

Environmental Management Policy

Policy Title	Environmental Management Policy IPP002		
Unit	International Program, Habitat for Humanity Australia		
Version	Version 3.0		
Authorised by	Board of Directors		
Date Endorsed	30 November 2007	Reviewed	12 November 2021
Last ratified	18 November 2021		

Introduction

The Australian Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act defines the environment as:

- 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.

Human health and survival depends on appropriate management of the environment and resources, especially in the context of global population growth and associated stresses on local and global air, water and soil systems. It is vitally important that international development programs be approached with the necessary rigour for adequate management and protection of the environment.

The importance of a commitment to good environmental management in the work that HFHA does in the global housing challenge is underscored by an unprecedented climate challenge, which is having far-reaching impacts where we work.

The millions of families that Habitat partners with are often among the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, which include increasingly common and severe weather events such as cyclones, floods, wildfires, tornadoes and droughts. These events can result in tragic outcomes for families, including damage to or complete loss of their homes, which may expose them to other threats, such as food insecurity, disease and displacement.

At the same time, the United Nations Environment Programme has found that buildings and their construction produce nearly 40% of global energy-related greenhouse gas emissions¹. HFHA therefore has the potential to impact — and be impacted by — the future of climate change.

Adequate and affordable housing can be built sustainably, recognising that climate change has a disproportionate impact on the people we serve, and that to be accountable to them, HFHA must address that impact through resilient housing. HFHA must also recognise the need to minimise its own environmental impact, including through its programmatic work, to ensure that everyone has a decent place to live, now and into the future.

¹ <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/building-sector-emissions-hit-record-high-low-carbon-pandemic>

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish an organisational commitment to ensuring that the HFHA office and its international program activities are guided by the principles of environmental protection and biodiversity conservation and demonstrate the organisation's commitment to the environment and climate change action in development assistance. This policy also serves as a practical guide to HFHA staff in our relationships with partner organisations and the communities in which we work to ensure that program activities are informed by appropriate analysis of the potential environmental impacts of our program activities.

Policy Statement

HFHA is committed to planning, designing and building more energy and water efficient homes that are socially, environmentally and economically sustainable. HFHA is dedicated to ensure that all of its international development work does not cause, and is not likely to cause, significant impact on the environment, and to take steps to avoid and/or mitigate any potential negative impacts.

Scientific forecasts of the changes likely to occur in the environment as a result of changing climatic conditions represents one of the most significant and growing influences on HFHA programs in international development. As such, active measures are incorporated into HFHA programs aimed at adapting to and mitigating against climate change effects.

HFHA ensures its projects encourage and support other initiatives that:

- Promote sustainable housing design, including the use of safe and sustainable raw materials in the construction of housing, appropriate to the local community.
- Protect and maintain the health, diversity and productivity of natural habitats.
- Promote water harvesting installations.
- Promote 'green' septic/drainage systems.
- Promote the use of grey water for water recycling.
- Promote energy-efficiency through design and use of appropriate technology.
- Promote waste reduction and sediment control during construction and occupancy.
- Protect and conserve natural and cultural heritage.

Policy in Practice

HFHA ensures its office operations adopt working practices that contribute towards environmental protection, pollution prevention and carbon footprint reduction by:

- Reducing the amount of waste produced by reducing, reusing and recycling materials wherever possible.
- Using energy in an efficient way by turning off appliances at powerpoints, turning off the lights when not required, and using a renewable energy provider.
- Where possible, purchase environmentally sustainable goods such as fridges with high energy ratings, and buy/sell second hand goods.

- Reducing the amount of paper used by encouraging electronic methods for meetings etc, printing double sided, and recycling used paper.
- As part of our marketing and community awareness programs, raise awareness of behaviours that impact the environment and how HFHA programs contribute to climate change action with vulnerable and excluded communities.
- Support relationships with partners who have environmentally-sustainable products and operations.

HFHA will ensure the following, as part of international programming activities:

- Staff and local counterparts understand and support environmental protection and biodiversity conservation principles and practices and seek environmental expertise when required.
- Environmental impacts associated with the entire supply chain are considered by sourcing and using sustainable materials that, for example, do not involve highly water-intensive production, do not require unnecessary transportation and do not derive from old growth forests or endangered species habitats.
- Environmental issues and potential impacts (both positive and negative) are considered when designing and implementing all program activities through completion of an initial environmental assessment checklist to ensure projects supported by HFHA are assessed in light of their potential impact on the environment.
- Where potential environmental impacts are identified during the initial checklist assessment, a more detailed environmental impact assessment and associated environmental management plan that include potential climate change impacts and risk mitigation measures.
- Where environmental assessments of a HFHA project is assessed as likely to have an adverse impact on the environment, no contractual arrangements will be entered into without first developing an environmental impact assessment and management plan.
- Partner with families to build stronger, more disaster-resilient and more energy-efficient housing to contribute to both the immediate security and long-term well-being of families in mitigating and adapting to climate change while reducing a home's environmental impact.
- Monitoring and reporting activities will include environmental outcomes achieved through appropriate activity designs that incorporate corresponding performance indicators as appropriate to ensure all environment-related information is collected, measured, analysed and reported.
- Work with partner organisations to encourage partner families and communities to utilise sustainable energy and water management techniques such as fuel-efficient burners, generators renewable energy technologies and water harvesting facilities by educating them on their benefits and identifying cost-effective providers.
- Ensuring that environmental commitments and practices are written into all Memorandums of Understanding, Partnership Agreements and Activity Agreements with partners.



We build **strength, stability, and self-reliance** *through shelter.*

References

- HFHA Disaster Risk Reduction Policy
- HFHA Sustainability Policy