



Partners in Aid

AUSTRALIA

ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Version control & review

Version	Date	Distribution
1.0	April 2020	Board members; Committee members, Website, Partner Organisations
2.0		

1. Background

In its support of development projects, Partners in Aid seeks to protect the rights, health, safety, and livelihoods of people, including children, women, indigenous peoples, and other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. It recognizes that in developing countries, much of the population often depends on the environment for food, water, shelter and livelihoods and is therefore committed to maintaining the health, diversity and productivity of the environment, avoiding negative impacts on the environment and enhancing environment conditions wherever possible.

The following objectives (drawn from Commonwealth EPBC Act) provide a guideline for assessing and responding to environmental aspects and impacts in the design and implementation of all Partners in Aid supported international projects:

- protection of the environment, especially those aspects of the environment that are matters of national environmental significance,
- promotion of ecologically sustainable development through the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of natural resources,
- promotion of the conservation of biodiversity, and
- protection and conservation of heritage.

These objectives provide a guideline for assessing and responding to environmental aspects and impacts in the design and implementation of all Partners in Aid-supported international projects.

2. Definitions

Environment: Environment is defined 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 anything mentioned above.¹

Environment aspect: An environment aspect is any element of a project's activities, products and services that can interact with the environment.²

Environment impact: An environment impact is any change to the environment, whether adverse or beneficial, wholly or partially resulting from a project's environmental aspects.³

Significant impact: A 'significant impact' is an impact which is important, notable, or of consequence, having regard to its context or intensity. Whether or not an action is likely to have a significant impact depends upon the sensitivity, value, and quality of the environment which is impacted, and upon the intensity, duration, magnitude and geographic extent of the impacts.⁴

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy to ensure that in project conceptualization, design, implementation and monitoring, 'decision-making processes ... effectively integrate both long-term and short-term economic, environmental, social and equitable considerations.'⁵ The policy provides the guiding principles for setting and reviewing environmental impacts of projects supported by Partners in Aid.

4. Scope

This policy applies to any project Partners in Aid supports through Partners In Aid funding and to projects implemented with grant money for which Partners In Aid is responsible.

5. Procedures

5.1 Project Design Requirements

5.1.1 When considering a proposal for any new project, consultation between the Partner Organisation and the proposed Partners In Aid Project Coordinator must include, *inter alia*, discussion of the environmental aspects of each project activity, what impact - intended or unintended, short or long-term - these aspects are likely to have on the environment, the potential significance of identified impacts, and ways in which any adverse impacts might be avoided, minimized or mitigated. These issues should be considered in the context of the local and national laws and regulations of the Partner Organisation's country and ensure full compliance with these laws and regulations.

Circumstances permitting, this consultation between the Partner

¹ City of Marion (2009). *General Environment Policy Version 5*. <https://images.template.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/05082648/General-Environmental-Policy.pdf> (last Viewed September 2019)

³ *Ibid*

⁴ Australian Government. Department of Environment (2013). *Matters of National Environment Significance*. environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/42f84df4-720b-4dcf-b262-48679a3aba58/files/nes-guidelines_1.pdf
Last viewed September 2019

⁵ *Ibid*

Organisation and the proposed Partners in Aid Project Coordinator regarding the environmental aspects and potential impacts of project activities should take place in the locality in which the project will be implemented.

5.1.2 Following consultation, the Partner Organisation will be asked to include in their formal proposal:

- details of consultation that they have carried out with affected communities regarding possible environment aspects and impacts, and
- confirmation that in order to identify any differences in the needs of different groups in the project area with respect to environmental aspects and impacts, these consultations have included men, women and any vulnerable groups.

If feasible, the Partners in Aid Project Coordinator, in conjunction with the Partner Organisation, should participate in at least some of these community consultations.

5.1.3 The formal project proposal submitted should then include:

- details of identified environment aspects and impacts,
- how any negative environmental impacts identified as a possible outcome of project activities will be avoided, or, if avoidance is not possible, minimized or mitigated, and
- if necessary, a plan for the management of any environment impacts and any associated risks, taking into account any differences in the needs of different groups in the project area.

5.1.4 Provide accessible and culturally appropriate grievance redress mechanisms and ensure that grievances are handled promptly, transparently, and without retribution or cost to the party that raised the concern.

5.1.5 Once the proposal has been submitted to Partners In Aid, the Partners In Aid Project Coordinator will discuss with the Project Sub-committee its potential environmental impacts and proposed mitigation where necessary. Scope for enhancing any activities likely to have a positive environmental impact will also be discussed. If there are concerns which cannot be resolved in the Sub-committee discussion, external expertise will be sought.

5.2 Environmental Aspects and Impacts to be Considered in Project Proposal Assessment

5.2.1 Assessment of the project during the design and implementation phases will seek to ensure that it will:

- not degrade air quality, remnant native vegetation, water quality, soil quality, etc (e.g., pollute the water supply by the construction of pit latrines which can lead to the seepage of human waste into ground water tapped by wells),
- protect the health, welfare, and livelihoods of people including women, children, people with disabilities and any other vulnerable groups (e.g.

- ensure that access to water for domestic use is not made more difficult because of crop irrigation schemes, reduce open defecation),
 - not affect any cultural heritage (e.g. burial sites, memorials, sacred sites, places of worship),
 - risk the health of workers, including those involving any external bodies contracted by the Partner Organisation, or local communities or increase the likelihood of accidents (e.g. leave open excavations, dangerous machinery unguarded during construction, use of materials hazardous to people or the environment),
 - split communities by the construction of infrastructure, and
 - whether it will enhance or restore the condition of natural resources (e.g. revegetation, tank desilting, rehabilitation of water courses), and
 - whether activities that help control environmental hazards and whether any additional project activities encouraging such control can, with the approval of the Partner Organisation, be incorporated or enhanced (e.g. control of mosquito breeding, encouraging recycling and composting etc).
- 5.2. Consideration will also be given to whether the project is taking into account changing environment conditions (e.g. rising sea level, changing patterns of rainfall, global warming, etc) and the whether any additional project activities encouraging positive adaptation to such changes can, with the approval of the Partner Organisation, be incorporated or enhanced. (e.g. provide training in production of crops more suited to changing climatic conditions, planting of coastal mangroves).

6. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

7. References

Australian Government. Department of Environment (2013). *Matters of National Environment Significance*.
environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/42f84df4-720b-4dcf-b262-48679a3aba58/files/nes-guidelines_1.pdf (Last viewed September 2019).

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Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

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<https://images.template.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/05082648/General-Environmental-Policy.pdf> (Last viewed September 2019).

² Australian Government. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (2014). *Environment Protection Policy for the Aid Program*. <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/environment-protection-policy-aid-program.aspx> (Last Viewed September 2019)