

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

### **I. RATIONALE FOR POLICY**

In pursuit of its mission to support children around the world to overcome barriers and access education so they can be a voice for change, Children Believe (CB) is committed to protecting the natural environment and enhancing its ability to support life for future generations.

CB recognizes the interrelatedness of poverty and the environment, and views environmental quality as a key factor for achieving sustainable development. CB works in countries and communities in the Global South, some of which severely affected by environmental degradation and climate change. Such environmental degradation, contamination and climate change increase the vulnerability and undermine the resilience of children, their families and communities living in poverty. In situations requiring humanitarian aid, ignoring environmental issues in the short term can compromise recovery, worsen existing problems or cause new ones. In working with and engaging with a wide variety of stakeholders, our work and influence extends beyond the Global South.

As a responsible organization in the international development sector, CB endorses the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As a proud member of the ChildFund Alliance, CB adopts and aligns with the Alliance's Environmental Sustainability Standards and other internationally-recognized humanitarian standards. This policy is informed by the Impact Assessment Act (IAA) and aims to equip the organization meet Global Affairs Canada's requirements for an environmental integration process that aims to ensure the environmental sustainability of Canada's development initiatives.

### **II. POLICY OBJECTIVE**

This policy articulates Children Believe's commitments to environmental sustainability in order to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It outlines the standards that CB will uphold to ensure its programming, operations, and environmental sustainability education & advocacy efforts are planned, implemented, and monitored in a socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable manner.

### **III. POLICY SCOPE**

This policy applies to:

- All persons working for Children Believe including but not limited to employees, volunteers, Board members, interns, and consultants;
- Partner organizations and their representatives who are responsible for implementing programs or projects on behalf of Children Believe.

The policy applies to CB's institutional and programmatic activities in Canada and the countries where CB works. This policy applies to CB-supported programming, whether developed, implemented and or evaluated by CB or by its partner organizations.

## IV. POLICY DETAILS

### 1. Environmental Sustainability Commitments

Recognizing that the right to a healthy environment is a basic right in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international covenants, and the direct relationship between the well-being of children and the current environmental and climate crisis, CB commits to promoting a healthy, sustainable environment and strives to reduce its ecological footprint.

- 1.1. **Programming:** In the communities where CB works, our programs will build on local capacities, demonstrate a commitment to (1) strengthening community resilience and preparedness, and (2) protecting the natural environment and enhancing its ability to support life for future generations.

CB's work will abide by the following principles guiding the integration of environmental sustainability in Canada's international assistance:

- a) **"Do no harm"**—CB's development initiatives will not pollute or degrade the environment or natural resources of its partner countries. Initiatives will aim for multiple benefits that improve the environment while benefitting other sectors, such as gender equality and economic growth.
- b) **Mitigate environment-related risks**—CB's development initiatives will consider environmental risks, including those posed by climate change (such as drought, flooding and extreme weather-related events). CB will integrate mitigation measures into strategies and programming in order to safeguard investments and results achieved.
- c) **Capitalize on environmental opportunities**—CB will seek to capitalize on opportunities offered by the natural environment and/or emerging environment-related opportunities. Such opportunities may include renewable energy resources, green growth, promoting reduces use of paper and climate-friendly finance.

- 1.2. **Internal operations:** CB will manage its resources in an environmentally responsible way and strive to minimize the environmental impacts of its internal operations.

- 1.3. **Education and advocacy:** CB will act as a global voice with and for vulnerable children on the threat of environmental degradation and climate change to child rights and violence against children.

### 2. Our Approach to Environmental Sustainability

- 2.1. **CB will proactively address the environmental issues related to its programming and operations. To this end, CB will:**

- Stay informed and take into account the prospects for climate change and the environmental situation in the areas of influence of CB-supported programs.
- Comply with all applicable environmental legislation and statutory requirements in Canada and the countries where we work, and its own environmental commitments;
- Determine the significant environmental effects of its programs and operations through environmental assessments in order to control the negative effects and the maximize the beneficial ones.
- Prevent pollution at the source, where feasible;
- Conserve resources, where feasible;
- Use participatory and inclusive approaches to working with and supporting local partners and communities to create and maintain environmentally sustainable programs and practices;
- Monitor, evaluate and report practices with a view to continuous improvement and further reduction of environmental impacts.

### 3. Environmental Stewardship Standards

#### 3.1. Programming and humanitarian aid

- a) **Environmental planning** will be incorporated into CB country and community-level development plans. This includes identification of risks, opportunities and the impact of proposed initiatives on the environment, both positive and negative.
- b) CB-supported programs will demonstrate **an anticipatory approach** to climate change **through a child-focused lens**.
- c) CB will consistently consider the **environmental implications** of CB-supported programming **throughout the program life cycle**, from concept stage to development, implementation and follow-up processes.
- d) CB will **consult with local partners**, and wherever possible, the communities we serve, in the program design and implementation to facilitate identification and mitigation of environmental implications and concerns. **Community action** to address identified problems will be encouraged and supported.
- e) CB will consider the potential **environmental impact of its humanitarian work** and will develop appropriate prevention and mitigation strategies.
  - In humanitarian circumstances where speed of purchase and distribution is essential in saving lives, CB will use the most appropriate available sources, meaning that in exceptional circumstances where it has not been possible to plan ahead to meet humanitarian needs, the standards in this policy may not be as rigorously applied.
  - Post-emergency and reconstruction work are not considered as humanitarian interventions under the Impact Assessment Act (IAA).
- f) All CB-supported programs – and in particular any infrastructure construction work - will include an **environmental impact assessment** and will be assessed to ensure environmental considerations are appropriately accounted for and prevention of any environmental impact is prioritized over mitigation.
- g) CB's main long-term development work involves support to and capacity building of civil society organizational partners in the counties where we operate. CB **works with and support its local partners** who deliver CB-supported programs to ensure these programs meet the standards and practices outlined in this policy.

#### 3.2. Institutional operations and facilities

- a) **Internal operations must strive to minimize greenhouse gas emissions.** Examples include but are not limited to minimizing air travel where appropriate and supporting alternatives such as such as virtual meetings.
- b) **Internal operations must minimize environmental impact and waste generation.** Examples include but are not limited to:
  - Reducing paper use through improved access to digital information;
  - Promoting electronic communications and document storage wherever possible;
  - Promoting rethinking, reducing and reusing before recycling;
  - Providing office compost and “green bin” programs where such recycling programs are available;
  - Sourcing locally from suppliers committed to sustainable inputs and practices where possible;
  - Considering the energy / environmental characteristics when evaluating building space or office equipment.
- c) **Relevant organizational policies** and guidelines should consider – where feasible - **inclusion of environmental criteria** to advance the full realization of environmental sustainability either directly by CB or indirectly by its suppliers or service providers.

Examples of such policies may include purchasing and procurement, investment policy, partnership, corporate due diligence, etc.

### 3.3. Education and advocacy

CB is committed to taking appropriate measures to promote and advance environmental sustainability in the countries where we work. To this end, CB will work to:

- a) **Educate** children, their families and communities, as well as relevant authorities about the risks posed to children due to environmental degradation and climate change, highlighting how these are root causes of violence against children. CB will rally support on the need for environmental protection and climate action and the promotion of child rights and child protection.
- b) **Empower** the communities we serve to be the stewards of the local environment on which they depend. We will work to build capacity to identify the root cause of problems, raise awareness of local environmental issues and provide access to information to help them make informed decisions.
- c) **Advocate** to governments to deliver financial resources and political action to ensure children's vulnerability to environmental degradation and climate change is prioritized. Further, their rights to survival, development, protection and participation, as promised under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are upheld.

## V. POLICY AUTHORITY AND OFFICERS

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|---------------------------------------|---|
| a. Authority to approve this policy:  | <b>Board of Directors</b>                   |
| b. Executive champion of this policy: | <b>Chief International Programs Officer</b> |
| c. Authority to develop procedures:   | <b>Chief International Programs Officer</b> |
| d. Authority to approve procedures:   | <b>Executive Leadership Team</b>            |

## VI. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, COMPLIANCE AND REPORTING

The Executive Champion is responsible the implementation of this policy including its publication, communication, training and change management, development and implementation of the related policy procedures, forms and guidelines as well as cascading the policy to Country Offices (where applicable).

The Approval Authority identified in Section Va is ultimately responsible for compliance with this policy.

The Executive Champion will report on compliance with this policy to the policy Approval Authority on a quarterly basis.

## VII. POLICY REVIEW

This policy and related procedures must undergo an in-depth review **every 3 years** from the approval date, but may be reviewed at any time as needed.

The Executive Champion will initiate and lead the policy review process and will provide updates to the Approval Authority on the progress and key dates.

## VIII. RELATED DOCUMENTS

The following internal and external documents support the application of this policy:

- a. Applicable legislation, regulations and standards:
  - [Impact Assessment Act \(IAA\)](#)
  - Government of Canada's [Supporting Environmental Sustainability in Developing Countries](#)

- [ChildFund Alliance Environmental Sustainability Standards](#)
- Global Affairs Canada's (GAC) [Environment Handbook for Community Development Initiatives](#)
- GAC [Environmental Integration Process – Screening Tool](#)
- Sphere [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#)

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## DEFINITIONS

**Environment:** The Impact Assessment Act defines the environment as the "components of the Earth, and includes: (a) land, water, and air, including all layers of the atmosphere; (b) all organic and inorganic matter and living organisms; and (c) the interacting natural systems that include components referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b)".

**Environmental assessment:** Both a tool and a process to assist in planning, environmental integration and decision-making. It serves to define an initiative's environmental dimensions (biophysical, cultural, socio-economic; as well as negative and positive) and to identify measures needed to prevent the initiative from causing ecological damage and generating social costs. It also serves to identify opportunities to achieve environmental benefits and positive environmental outcomes, even when the primary focus of activities is not necessarily environment-related. An environmental assessment is specific to the initiative and its site, and must consider all components and phases of the initiative.

**Environmental sustainability:** Responsible programming and operations that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Executive Champion:** A member of the ELT with overall responsibility for an assigned policy including: drafting, carrying out appropriate consultations / assessment, evaluating implications of the policy including risks and costs and seeking legal advice where necessary, developing and carrying out the communication, change management and implementation plan, writing any related procedures, standards or guidelines, monitoring compliance through regular reviews of the policy as well providing oversight to cascading the policy to Country Offices.

**Executive Leadership Team (ELT):** The most senior level of staff leadership within Children Believe comprised of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Marketing and Development Officer (CMDO), Chief International Programs Officer (CIPO) and Chief People & Culture Officer (CPCO). The CEO may alter the composition of the ELT as required from time to time. One person may hold more than one position. Titles may change at the discretion of the ELT or the Board.