ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Version control & review

Version	Date	Distribution
1.0	April 2020	Board and Advisory Group members; Website, Partner Organisations
2.0	Nov 2024	Board members; Committee members, Website, Partner Organisations

1. Background

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

The following objectives (predominantly drawn from Commonwealth EPBC Act) provide a guideline for assessing and responding to potential environmental concerns and impacts in the design and implementation of all international projects that PIA supports.

- Protection of the environment
- 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.

An additional objective has been included in this latest version of PIA's Environmental Policy: recognising any adverse impacts that climate change might be having on the livelihoods and well-being of people living in the region where the project will be implemented, and, wherever feasible, mitigating these impacts throughout the project.

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, and

- social, economic, and cultural aspects of anything mentioned above.'[1]

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

Environmental impact: An environmental 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]

Environmental Sustainability: Making decisions and actions that minimise harm to the environment and people through the relationship they share with it. and ensuring that the environment is not degraded beyond its capacity to maintain a critical ecological response[5].

Climate Change: Climate change refers to any long-term trends or shifts in climate over many decades[6].

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy to ensure that in project conceptualisation, design, implementation and monitoring, 'decision-making processes ... effectively integrate both long-term and short-term economic, environmental, social and equitable considerations',[7] along with consideration of climate change.

The policy provides the guiding principles for (i) setting and reviewing environmental impacts of projects supported by Partners in Aid and (ii) assessing any impacts of climate change in the project area and taking these into account in project design and implementation.

3. Scope

This policy applies to any project that Partners in Aid supports.

4. Procedures

4.1.   Project Design Requirements

4.1.1   PIA now has a template covering contextual analysis to be undertaken prior to a project design being finalised. This includes analysis of the environment, including climate change, in the region where the proposed project is to be implemented.

4.1.2   The project proposal form that PIA asks an NGO seeking PIA funds to complete contains questions on positive or negative potential impacts the proposed project might have on any aspect of the local environment (water supply, air quality, inadequate disposal of plastics, heritage sites, etc.) If considered necessary, this analysis should be enhanced through research by PIA.

2.   Any potential environmental impact of the proposed project may also need to be considered in the context of the local and national laws and regulations of the NGO's country to ensure full compliance with these laws and regulations.

4.1.3   The NGO's responses to the environmental questions in the proposal should at least be partly based on community consultation that includes consultation with men, women and any vulnerable groups in the targeted communities. Confirmation that this consultation has been carried out, and details of how, should be included in the proposal.

4.1.4   If environmental impacts or risks have been identified, a plan outlining what the project will do to mitigate any potential negative impacts or sustain positive impacts should be attached. This plan should consider any differences that project environmental impacts might have on different sections of the local population. It should also include accessible and culturally appropriate ways for communities or sections of communities to seek redress in the event that project implementation has a negative impact on some aspect of their environment.

4.1.5   PIA now also requires that for any new project, the contextual analysis preceding project design must include an analysis of any recent climate changes identified in the targeted project area, and their impact on residents' livelihood and well-being.

4.1.6   In addition, the PIA project proposal form now not only includes a section on climate change and its potential impact on the residents of the targeted project area, but also questions on any risks to project implementation and its outcomes that might arise as a result of climate change, as well as any planned initiatives for ameliorating the impact of climate change.

2.   Environmental Aspects and Impacts to be Considered in Project Proposal Assessment

1.   PIA's appraisal of a project proposal, prior to deciding on whether to support it, will explore whether the project will make every effort with respect the following.

- 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).

- It will not present a health risk or affect the livelihoods or welfare of any people (e.g., reduce access to water for domestic use because of the diversion of water for crop irrigation schemes).

- It will not affect any cultural heritage sites (e.g., burial sites, memorials, sacred sites, places of worship).

- It will not split communities geographically by the construction of infrastructure such as busy main roads through part of the settlement, etc..

- It will enhance or restore the condition of natural resources (e.g., revegetation, dam desilting, rehabilitation of water courses).

- It will incorporate activities intended to help control environmental hazards (e.g., control of mosquito breeding, encouraging recycling and composting etc).

4.2.2   Consideration will also be given to whether the project is taking into account any risks to achieving or sustaining intended project outcomes that might be present due to changing environmental conditions (e.g. rising sea level, changing patterns of

rainfall, global warming, etc) arising from climate change . If so, does the project design include any additional project activities that will facilitate positive adaptation to such changes (e.g. provide training in production of crops more suited to changing climatic conditions, planting of coastal mangroves, etc.)?

4.2.3   If there are concerns which cannot be resolved internally in the course of PIA appraisals, external expertise will be sought.

4. 3 Monitoring

4.3.1.   The monitoring checklist for project coordinators visiting project sites requires them to assess: (i) whether the project is having any impact on the water supply or any other aspect of the environment; (ii) if so, how and what has been done to ameliorate any adverse impact or ensure that any positive impact is sustainable; and (iii) whether the project is addressing any climate change issues and, if so, how.

4. Internal Commitment to Environmental Sustainability

5.1   For as long as it continues to be feasible, PIA will not work from an office but be run from a member's home.

5.2   PIA will continue to make every effort to contact PIA members via the internet rather than using the postal service.

5.3   SharePoint will be used to store documents so that paper documents no longer need to be kept or printed.

5.4   PIA will reduce the environmental impact of travel by clustering travel purposes, ensuring appropriate transportation is used during overseas field visits, programs and projects, and utilising online communication and meeting options effectively.

5.   Environmental impacts will be considered in the choice of purchases made, where appropriate and applicable.

6.   All relevant Australian Government environmental legislation and initiatives will be observed by PIA.

6. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

7. References

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[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)

[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)

[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
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[5]..ACFID Climate Change Working Group (2015). Tackling Climate Change and Promoting Sustainable Declelopment. https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/resource_document/Tackling-climate-change-and-promoting-sustainable-development-final.pdf

[6] *Ibid*