

UNICEF Australia Climate, Environment and Sustainability Policy

1. Review

Review of this policy will occur every	3 years
Approval Level Required of amendments to this policy by	Board
Policy Owner	Director of International Programs
Required on Website?	No

VERSION LOG

This is the first Climate, Environment and Sustainability Policy which flows from previous drafts and is to be read in association with the Environment and Development Policy, approved by the Programs Committee in March 2022.

Version	Author/s	Approved By*	Approval Date	Next Review Due	Comments
Green Policy	Operations	Board	June 2014		Replaced by UA's Climate, Environment and Sustainability Policy
Environment and Development Policy	International Programs	EMT & Board	24 June 2014	June 2017	Reviewed by EMT and PPAC (23/11/16)
Environment and Development Policy	International Programs	Programs Committee	June 2022		Moved into new policy format, addition of guiding principles, streamlining of implementation section. To be replaced by UA's Climate, Environment and Sustainability Policy when approved
Climate, Environment and Sustainability Policy	Climate Action Sustainability Team	Board	Nov 2022	Nov 2025	Organisational wide policy

2. Policy Statement

UNICEF Australia recognises that climate change and environmental degradation present direct and immediate threats to the ability of children throughout the world to survive, grow, and thrive. This is especially true for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children, who overwhelmingly live in areas that are less resilient to climate shocks.

UNICEF Australia is committed to:

- Using our influence to elevate climate change and environment as a child rights issue
- Contributing to a better environment for children by supporting programs that reduce the impacts of climate change and improve environmental sustainability
- Providing platforms for the voice of children and young people on these issues in Australia, and advocating to government to effect change
- Acting to achieve net zero emissions in UNICEF Australia operations by 2030.

Through these commitments and actions, UA contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and helping realise the protection, survival, development and participation rights of all children as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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3. Purpose

Environmental degradation, climate change and other negative effects on environmental sustainability disproportionately impact on children in the world's poorest communities. Every child is already affected by at least one climate or environmental shock and over one billion are at extremely high risk.¹ Globally, one death in four among children aged under 5 years could be averted by improving environmental factors, such as air pollution, water, sanitation, hygiene or chemicals². In addition to the rising tide of climate change and the related physical effects of environmental degradation, such as pollution, land use, waste management and water sanitation, children are similarly affected by associated socio-economic aspects. These include health risks and diseases, the increased risk of poverty and unemployment and in turn, community susceptibility to resource-related conflicts. In low- and middle- income countries, we are already seeing the majority of these consequences and the disparate impact on children, with conditions predicted to worsen in the coming decade. The importance of these challenges has been emphasised by their inclusion in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which prioritises sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

In Australia too, climate-related emergencies are impacting children and young people today. During the summer of 2019/2020, two in five children and young people were personally impacted by bushfires; three in ten children were personally impacted by drought; and almost 25% of children were personally impacted by floods.³ 82% of Australian children are extremely, very, or moderately anxious about climate change, and 43% are hesitant about having children as a result of climate change impacts.⁴

As reflected in UNICEF's guiding document, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989), UNICEF is committed to protecting the rights of all children, including their right to a high standard of health based on the development and maintenance of a safe and clean environment (Article 24). The CRC compels UNICEF and signatory governments to further protect children from anything that could harm their development including unsustainable working practices and programs which cause more harm than good. UNICEF has further articulated the significant impact of environmental degradation and climate change on children and UNICEF's priorities for addressing this through mainstreaming, targeted programs, and advocacy.

This policy seeks to:

- Ensure that UNICEF Australia is aligned with UNICEF's adoption of climate change and environment as a global priority⁵
- Guide the contribution UA makes to protecting children and the environment through its programs, advocacy and fundraising
- Drive continual improvements in the environmental sustainability of our operations and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- Comply with Australian legal and regulatory requirements, including DFAT Accreditation requirements (see application section below).

4. Guiding Principles

¹ UNICEF, *A Liveable Planet for Every Child: UNICEF's Strategy At-A-Glance for Climate, Environment, Energy, and Disaster Risk Reduction*, 2022.

² Prüss-Üstün, A., Wolf, J., Corvalán, C., Bos, R. and Neira, M. 2016. *Preventing Disease through Healthy Environments: A global assessment of the burden of disease from environmental risks*, 2nd ed. Geneva: World Health Organization.

³ UNICEF Australia and Royal Far West, *Bushfire Recovery: The Children's Voices*, 2021.

⁴ UNICEF, Report Card 17 – Places and Spaces: Environments and children's wellbeing, 2022

⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/environment-and-climate-change>

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UA works with partners at a global, regional and local level to ensure that children can live in a safe and clean environment, with actions structured around the following key principles:

- Make children the centre of climate change strategies and response plans:** The real and existential threat of climate change has put our children and future generations lives and wellbeing at stake. Unfortunately, whilst children are the least responsible for climate change, they bear the greatest burden of its impact. UA supports children to be key participants in government, business and community policy and decision-making around climate change with the aim of ensuring climate change adaptation and resilience-building prioritizes the needs of children. UA incorporates climate resilience into its programs, with a focus on institutions and services that children depend on most, such as education and health.
- Recognise children as agents of change:** Children’s participation in issues that affect them is part of their fundamental rights (Article 12, Convention on the Rights of the Child). UA uses its platform to elevate and amplify the message of existing youth climate movements and encourage children to take part in climate and environment action. UA supports the capacity-building of young people to be agents of change at local, national, and international levels. UA also recognises that children and young people can play a key role in addressing climate-related risks through education and their participation in climate adaptation and resilience-building solutions, by promoting environmentally sustainable lifestyles and setting an example for their communities.
- Protect children from the impact of climate change and environmental degradation:** UA acknowledges that children of different backgrounds (socio-economic, ethnic and cultural) are unequally affected by climate change, both within and outside of Australia. UA works to address this disparity and supports initiatives to make schools, health centres, water and sanitation facilities – and other services critical to children’s well-being – resistant to climate and environmental shocks. This not only improves children’s resilience to future shocks, but also makes it less likely that today’s inequities will be exacerbated by climate change. UNICEF Australia seeks to promote improved environmental outcomes through the implementation of programs, using a twin track approach.
- Reduce emissions and pollution:** UA is working to transform how and where it works to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impact. A key aspect of this work involves investing in sustainable energy for children and global communities. UA calls on governments and businesses to set stronger commitments and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a manner commensurate with what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) demands. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) must be child-sensitive. Transitions to renewable energy-powered economies and societies must also take into account the needs, priorities, and voices of children, including those in coal, gas, and oil producing communities. Furthermore, UA understands that it too plays a part in the protection of the environment. UA is committed to reducing the negative climate and environmental impacts of its own operations and promoting sustainable practices in its programs. This includes reducing and/or off-setting water and energy consumption, paper use, and waste.
- Do no harm:** UNICEF Australia applies the principle of “do no harm” to the potential environmental impact of its programs and seeks to ensure that programs do not inadvertently lead to a negative environmental impact for beneficiaries and their communities.

5. Application

This policy applies to UA’s internal operations and staff members, UA’s work in advocacy and government relations, as well as fundraising and communications. This policy further applies to all UA’s domestic work and Directly Supported Programs. Programs and projects which have not been appropriately screened for

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their environmental impact, including their impact on child health and development, or where adequate risk mitigation strategies are not in place, will not be supported by UNICEF Australia.

This policy is written in accordance with best practice guidance from ACFID, DFAT and the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

EPBC ACT: The *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC Act, 1999) is the primary piece of environmental legislation in Australia. It binds state and territory governments with the federal government to provide a national approach to environment and heritage protection and biodiversity conservation. The legislation also provides a legal framework which includes the protection and management of nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places. These are defined in the Act as ‘matters of national environmental significance’.⁶ UA is committed to abiding by the requirements of this act within its work and internal operations.

DFAT: The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) *Environment and Social Safeguard Policy* (2019) applies to all domestic and international stakeholders and DFAT partners. Under the EPBC Act, DFAT is legally obliged to ensure that the Australian Aid Program and its related activities are not causing or contributing to negative environmental impacts. The *Environment and Social Safeguard Policy* outlines what is required for Australia to meet its international obligations and implement best practice in Australian Aid programming. UA is committed to applying the principles of the *Environment and Social Safeguard Policy* to its work and operations.

ACFID: The Australian Council for International Development’s (ACFID) *Quality Assurance Framework* (QAF) applies to all ACFID members and is related to the ratified *Code of Conduct*. All members are required to assess their commitments to the compliance indicators within the QAF. UA is committed to complying with these commitments and good practice indicators. Of specific relevance to this policy is *Quality Principle 3: Sustainable Change*, which outlines commitments towards promoting environmental stewardship and sustainability.

6. Responsibilities

Responsibilities in enacting this policy include:

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is responsible for ensuring UA’s internal operations align with this policy, and that these operations meet the standards required by the EPBC Act and ACFID’s Code of Conduct. The COO leads the Climate Action Team (CAT) and is responsible for measuring and reporting on emissions.

The Chief Marketing Officer is responsible for ensuring UA’s fundraising and communications are undertaken in a manner consistent with this policy, communicating publicly about how climate change is impacting children and raising funds to support UNICEF’s work to address this.

The Director of Australian Programs and Child Rights is responsible for ensuring UA’s domestic programs, advocacy and work in government relations are aligned with this policy, applying the guiding principles wherever possible for work performed in Australia.

The Director of International Programs is responsible for mainstreaming climate change and environmental sustainability in policies and practice relating to international programs and systematising a critical analysis of environmental risk within the project review process.

⁶ Department of the Environment, *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*, <http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/about-us/legislation/environment-protection-and-biodiversity-conservation-act-1999>, accessed 6 May 2022

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Programs staff are responsible for working with partners to include environmental risk assessments to inform program design, identifying environmental impact of projects and any associated mitigation strategies. Programs staff must monitor implementation to ascertain whether activities occur in ways consistent with the principles outlined in this policy and address any issues during implementation as they arise.

UNICEF Australia staff are responsible for applying the principles of this policy in their day-to-day work, procurement of goods and services and travel in line with guidance from their relevant ELT member.

UNICEF Australia Implementing Partners are responsible for day-to-day implementation and management of programs and play a key role in ensuring children are not negatively affected by program activity. Implementing Partners are responsible for identifying and mitigating environmental risks and impacts through their needs assessments, project design, implementation, monitoring and internal operations.

The Climate Action Team (CAT) is responsible for dissemination and awareness raising of this policy with all UNICEF Australia staff. It is also responsible for the measuring, monitoring, and reporting on areas of environmental footprint for UNICEF Australia.

7. Implementation

Implementation of this policy is achieved through:

- Working with partners to help protect children by mainstreaming environment and climate design in programs and implementing targeted strategies within programs to reduce the impacts of climate change and improve environmental sustainability.
- Advocating to help place the rights and wellbeing of children and young people at the centre of climate change strategies and frameworks (including climate adaptation and resilience building) and emergency preparedness and response plans by governments.
- Ensuring our own operations are run in an environmentally conscious manner.
- Providing platforms for children and young people to have their voices heard, notably in the areas of climate change, environment and biodiversity and advocating to help place child rights and wellbeing at the centre of climate change policymaking and emergency preparedness and response plans.
- Communicating publicly about how climate change is impacting children and raising funds to support UNICEF's work to address this.

The following associated policies and procedures support our implementation and on approval of this policy we will develop further procedures around our Net Zero targets.

8. Associated Policies and Procedures

Directly Supported Programs Policy
 Country Office Partnerships Policy
 Procurement Policy and Procedures
 International Programs Operations Manual

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Annex 1: Definitions

Climate Change: The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as: ‘a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods’

Environment: In English, the word ‘environment’ can be linked to many concepts – e.g., the ‘economic environment’ or the ‘digital environment’. For the purposes of this policy, we use the term to cover the physical aspects of natural and built environments that children experience and that affect their well-being including:

- 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)

Downstream Implementing Partners: Any organisations which are responsible for collaborative implementation of project activities in relation to the Directly Supported Programs. This includes, but is not limited to, local and international NGOs, CSOs, and government. Downstream Implementing Partners are any organisation with which UNICEF has a Program Cooperation Agreement, Small-Scale Funding Agreement or Rolling Workplan with respect to or including the Directly Supported Program. This does not include collaborative arrangements under an MOU where the organisation utilises its existing resources and there is no transfer of cash or supplies.

Directly Supported Programs: Any project or suite of projects for which UNICEF Australia remits earmarked funds and where UNICEF Australia has ongoing engagement in the monitoring and management. Directly Supported Programs only include projects which are eligible to be included in RDE.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA): An EIA is a procedure that UNICEF Country Offices need to follow in order to determine to what extent the environment may be affected by development programs and what procedures should be followed to manage such risks. The importance and procedures of the EIA derive from UNICEF Policy Paper [E/ICEF/1989/L6](#), *Children and Environment: A UNICEF Strategy for Sustainable Development*. This policy reiterates that UNICEF’s protection of children extends to include all aspects of a child’s environment which may impact on their survival and development.⁵

Implementing partners (including downstream): any entity (government, multi-lateral, non-governmental, community-based or other) under contract with or funded/supported by UA for the purpose to conduct programs/projects/activities in Australia or abroad on behalf of or endorsed by UA, as well as their partners and contractors (i.e. UA’s downstream partners/contractors). UA’s primary implementing partners abroad are UNICEF Partner Country Offices (see definition below).

Partner Country Office: A UNICEF Country Office with whom UNICEF Australia holds a signed Letter of Acknowledgement and a minimum of one active Directly Supported Program. These are UNICEF Australia’s primary implementing partners.

Program: Programs are overarching development approaches and initiatives that set priorities and guide project outcomes, results and activities. Programs constitute a coherent set of development activities (projects) that pursue a single focus, which may be regional, thematic or country based. At UNICEF Australia, programs are predominantly focused around thematic areas.

Project: Projects are the practical implementation of UNICEF Australia’s overarching development approach or program. Projects are discrete investments in particular countries, contexts and/or sectors, with a specific start and end date and identified funding.

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Annex 2: Supporting Documents

Department of the Environment, *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*, <http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/about-us/legislation/environment-protection-and-biodiversity-conservation-act-1999>, accessed 6 May 2022

Department of the Environment, *About the EPBC Act*, <http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/about-us/legislation/environment-protection-and-biodiversity-conservation-act-1999/about-epbc>, accessed 6 May 2022

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Environment Protection Policy for the Aid Program*, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/environmental-social-safeguard-policy.pdf>, accessed 6 May 2022

United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), *Millennium Development Goals and post-2015 Development Agenda*, United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/mdg.shtml>, accessed 6 May 2022

UNICEF, *Climate Change and Children*, UNICEF: New York, 2007.

UNICEF, 'Chapter 2: Country Programme Approach', *UNICEF Programme Policy and Procedure Manual*, UNICEF, Division of Policy and Practice: New York, February 2012.

UNICEF, *Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)*, https://www4.intranet.unicef.org/dpp/ppphandbook.nsf/site%20pages/ppp_toolbox_sec5, accessed 26 March 2014.

UNICEF 2015, *UNICEF Strategic Framework on Environmental Sustainability for Children 2016-2017*, Division of Data, Research and Policy.

UNICEF Global Policies and Procedures on mainstreaming environmental sustainable work practices: UNICEF, 'Chapter 2: Country Programme Approach', *UNICEF Programme Policy and Procedure Manual*, pp. 52-53.

UNICEF Office of Research (2022). *Places and Spaces: Environments and children's well-being*, Innocenti Report Card 17, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence. https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/RC17-EN_Places-and-Spaces_Environments-and-childrens-well-being_Report-Card-17.pdf Accessed 25 May 2022.

UNICEF Policy Paper, *An Environment Fit for Children*, UNICEF: September 2019, [An-Environment-Fit-for-Children-2019.pdf \(unicef.org\)](https://www.unicef.org/an-environment-fit-for-children-2019) accessed 5 May 2022.

United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF, *UNICEF UK Climate Change Report*, 'Our Climate, Our children, Our Responsibility: The Implications of Climate Change for the World's Children', UNICEF UK/Agulhas: Applied Knowledge, 2008.