

## ENVIRONMENT and CLIMATE POLICY

<b>Approval Date:</b>	March 2021	<b>Next Review Date:</b>	March 2024
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Deputy Director / Programs Director	<b>Approved by:</b>	Executive Director

### 1. OVERVIEW

The Environment and Climate policy is based on the Christian principle that God has placed humans on earth, among all living creatures, with a duty to take care of what has been given to them. In Genesis 2 we read, “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (verse 15). This stewardship over creation, both living and inorganic, should be exercised in such a way as to maintain the integrity and sustainability of the environment for present and future generations.

ALWS recognises that the food, water, shelter, and livelihoods of those we seek to serve is dependent on the environment and impacted by a changing climate. The implementation of some activities can have risks, lead to negative impacts on the environment and threaten livelihoods, food security, health, and access to safe water. In addition, environmental degradation can increase the vulnerability of communities to disasters and the impacts of climate change<sup>1</sup>. It is therefore essential that ALWS and its partners work with local communities to ensure that support is provided in an environmentally sustainable way and opportunities to promote positive environmental outcomes are identified. This may include building resilience through disaster risk reduction and the adoption of practices appropriate to address the impacts of climate change.

ALWS also recognises that the daily operations of the organisation can have an impact on the environment and carbon emissions. This may include staff transportation and office functionalities. ALWS therefore works to mitigate negative impacts on the environment, minimises carbon footprint and promotes positive environmental outcomes in our domestic operations.

This policy is designed for both overseas programs and domestic operations, and provides a framework that endeavours to ensure that:

- ALWS mitigates environmental risks and negative impacts and promotes positive environmental outcomes in our partnerships and programs;
- Environmental requirements set out in the project proposal are implemented, monitored, and evaluated and lessons incorporated into future activities;
- The environmental impact resulting from ALWS’ domestic operation is minimal; and
- ALWS complies with environmental and climate related laws, regulations, standards, or requirements in Australia and partner countries.

### 2. GOAL

To promote environmental protection and climate sustainable development in our programs, partnerships and operations through environment and climate sensitive practice.

#### 2.a. OBJECTIVES

1. To ensure climate change mitigation, adaptation and impact, and disaster risk reduction are incorporated into program strategies.
2. To ensure environmental and climate change risks and impacts are identified, assessed, and managed in project design.
3. To monitor and manage environmental and climate change risks and impacts during project implementation and assess environmental risks and impacts in evaluation processes.
4. To assess and manage environmental impact in domestic operations.

### 3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

*Accountability:* We are accountable to those we seek to assist, working with them to ensure the best use of available resources.

*Empowerment:* Our intention is to enable people to determine and control their own development, guided by a focus on long-term sustainability.

*Stewardship:* We continuously improve the way we look after and take care of our gifts and resources, including the environment and the land.

### 4. SCOPE

This policy applies to all ALWS personnel including Board members, employees, contractors, consultants, and volunteers.

### 5. DEFINITIONS

For this document, the following definitions<sup>1</sup> of key policy terms are used:

*Environment:*

- 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; and
- e. the social, economic, and cultural aspects in relation to paragraphs a, b, or c.

*Impact:*

An impact is a change to the environment, including people and communities, whether negative or positive, or wholly or partly resulting from an investment's actions. An investment can have direct and indirect impacts on the environment. Impacts may be cumulative (over time) or combined (more than one impact in one place).

### 6. IMPLEMENTATION

#### A. Overseas Programs

ALWS' community-based approach to implementing environmentally sustainable development practices considers the specific strengths and needs of our local partners and acknowledges their role in the community. Specifically, we commit to ensuring:

1. Wherever possible program strategies support and implement sustainable environmental practices and include climate change mitigation, adaptation and impact, and disaster risk reduction.
2. Programs are screened for potential environmental risks and impacts, and more thorough environmental impact assessments and management plans are undertaken if required. Identified environmental risks and impacts are managed to avoid or mitigate negative impacts, promote positive impacts, and comply with all relevant environmental laws and regulations of the partner country.
3. Environmental risks and impacts are monitored and reported on by partners and ALWS throughout the program cycle.

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<sup>1</sup> DFAT Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy online available at: <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/environmental-social-safeguard-policy.aspx>

4. Engagement and support with partners on environment and climate change and ensure that the DFAT environment policy and guidelines known as Environment and Social Safeguard Policy are applied.

## **B. Domestic Operations**

ALWS commits to ensuring:

1. We minimise our carbon footprint. This includes travelling only when necessary and if must travel considering the most climate friendly form of transport, offsetting carbon emissions where possible and ensuring appliances and amenities are used efficiently.
2. We minimise our use of natural resources and derivative materials. This includes but is not limited to minimising the use of water and printing on both sides of paper.
3. We minimise our production of landfill. This includes but is not limited to paper waste and includes positive action such as reusing, recycling, and composting.
4. A sustainable office action tool is used to identify environmental strengths and areas for improvement leading to behaviour change.

## **7. RESPONSIBILITIES**

The ALWS Executive Director responsibilities include:

- Approving this policy and endorsing related revisions.
- Ensuring organisational level policy implementation.

The ALWS Management responsibilities include:

- Ensuring the policy is effectively communicated and implemented in each team.
- Fostering continuous learning and improvement.

The Programs Manager responsibilities include:

- Determining and supporting the policy focal person.

The Policy focal person responsibilities include:

- Leading the policy review and supporting policy implementation.
- Keeping abreast of related standards and best practices.

ALWS personnel responsibilities include:

- Complying with this policy.
- Contributing to policy implementation and review.

## **8. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- ACFID Code of Conduct (2017, revised 1 January 2019)
- DFAT Australian NGO Accreditation Guidance Manual (2018)
- DFAT Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy (2019)
- The Sphere Handbook 2018
- Sphere: Reducing environmental impact in humanitarian response
- The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (2014)
- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)
- DFAT Climate Change Action Strategy (2019)
- Lutheran Church of Australia, Commission on Social and Bioethical Questions, Proposal on the Environment (2015)
- COP22 Interfaith Statement to World Leaders Nov 2016 (signed by Bishop J Henderson LCA)
- Lutheran World Federation 'Creation – Not for Sale' 2017
- Lutheran Education Earth Care Charter - [www.earthcare.lutheran.edu.au](http://www.earthcare.lutheran.edu.au)

## 9. REVIEW

This policy is subject to review every 3 years.

### 9.1 Record of Policy Review and Version History

<b>Version No.</b>	<b>Date Approved</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Description of Changes</b>
1.0	2015	ALWS Board	Introduction of the Policy
2.0	March 2021	Executive Director	Climate change incorporated. Rationale detailing risks of program and daily operational impact on the environment. Goal added promotion of improved environmental outcomes. Objectives added risk management approach and opportunities. Implementation altered to reflect the goal and objectives. Commitment, Scope, Guiding Principles, Definitions and Responsibilities and related documents added.