



ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY

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When relevant, this policy and associated documents should be translated into the local language to ensure access to all personnel.

1. INTRODUCTION

The majority of the population living in the Himalaya depend on the natural environment for their survival and sustenance. This includes access to healthy food, clean water, adequate shelter and sustainable livelihoods. Globally, access to such environmental goods is increasingly considered to be a human right, and widely enshrined in domestic law.¹

In recent years, the global development community has also increasingly come to appreciate that the impacts of climate change are affecting, and will likely continue to affect, the most vulnerable populations more acutely, as well as threaten to reverse the human development gains of past decades. The interconnection between human development progress and environmental protection is becoming ever more evident.

The Himalayan Region specifically is facing a number of issues that threaten the environment, biodiversity and human livelihoods. Overexploitation of forests, intensive grazing and clearing forest for agriculture have affected the biodiversity and natural ecosystems of this region and resulted in many incidences of human-wildlife conflict. Due to the topography and climate, people in the Himalaya also live in harsh conditions where communication and movement is limited as compared to life on the plains. Furthermore, poverty, poor infrastructure for healthcare, education and water supply along with substandard human development indicators leave populations in the region more vulnerable to climate change as their capacity to adapt is limited. In this context, effective and responsive environmental planning and management is critical to the long-term reduction of poverty and improved social development – to better ensure that the most vulnerable people retain access to their main and essential sources of food, water, incomes and livelihoods.

AHF is committed to making a positive and sustainable contribution to the Himalayan natural environment and the communities within which we work. AHF is committed to strengthening climate change adaptation and supporting environmental and wildlife conservation by:

- Strengthening the resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in selected communities of Nepal, Ladakh and Bhutan
- Increasing community awareness and capacity on climate change mitigation, ecosystem-based adaptation and impact reduction
- Assisting the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to maintain and enhance their capacity to provide ecosystem services (environmental goods) and other benefits essential for sustainable livelihoods and development

¹ As of 2018, 155 States had established legal recognition of the right to a healthy environment (UNGA, [Human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment](#) (19.07.2018)) Most recently, in 2021, Nepal, alongside 68 other nation states, co-sponsored a joint statement at the Human Rights Council calling for the recognition of the right to a healthy environment as a human right (OCHA, [Joint Statement by UN human rights experts for World Environment Day](#) (5.6.2021))

- Reducing our carbon footprint and introducing further environmental safeguarding practices in our Australian operations

This Policy aims ensures that AHF activities are consistent with the Australian Government’s *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC). Under the EPBC, AHF is obligated to assess whether its programs will cause, or are likely to cause, a significant impact on the environment, and take steps to avoid and/or mitigate, monitor and report on any negative impacts. Specifically, the following aspects of the ‘environment’ must be considered:

- ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities
- climate and natural systems and processes
- natural and physical resources
- qualities and characteristics of locations, places and areas, and
- heritage values of places; social, economic and cultural aspects of the above, including those related to Indigenous peoples.

This Policy is also guided by the DFAT [Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy \(2018, updated 2019\)](#) (see also section 8, Legislative and Regulatory Framework).

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- AHF International Program Manual
- AHF Risk Management Policy
- AHF Programmatic Sector Strategies

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the environment is safeguarded and that environmental and climate change considerations are integrated into all AHF programs and activities.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all AHF personnel including Directors, employees, volunteers, consultants and other representatives, as well as in-country partners. AHF works through local implementing partners, rather than directly implementing programs, so the Foundation will work closely with these partners to operationalise the principles outlined in this policy.

4. PRINCIPLES

AHF is committed to the following guiding principles in line with DFAT’s 2019 Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy:

- **Do no harm** – by protecting and safeguarding natural habitats, rare and endangered native wildlife, and cultural heritage. This includes the health, welfare, and livelihoods of Himalayan communities with a focus on vulnerable groups, including women, children and persons living with disabilities. This includes applying pollution prevention and control technologies and practices; avoiding the use of hazardous materials; and providing safe and healthy working conditions that prevent accidents, injuries and disease to workers, local communities and animals, both domestic and wild. The focus is on maintaining environmental health, productivity and biodiversity. AHF’s Australian operations will also promote this commitment by, for example, reducing our carbon footprint.
- **Identification, assessment and management of environmental impacts** – AHF will identify and assess all potential environmental risks when designing and implementing projects and ensuring that those activities likely to have environmental impacts are properly managed and monitored. If it is not possible to completely avoid a negative impact, the principles of minimising, mitigating or as a last resort, offsetting or compensating for any negative impacts will be applied by AHF.
- **Effective engagement with stakeholders** – AHF commits to being transparent about its activities and to highlight environmental risks and impacts to the people potentially affected by its work. AHF will engage with them and any other stakeholders early on to identify and manage these. AHF will consult with affected parties in an inclusive and participatory way that is free from interference, coercion, intimidation and manipulation. Further, AHF will ensure that culturally appropriate and accessible redress mechanisms are in place and that any grievances are responded to transparently, promptly and without cost or retribution to the party that raised concern.
- **Effectively working with partners** – AHF will comply with partner country environmental laws, standards and/or policies as well as Multilateral Environment Agreements to which they are signatory. This includes supporting the capacity of in-country partners to develop and implement environmental governance systems, in liaison with other relevant stakeholders where appropriate. AHF also commits to working with partners to manage environmental risks. When possible/relevant, AHF will use in-country systems and avoid duplication or unnecessary assessments and/or management planning requirements.
- **Promoting improved environmental outcomes** – AHF commits to promoting improved environmental outcomes wherever possible by integrating ecologically sustainable development practices into AHF’s work and improving implementation and outcomes by identifying and managing risks.

5. GUIDELINES

5.1 Organisation-wide

AHF will promote environmental management in the Foundation’s work:

- **Governance:** by encouraging and fostering a culture to safeguard the environment in every aspect of AHF’s work and organisationally, including in our Australian operations;
- **Human Resources:** *refer to Clause 5.2 below and the AHF Employee Handbook;*

- **Partner and Program Management:** *refer to Clause 5.3 below and the AHF International Program Manual;*
- **Engagement Activities:** *refer to Clause 5.4 below and the AHF Communications Policy.*

AHF will assess its organisational environmental management practices periodically, including its partners' practices.

5.2 Human Resources

All employees will receive an induction on the Environmental Management Policy upon accepting employment with AHF, including a briefing on related AHF procedures.

AHF employees will be asked to minimise their carbon footprint and follow green office practices such as minimising printing, using our office compost, and recycling. See *AHF's Employee Handbook*.

AHF's commitment to environmental management will remain a priority in annual operational planning in line with our strategic plan, quarterly activity tracking and in ensuring all roles, work and activities are in line with this Policy. AHF will provide training to employees, volunteers, consultants and other relevant stakeholders on environmental management and this policy, as required.

5.3 Partner and program management

AHF is committed to ensuring that environmental management and principles are embedded in its programs and partnership development.

- AHF's Environmental Management Policy will be promoted and related actions undertaken throughout its work with project partners when:
 - conducting due diligence assessment, undertaken prior to partnering with an organisation and regularly during the partnership;
 - developing project design;
 - appraising the project;
 - monitoring of project, partner and risks;
 - reporting of project;
 - developing and implementing partner capacity building plans where relevant;
 - evaluating projects.

For projects with an annual budget of more than AUD30,000 environmental impact assessments will be conducted and environmental management plans developed by AHF and partners.

5.4 Australian Engagement Activities

AHF conducts education, fundraising and marketing activities to raise awareness, funds and engagement in our work. AHF commits to considering and responding to the environmental impacts of these activities to reduce AHF's carbon footprint and promote environmentally-responsive practices in our Australian operations.

AHF will raise our Australian supporters' awareness of environmental issues, the impact of climate change on the Himalaya mountains and communities, and our programmatic responses.

5.5 Visits to International Programs

In line with AHF's commitment to reducing our carbon footprint and the broader environmental impact of our Australian operations, AHF will ensure environmental concerns are considered and responded to in our travel planning and when conducting in-country visits.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All AHF stakeholders, including partners, have a responsibility to embed environmental management at AHF and within our partner organisations and within the work they implement.

In applying the maxim of 'minimum impact – maximum benefit', all AHF personnel will be expected and instructed to act in an environmentally responsible manner and to employ all reasonable measures to minimise environmental impact (e.g. proper use of energy and water; recycling and reuse where possible; use of sustainably-produced and recyclable materials where possible).

All personnel are encouraged to raise any concerns with adherence to *AHF's Environmental Management Policy* with AHF's CEO or their supervisor. We encourage all personnel to raise areas for improvement.

6.1 Board and CEO

It is the responsibility of the Board and CEO to ensure effective environmental management mechanisms are implemented across all AHF areas of operations, including systems and processes. This includes partner organisations.

AHF's CEO is responsible for monitoring adherence to this Policy, and overseeing its effectiveness.

6.2 Managers

Managers and senior employees are responsible for ensuring that *AHF's Environmental Management Policy* is understood and implemented by the employees and other personnel (including consultants and volunteers) under their supervision and responsibility.

AHF's Head of Programs will have operational responsibility for ensuring that in-country partners meet the obligations of this Policy.

6.3 Employees and volunteers

All employees and volunteers have the responsibility to ensure compliance with AHF's Environmental Management Policy. Employees in charge of a particular project will ensure partners are aware of the policy and will assist the partner in implementing its content.

6.4 Consultants and other representatives

Consultants and other representatives will be expected to comply with the principles and guidelines of this Environmental Management Policy.

6.5 In-country partners

If in-country partners do not have an Environmental Management Policy or if the policy does not reflect the same principles as AHF's policy, they will be expected to show their agreement to adhere to AHF's Environmental Management Policy. AHF will also support partners to develop their own and provide training and mentoring.

7. REVIEW OF POLICY

AHF's Environment Management Policy will be formally reviewed at least every five years to assess its relevance and effectiveness and ensure it meets current standards.

8. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

- ACFID Code of Conduct
- ACFID Quality Assurance Framework
- Australian Government Environment and Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
- DFAT Climate Change Action Strategy 2020-2025
- DFAT Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy 2019
- UN Convention on Biological Diversity (Biodiversity Convention) 1992
- UN Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (the 1972 Stockholm Declaration)
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Kyoto Protocol 1997
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement 2015
- UN Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992
- UN Sustainable Development Goals 2015