

Climate, Environment and Sustainability Policy		
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Policy Statement

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

MSA is committed to:

- Using our influence to elevate climate change and environment as a key health issue
- Contributing to a better environment for vulnerable people 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

Through these commitments and actions, MSA contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and helping realise the protection, survival, development, and participation rights of all people in developing nations.

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. MSA witnesses and confirms the negative impact that global warming has had in the South Pacific with rising sea-levels a direct consequence of this potentially reversing many of the development gains of recent decades.

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 chemicals. 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.

It is incumbent on us, individually and collectively in our day-to-day activities to modify our behaviour to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and negative impacts of pollution on vulnerable communities.

This policy seeks to:

- Ensure that MSA is aligned with MSA’s adoption of climate change and environment as a global priority
- Guide the contribution MSA makes to protecting children, vulnerable people and the environment through its programs, advocacy and fundraising
- Drive continual improvements in the environmental sustainability of our projects, operations and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- Comply with Australian legal and regulatory requirements, including DFAT Accreditation requirements.

Policy

- MSA supports long-term community sustainable development projects that help people move towards self-sufficiency and reducing poverty.
- This includes promoting long term solutions that mitigate the current and anticipated environmental effects of global warming
- It is incumbent on us, individually and collectively in our day to day activities to modify our behaviour to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and negative impacts of pollution on the South-Pacific.
- Where carbon emissions cannot be avoided, we will mitigate them when possible with carbon offsetting.
- MSA is compliant with all of its legal and other environmental requirements
- MSA is aware of its own carbon footprint and is committed to:
 1. reducing or offsetting DAISI’s greenhouse gas emissions
 2. implementing waste minimisation particularly when it comes to the supply of single-use medical disposables.
 3. minimising our water usage
 4. initiatives that promote efficient transport solutions for our volunteers and staff to reduce the impacts of fuel burning on greenhouse gas emissions
- To this end, MSA has a dedicated Environment Protection Officer, whose role it is to ensure minimal negative environmental impact related to MSA activities.
- This includes the responsible reclaiming of medical and surgical supplies from Australia, otherwise destined to become landfill, and their responsible shipping to the Desired location
- MSA must also ensure that it only sends equipment and medical supplies that are genuinely needed, and likely to be used in a timely manner to reduce the negative environmental impact that sending unused equipment has on the environment
- Wherever possible, MSA should promote self-reliance with reusable equipment and the avoidance of single-use disposables that end up as land fill or cluttering the shoreline and oceans

Responsibilities

Responsibilities in enacting this policy include:

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is responsible for ensuring MSA’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 Environment Protection Committee and is responsible for measuring and reporting on emissions.

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.

MSA Implementing Partners are responsible for day-to-day implementation and management of programs and play a key role in ensuring recipients 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.

Environment Protection Committee (EPC) is responsible for dissemination and awareness raising of this policy with all MSA Australia staff. It is also responsible for the measuring, monitoring, and reporting on areas of environmental footprint for MSA

Implementation

Implementation of this policy is achieved through:

- Working with partners to help protect recipients 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, young people, and women 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, young people, and women to have their voices heard, notably in the areas of climate change, environment and biodiversity and advocating to help place child, human rights, and wellbeing at the centre of climate change policymaking and emergency preparedness and response plans.
- Communicating publicly about how climate change is impacting vulnerable people and raising funds to support MSA's work to address this.

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 MSA 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.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA): An EIA is a procedure that MSA 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 MSA Policy Paper E/ICEF/1989/L6, Children and Environment: A MSA Strategy for Sustainable Development. This policy reiterates that MSA’s protection of children extends to include all aspects of a child’s environment which may impact on their survival and development.

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

Partner Country Office: A MSA Country Office with whom MSA partners with in many countries to deliver our projects and programs. These are MSA’s primary implementing partners.

Program: Programs are overarching development approaches and initiatives that set priorities and guide project outcomes, results, and activities.

Project: Projects are the practical implementation of MSA’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.