

Environmental Management and Climate Action Policy

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Unit	International Program, Habitat for Humanity Australia		
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Introduction

Human health and survival depends on appropriate management of the environment and resources, especially in the context of existing natural hazards, climate change impacts, global population growth and associated shocks and stresses on local and global air, water and soil systems. It is vitally important that HFHA's international and domestic programs be approached with the necessary rigour for the sustainable management and protection of the environment.

The importance of a commitment to good environmental management in the work that HFHA does addressing the global housing challenge is underscored by the 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, and droughts. These events can result in tragic outcomes for families, including loss of life or injury to family members, 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 the operations of buildings and the energy embodied in their construction produce nearly 40% of global energy-related greenhouse gas emissions.¹ 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 operations and programmatic work, to ensure that everyone has a decent place to live, now and into the future.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish an organisational commitment to ensuring that the HFHA office and its activities are guided by the principles of environmental protection and climate action 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.

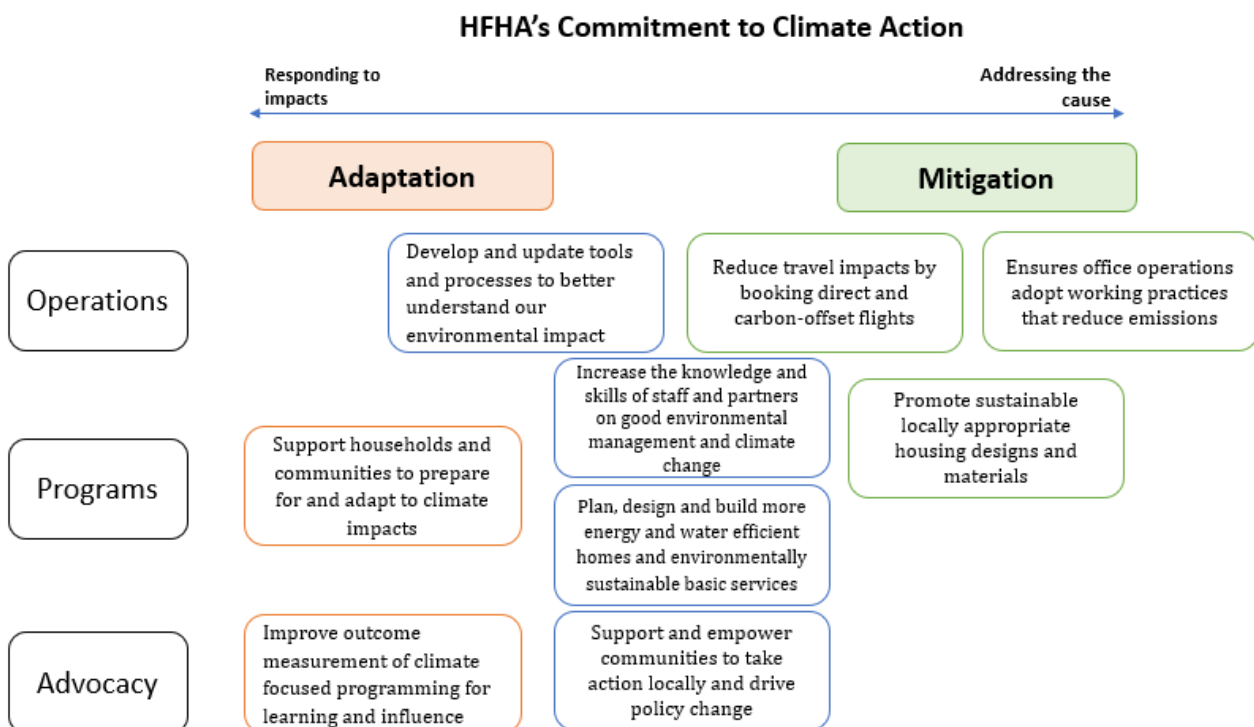
Policy Scope

This policy applies to HFHA's operations in Australia and our work with partner entities overseas. The policy will be reviewed and updated every three years.

Implementation of the policy is supported by program tools and guidance notes. Environmental Impact Assessments and Management Plans. These will continue to be developed and updated as programs evolve.

Policy Statement

HFHA acknowledges that its activities do contribute to climate change. Given this, the organisation is committed to better understanding and minimising the potential negative environmental impacts of its work, and delivering activities which can support adaptation to and mitigation of climate change leading to improved environmental outcomes in its programming. The following diagram outlines actions HFHA undertakes to achieve this. Our action is aligned with the suggested approach by ACFID (refer Appendix 1 for additional detail).



Policy in Practice

1. International Programs

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's international development programs. As such, active measures are incorporated into HFHA programs aimed at adapting to and mitigating against climate change effects. HFHA will ensure the following, as part of international programming activities:

- Staff and local counterparts understand and support environmental protection and climate change mitigation and adaptation principles and practices and seek expertise when required.
- For each project, a contextual analysis of environmental and climate change issues and potential impacts (both positive and negative) are considered during project design through an initial environmental and climate change impact checklist.
- Where potential environmental and climate change impacts are identified during the initial checklist assessment, a more detailed environmental impact assessment and associated environmental management plan that includes potential climate change risks and impacts, adaptation and mitigation measures will be developed.
- Where environmental assessments of a HFHA project is assessed as likely to have an adverse impact on the environment, no contractual arrangements with partners will be entered into without ensuring an appropriate environmental and climate change risk adaptation and mitigation plan is developed.
- Environmental and climate change impact management plans will be regularly monitored and revised if necessary to ensure they remain appropriate to any changing contexts.
- Environmental impacts of construction materials and practices are considered by sourcing and using sustainable materials and through ongoing monitoring and training in sustainable construction processes.
- Projects are designed and implemented with a priority on sustainable environmental and climate outcomes.
- Projects support local partners to engage with communities using participatory and locally-led approaches, such as Participatory Approach to Safe Shelter Awareness (PASSA) process that recognise traditional and local knowledge sharing. Through this process we are able to build stronger, more climate-resilient and more environmentally sustainable housing and communities.
- Local communities will be empowered and supported to influence government decision-making, to support inclusion of community-identified climate adaptation priorities in government planning and strategies.
- Ensuring that environmental sustainability and climate action commitments and practices are written into all Memorandums of Understanding, Partnership Agreements and Activity Agreements with partners.

2. Australian Programs

HFHA's work in Australia will seek to reduce the climate impacts of housing construction and use and improve living conditions for vulnerable Australian by:

- Implementing eco friendly processes and policies to reduce our impact on the environment
- When possible, utilising more sustainable materials that may be available (such green cement, sustainably sourced timber and recycled materials) and using energy efficient measures.
- Supporting and promoting initiatives that improve energy and water efficiency and thermal comfort of housing through upgrades and repairs.
- Supporting and promoting reuse and refurbishment of existing buildings for housing.

3. Global Village

HFHA's Global Village program supports the delivery of housing initiatives across Asia Pacific as part of our International Programs work. International volunteering involves travel-related emissions and potential environmental impact. HFHA recognises its responsibility to mitigate the environmental impact of the program and implements a range of initiatives to support more sustainable practices including:

- Reducing travel impacts by encouraging volunteers and staff to book direct or carbon-offset flights, and accommodating volunteers close to build sites to reduce daily transport emissions.
- Promoting sustainable on-site practices including waste reduction, reuse of water bottles, and limiting single-use plastics; on-site meal preparation to cut food packaging waste and the inclusion of vegan menus.
- Sharing best practices, such as the 'green build' model piloted in Indonesia, across other country programs.
- Ensuring volunteer communications highlight sustainability efforts and the broader impact of the program and gathering volunteer feedback during post-build debriefs to improve environmental practices.

4. Operations

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 where possible using a renewable energy provider.
- Reducing the amount of paper used by encouraging electronic methods for meetings etc, printing double sided, and recycling used paper.
- Where possible, organise virtual rather than face-to-face meetings.

- Supporting relationships with partners who have environmentally-sustainable products and operations.
- Demonstrating transparency in our environmental commitments to build trust and preempt concerns.

References

- HFHA Asebstos Policy
- HFHA Disaster Risk Reduction Policy
- HFHA Sustainable Development Policy
- HFHA Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Management Plan templates (International Programs)
- HFHI Position on Housing and Climate Change

Appendix 1: ACFID Climate Action Framework¹

	ADAPTATION ACTIONS	ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION ACTIONS	MITIGATION ACTIONS
OPERATIONAL LEVEL RESPONSES	<u>Organisational climate risk</u>	<u>Reducing environmental impact</u>	<u>Decarbonising programs and operations</u>
PROGRAMMATIC LEVEL RESPONSES	<u>Building climate resilience</u>	<u>Nature-based solutions</u>	<u>Low carbon development</u>
POLICY AND ADVOCACY LEVEL RESPONSES	<u>Increasing adaptation assistance</u>	<u>Increasing environmental protection and restoration</u>	<u>Global emissions reduction</u>

¹ <https://acfid.asn.au/our-focus/combat-climate-change/>