

# **ACTIONAID MYANMAR'S ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY FOR PROGRAMMING AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

*September 2020*

## **COUNTRY DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD**

I am delighted to share and launch ActionAid Myanmar's Environmental and Climate Change policy. Considering the majority of Myanmar's population live in areas easily impacted by climate change, ActionAid Myanmar strives to take responsibility and accountability in its environmental impact in our programme work as identified in our Country Strategic Plan (2018-27). This policy has been developed to make AAM into a greener and more sustainable organization through encouraging ecological protection and building resilience to climate change practices in our programme areas and operations.

The Head of Operations and the Head of Programmes, Policy and Advocacy will be the custodians of ActionAid Myanmar's Environmental and Climate Change policy for Programming and Organizational Development. The Senior Management Team is committed to ensuring this policy is effective and will monitor and review the practices that underpin it.

ActionAid Myanmar's Environmental and Climate Change Policy for Programming and Organizational Development will be effective from 25th of September 2020 until further revision.

ActionAid Myanmar would like to thank our Interim Resilience Lead, Ms. Liliana DeMartini for developing this policy with all necessary consultations and references, Harjeet Singh, global climate lead, who provided major comments and suggestions that were integrated. We also would like to acknowledge support of Asia Regional Country Support team, AA Bangladesh and AA Sweden for sharing the reference resources and colleagues of the Federation Green Champions Group.

Thank you for your support and cooperation in implementing the policy.

**Khaing Zar Lin**  
**Interim Country Director**

**Dated: September 25, 2020**

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## BACKGROUND:

Environmental degradation and negative impacts of climate change severely impact the people living in poverty and exclusion. We live in a world that is warming everyday due to irresponsible actions of the human race. Our environment is degraded due to over extraction of natural resources and their exploitation for economic growth. According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment report 2019, around 1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades, more than ever before in human history.

Over time, this has impacted lives and livelihoods of communities, particularly of women and indigenous people, dependent on natural resources, that ended up suffering the most of the consequences of the climate crisis, while the world's richest nations are the ones the most responsible for the emission of Green House Gases (GHG). While some solutions lie in taking measure to shifting to renewable sources and ensuring energy, several reports suggest that this will not be sufficient to achieve the target of limiting global warming to 1.5°C or stop environmental degradation. We therefore must shift from traditional linear economic model to circular practices, promote climate justice and take measures to protect our environment, the ecosystem and biodiversity to ensure human race continues to exist and development is equitable and sustainable.

ActionAid is a global federation working to achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication with over 15 million people in 45 countries across the globe. Guided by feminist and human rights-based principles and approaches, the organization therefore facilitates platforms for collective action and solidarity by enabling people around the world to shift and transform power. The Federation has a long-term integrated programming agenda focused on three interconnected and mutually reinforcing pillars - Rights, Redistribution and Resilience. ActionAid started its operation in Myanmar in 2001. As a member of the Federation, ActionAid Myanmar (AAM) works to achieve its mission and vision setting 3 major thematic areas: Women's Rights, Resilience (including climate change adaptation and humanitarian assistance), Governance and Youth.

AAM's initiatives to build resilience of the communities to disasters, climate change and environmental impacts helped AAM to realize that it is critical to be accountable to the community we work with and ensure we walk the green talk by taking actions to protect environment and reduce the impact of climate change. AAM, therefore, will continue holding the polluters to account as well as take measures to reduce its own environmental impacts from its operation and programme implementation. These Guidelines are prepared, therefore, with the purpose to promote a systematic approach to protect the environment and address environmental concerns.

## SCOPE:

The Environmental and Climate Change Policy aim to provide ActionAid Myanmar with a set of guiding principles and procedures that will encourage AAM's programming to integrate ecological protection and building resilience to climate change throughout the project cycle, as well as in organization development and management processes.

This Policy guide will particularly focus on:

- a. Programme Areas: Promoting Sustainable Development Goals taking circular economy model and ensure our programme promotes environmental protection and resilience to climate change in every aspect of the operation;
- b. Operations: ActionAid Myanmar will calculate its ecological and carbon footprint and take measures to reduce and proactively neutralise emissions from its operations.

ActionAid Myanmar will also take account of the existing environmental and climate change policies, acts and regulations adopted by the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and will comply as guided. A review of this policy will be conducted every 2 years.

## COMMITMENTS:

ActionAid Myanmar commits:

1. To abide itself with following promises - with open mind & attitude  
i.e. **GREEN ATTITUDE**
2. To introduce automated office and administrative processes  
i.e. **GREEN OFFICE**
3. To promote and practice online communication  
i.e. **GREEN COMMUNICATIONS**
4. To reduce wastage of water consumption and electricity use by 10%  
i.e. **GREEN UTILITY USAGE**
5. To set up and use energy-saving electronic tools and appliances  
i.e. **GREEN ENERGY**
6. To purchase goods and services with the least environmental impact  
i.e. **GREEN PROCUREMENT**
7. To reduce paper-prints by 50%  
i.e. **GREEN PRACTICE**
8. To plan travels strategically decreasing CO2 emission by at least 5% using mass transit systems  
i.e. **GREEN TRAVEL**
9. To influence and inspire LRP and other partners/ individuals through policy and programs to be CO2 sensitive in programme implementation  
i.e. **GREEN PARTNERSHIP**
10. To plant around 100,000 trees with communities and partners in LRP areas by end 2022.  
i.e. **GREEN MYANMAR**

## DEFINITIONS:

ActionAid is committed to limiting the environmental impact of its work. By reducing our environmental footprint and resource consumption, we will take actions to mitigate climate change and its adverse impacts on marginalized and excluded people and their communities.

ActionAid envisions to be a modern organization, which works systematically on developing the organization as a sustainable one. By making these small changes in our ways of working, we can all play our part in minimising the environmental impact of our operations.

There is an inseparable interlinkage between climate change and environment. The environmental degradation caused by unsustainable extraction and consumption is one of the main causes behind climate change. Our biodiversity and ecosystems are also threatened by the negative impacts of climate change. Furthermore, climate change induced environmental degradation impacts Myanmar in various ways. Taking environmental actions and promoting sustainability will have a positive impact on nature and will help mitigate climate change and its impacts.

The following definitions are adopted:

**Climate Change:** “A significant or abnormal difference in the long-term, average weather pattern for a particular region or for the Earth as a whole and the effects it has on the Earth.” (ActionAid UK, 2020)

**Climate Justice:** “Links human rights and development to achieve a human-centred approach, safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable people and sharing the burdens and benefits of climate change and its impacts equitably and fairly. Climate justice is informed by science, responds to science and acknowledges the need for equitable stewardship of the world’s resources.” (Mary Robinson Foundation Climate Justice, 2020)

**Circular Economy:** means a system that is restorative or regenerative by intention and design. It replaces the end-of-life concept with restoration, shifts towards the use of renewable energy, eliminates the use of toxic chemicals, which impair reuse and return to the biosphere, and aims for the elimination of waste through the superior design of materials, products, systems, and business models (World Economic Forum, 2020).

**Ecological/Environmental Justice:** is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies (USEPA, 2017);

**Ecological Footprint:** measures the ecological assets that a given population requires to produce the natural resources it consumes (including plant-based food and

fiber products, livestock and fish products, timber and other forest products, space for urban infrastructure) and to absorb its waste, especially carbon emissions (Global Footprint Network, 2020);

**Ecosystem** means the natural system existing living, non-living substances and plants in compatibility and the natural environment which have been evolving due to such system (Myanmar Climate Change Strategy, 2019);

**Environment** means the physical factors in the human environment, including land, water, atmosphere, climate, sound, odour, taste, the biological factors of various animals and plants and historical, cultural, social and aesthetic factors (Myanmar Climate Change Strategy, 2019);

**Pollution** means any direct or indirect alteration, effect of the physical, thermal, chemical or biological properties of any part of the environment including land, water and atmosphere by discharging, emitting or depositing environmental hazardous substances, pollutants or wastes so as to affect beneficial use of environment, or to affect public health, safety or welfare, or animals and plants (Myanmar Environmental Conservation Law, 2012);

**Resilience** means the capacity of social, economic and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning and transformation (Myanmar Climate Change Strategy, 2019);

## APPROACHES:

ActionAid Myanmar as a Human Rights based organisation will be guided by the Principles of Human Rights. Furthermore, the document will be operated to promote the policies and principles of ActionAid and ActionAid Myanmar. We adopt the R's approach, to promote circular economy in operation and programme implementation. These 6 R's are:

1. Refuse – wasteful and polluting products and processes;
2. Reduce – the use of harmful, wasteful, and non-recyclable products to avoid unnecessary waste;
3. Reuse - items throughout the workplace instead of buying new ones;
4. Repurpose – think creatively to upcycle and find new purposes for an item;
5. Recycle - to reprocess waste materials to produce another product;
6. Recover – safe and eco-friendly alternative should be used and in place.

AAM shall adopt necessary tools and techniques to

operationalize the Environmental Policy. It is to be noted that the Policy will operate under the 'Do No Harm' principles in general protecting the ecosystem and biodiversity within the country and beyond as well as have a community focused programmatic approach in implementing the elements.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY:

Under the guidance of the Senior Management Team (SMT), the Policy will be implemented taking the following steps and actions:

- a. **Setting up an organization wide 'green' team:**  
AAM should set up a Green Champions Team, with minimum one person from each team (both programme and function), which should be updated on a regular basis. The Team would be operating under the guidance of the SMT/Country Director to implement projects, programmes and campaigns to promote ecological and climate justice actions within the organization. The Team would dedicate at least 5% of their time allocated (monthly) for implementing the tasks agreed by SMT to meet the objective of becoming an environmentally responsive organization. The Team will be led by a convener with technical knowledge of environment and social justice and clear understanding of the organisational mandate.
- b. **Setting up clear workplan:** The Green Team would develop a yearly work plan considering both programmatic aspect and operational facts to ensure AAM continues to operate as environmentally responsive organization. This will include scaling up actions related automation of its administrative processes, as appropriate, build capacity of partner organisations and undertake programmes to build in environmental concerns into all projects and community implementations
- c. **Measuring Ecological Footprint and Reporting:**  
Ecological footprint measuring is a rather technical aspect. ActionAid Myanmar assign individuals/team with dedicated time allocation in the Job Description/ Job Assignment to measure environmental impact yearly, or, alternatively, hire someone. This will include:
  - I. Ecological and Carbon Footprint Analysis and Reporting: AAM will measure ecological and carbon footprint of the organization, of its operations including investment made at partner/ community level, on a yearly basis. AAM will invest to set up tools, techniques and operational guideline for partners to collect data in regular interval, store data, and generate report annually.
  - II. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA): A SEA system will be developed and operationalized under the policy especially focusing on programme aspect. The system will adopt set of indicators to assess a programme while it is under development. This will include

- measures to adopt approaches to mitigate impacts including readdressing unavoidable impacts in a way that benefits both society, economy and the environment. This will also promote community-based monitoring mechanism of the environmental measures taken under projects / programmes and reported annually as part of environmental accountability of AAM.
- d. **Promoting Environmentally Responsible Culture:** AAM will promote a culture within the organization and all partners to be environmentally responsible. This will include
    - I. **Training on Environmental protection and Climate Change:** A training on Environmental protection and Climate Change will be provided to AAM staff as part of the induction program. AAM will be responsible for ensuring that each staff member has the basic understanding of environmental protection and climate change and how our everyday actions such as use of paper, fuel, electricity, transport etc. can positively or negatively impact the environment and climate system. The training module will be developed under the guidance of SMT and rolled out by technical expert within / outside the organisation.
    - II. **Promoting Sustainable Production and Consumption:** Guided by Sustainable Development Goal 12 and principles of Circular Economy, AAM will invest in research and campaign activities. This will include communities, partner organization and other actors. AAM does not produce any product; however, we will adopt a section in Procurement Policy ensuring AAM prioritizes products that are environment friendly or have minimum impact on the environment considering value for money, following the R principles. Moreover, the same principle will be applied by AAM when investing and promoting social enterprises and cooperatives. AAM will look for opportunities to use existing resources within the organization and create models/examples for shared learning.
    - III. **Investing in renewable energy:** AAM will gradually move away from using energy that harms the environment and will invest in renewable energy. This will also be scaled up at the community and partner levels. A feasibility study will be done before investing in renewable energy projects/ programmes to understand cost benefit on taking different approaches. E.g. by upgrade the outdated equipment, enhance the energy efficiency of the devices, considering installing solar panels.
    - IV. **Waste Management:** AAM will prepare specific guidelines to understand environment “pollutants” and ways to manage waste, particularly solid and chemical waste generated from its vehicle, batteries, electronic waste and all other wastes that cannot be re-used by AAM or community.
  - V. **Promote Waste to Resources:** Waste shall be regarded as resources as and when possible. AAM will identify ways to turn wastes into resources / products that can be reused or recycled. There are examples of waste to resource projects that benefit communities and promotes green jobs at community level. AAM will actively seek those opportunities and invest to create examples.
  - VI. **Partnership:** AAM may not have the technical capacity to dispose or manage hazardous wastes. However, there are companies / agencies who are working on managing these wastes and reusing some of the materials that reduces environmental impact. AAM will actively seek partnership with such organisations, as appropriate.
  - e. **Campaign on Ecological and climate justice:** AAM has been campaigning against projects and programmes that impacts the environment and communities negatively. AAM, under this policy, will further strengthen its campaign to protect environment, ecosystem and biodiversity, environmental sustainability and to promote climate justice within and outside the country, where applicable.
  - f. **Mainstream Ecological Protection and resilience to climate change:** Ecological protection and resilience to climate change will have to be built into AAM’s DNA. Therefore, we will develop checklist to ensure every programme and projects designed by AAM considers environmental protection and building of resilience to climate change in a way that promotes social and economic benefits.

# PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT IN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS SITUATION:

Humanitarian Crisis and its different phases (pre, during and post) requires actions focusing mostly to save lives. Often there is very limited time and space to take measures for protecting the environment. AAM, therefore, will adopt a mix of proactive and reactive approaches to protect the environment in humanitarian crisis situations. This document also takes note of document titled “Reducing Environmental Impact in Humanitarian Response” by Sphere and “Environment and Humanitarian Action: Increase Effectiveness, Sustainability and Accountability” by UNEP and OCHA.

- a. Inclusion of Environmental Concerns in Early Warning: AAM will update its early warning mechanism for the partners and communities and include environment factors to prepare the communities to project environment.
- b. Promote Environmental Messaging at Community Level: As part of preparedness phase, AAM communicates with communities and partners. This communication will be built in messages to promote environmental safeguarding including measure to protect forest, water resources, use of approaches to minimise ecological and carbon footprint, as appropriate.
- c. Do No Harm: The environment is one key component of potential or actual unintended negative effects of humanitarian activities that may compromise people’s safety, dignity and rights. (CHS Commitment 3, KA 3.6). Humanitarian response of ActionAid therefore should not contribute to unsustainable management of natural resources or the occurrence of environmental emergencies.
- d. Environmental and Climate Change Assessment in Response and Recovery: AAM will include an Environmental and Climate Change Assessment in designing Response and Recovery projects/ programmes. AAM will develop a checklist based on Core Humanitarian Standard and existing guidelines.
- e. Monitoring and Evaluation: Environmental protection should be part of monitoring and evaluation process of humanitarian actions. As humanitarian crisis context changes faster than normal situation, it is critical to set a shorter duration for data collection and monitoring.
- f. Compliant Response Mechanism (CRM): Environmental concerns will be integrated within AAM’s existing CRM process. The process and approach will be further elaborated through development of a specific guideline.

# APPROVAL AND SIGN-OFF

ActionAid Myanmar’s Environmental and Climate Change Policy for Programming and Organizational Development is signed off by Khaing Zar Lin, Interim Country Director, Myanmar with the approval of Jagat Patnaik, Head of Country Support, Asia Region, ActionAid International on 25th September 2020.

# ANNEX 1:

List of Key Acts, Policies and Guidelines on Environment Protection and Climate Change by Government of Myanmar:

7. Myanmar's National Environment Policy, 1994
8. Protection of Wildlife and Wild Plants Conservation of Natural Areas Law, 1994
9. Environmental Conservation Law, 2012
10. Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan, 2018
11. Forest Law, 2018
12. National Environmental Policy of Myanmar, 2019
13. Myanmar Climate Change Policy, 2019
14. Myanmar Climate Change Strategy (2018-2030), 2019

