and respond to the impacts of climate change in order to build resilience and foster sustainable development outcomes.

## **3. Principles and standards**

As a faith-based and rights-oriented organisation that works with partners, Act for Peace 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, Act for Peace 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, Act for Peace 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>8</sup> In addition, Act for Peace is guided by 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>9</sup>

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<sup>6</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>7</sup> Wording based on the ACT Alliance Framework Position for Climate Change Advocacy

<sup>8</sup> ACT Alliance Code of Good Practice

<sup>9</sup> Wording based on the ACT Alliance Framework Position for Climate Change Advocacy

As a member of ACFID<sup>10</sup> and signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct (2019)), Act for Peace has similarly committed to environmental sustainability within all development operations<sup>11</sup>.

Act for Peace commits to a 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>12</sup> The sustainable development agenda calls for action by all countries – poor, rich, and middle income – to promote prosperity while protecting the planet.

Act for Peace is also guided by the Istanbul Development Effectiveness Principles,<sup>13</sup> as well as policy guidance issued by the ACT Alliance, the WCC and other relevant bodies, including UN agencies. Act for Peace supports the World Council of Churches' (WCC) position 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>14</sup>

As a recipient of funding from the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Act for Peace agrees to ensure all aid investments, regardless of value or delivery mechanism, apply the safeguard principles of:

1. Do no Harm.
2. Identify, assess, and manage environmental and social impacts.
3. Effectively engage with stakeholders
4. Work effectively with partners
5. Promote improved environmental and social outcomes.

These principles apply to the five safeguards in the DFAT Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy (2019) for:

1. Environmental protection
2. Children, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups
3. Displacement and resettlement
4. Indigenous peoples
5. Health & Safety

Mandatory steps Act for Peace undertakes to address safeguards for environmental protection in accordance with this policy include:

1. Screen all investments for potential environmental impacts.
2. Rate the risk of potential environmental impacts.
3. Ensure a proportional environmental impact assessment and management plan is developed for identified risks.
4. Put in place systems to monitor and report on implementation.

Act for Peace recognises different people including children, people of different gender, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups may be affected by

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<sup>10</sup> Australian Council for International Development

<sup>11</sup> ACFID Code of Conduct (revised 2019)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

<sup>13</sup> CSO Istanbul Development Effectiveness Principles (2010)

<sup>14</sup> [Minute on Global Warming and Climate Change, 2008](#)

environmental impacts in different ways. They may also value different aspects of the environment. To be effective, the identification, assessment and management of environmental impacts needs to consider the views and needs of different groups. Detailed guidance on the implementation of these steps will be contained with the Act for Peace Operations Manual and Program Cycle Management Procedures.

#### *Climate change and disaster risk*

Aid investments can inadvertently increase the vulnerability of people and the environment to the short and long-term impacts of climate change and disasters. The potential impacts of climate change and disaster risk reduction must be considered as part of environmental and social impact assessments and management plans<sup>15</sup>.

#### **4. Scope**

All staff, volunteers, contractors, and consultants are to abide by this policy. The policy informs work with our partners; therefore, partners will be informed of relevant obligations through formal mechanisms such as our partnership and grant agreements.

#### **5. Policy in Action**

The principles contained within the policy should be integrated into all Act for Peace operations.

This policy affirms Act for Peace's commitment to:

- Adapt its operations and programming, and support partners to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.
- Support global efforts to balance the economic, environmental, and social needs of current and future generations as articulated within the Global Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.
- Support partners to assess and appropriately manage environmental risk and impacts in their operations and programs.
- Support community-led approaches 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; and
- Ensure relevant and appropriate monitoring and inclusive complaints handling mechanisms are established; and
- Compliance with Australian and partner organisation government policies and laws for social and environmental protection.

This policy supports and should be read in conjunction with the following Act for Peace Policies: The Code of Good Practice, Human Rights Policy, Protection Policy, Act for Peace Sustainability Policy, Act for Peace Complaints Policy, Act for Peace Whistle-blower, and the Act for Peace Code of Conduct.

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<sup>15</sup> DFAT Environmental and social safeguard policy (2019)

## 6. Definitions and explanations

**Climate Change:** a change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and that is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods (UNFCCC)<sup>16</sup>.

**Climate Change Adaptation:** The process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In some natural systems, human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects (IPCC)<sup>17</sup>.

**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)<sup>18</sup>.

### **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<sup>19</sup>

**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<sup>20</sup>.

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

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<sup>16</sup> United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.(UNFCCC)  
[https://unfccc.int/files/press/backgrounders/application/pdf/press\\_factsh\\_science.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/press/backgrounders/application/pdf/press_factsh_science.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Synthesis Report 2019  
[https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/01/SYRAR5-Glossary\\_en.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/01/SYRAR5-Glossary_en.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction  
[https://www.preventionweb.net/files/7817\\_UNISDRTerminologyEnglish.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/7817_UNISDRTerminologyEnglish.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

<sup>20</sup> UNISDR, 2009; (UNISDR, now UNDRR, is part of the United Nations Secretariat and it supports the implementation & review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction)

**Vulnerability:** The characteristics and circumstances of a community, system, or asset, that makes 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).

## 7. References

1. **ACFID Code of Conduct (2019)** - <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 Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy (2019)** - <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/environmental-social-safeguard-policy>
5. **DFAT Environmental and Social Safeguard Operational Procedures (2019)** - <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/environmental-and-social-safeguard-operational-procedures>
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>