

Global Environmental Policy

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1.0	01/03/2021	Management by MT	Management
1.1	25/09/2023		Management
1.2	30/10/2023	Minor amendments to text for clarification purposes, no material change	Management
2.0	October 2026	We have matured in this area since the environmental policy was introduced in 2021. This version reflects how our offering in this area has changed and how we are committed to being more climate resilient in our activities.	Management

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Purpose.....	4
3.	Scope and objectives	4
3.1	Scope	4
3.2	Objectives.....	4
4.	Responsibilities.....	5
4.1	Management.....	5
4.2	Environmental Operations Steering Group (EOSG)	5
4.3	Climate Action Strategy Team (CAST)	5
4.4	Environmental leads	5
4.5	Staff	5

5.	Climate resilience.....	6
5.4	Mitigation	6
5.5	Adaptation	6
5.6	Response	6
6.	Office activities.....	7
6.6	Business travel	7
6.7	Paper	8
7.	Supply chain.....	8
8.	Digital	8
9.	Programmes	9
9.3	Environmental integration	9
9.4	Climate resilience and adaptation.....	9
9.5	Environmental risk and safeguards	9
9.6	Partnerships and capacity strengthening.....	9
9.7	Learning and evidence	9
10.	Related policies	10

1. Introduction

- 1.1 We recognise that some of the world’s most marginalised people are at the greatest risk from the effects of climate change, including persons with disabilities, women and girls.
- 1.2 We also recognise that as a global development organisation we have a responsibility to minimise our environmental impact, support climate resilience, protect biodiversity and natural ecosystems, and ensure that environmental sustainability is integrated into our operations, partnerships and programmes.
- 1.3 We seek to avoid, minimise, and mitigate any unintended environmental harm arising from our activities, investments, procurement decisions and programme delivery.
- 1.4 Our work aligns closely with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which sets out global actions for countries and organisations to follow in alleviating poverty and avoiding the potentially catastrophic effects of climate change. i.e., Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 Climate Action is “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of the Sightsavers Environmental Policy is to ensure that:
 - 2.1.1 Staff, partners and other interested parties understand what our environmental approach and main objectives are. This enables us to influence and communicate our relevant environmental requirements to external providers, including contractors. It also enables us to be clear about our environmental objectives when working in partnerships and consortia.
 - 2.1.2 By sharing our environmental objectives and monitoring our environmental risks we remain accountable as we seek to reduce our environmental impact.
 - 2.1.3 We comply with relevant environmental legislation and reporting requirements, including targeting Net Zero emissions in the UK by 2050 in line with the UK Government's commitment via our carbon reduction plan, which is shared on our website.

3. Scope and objectives

3.1 Scope

- 3.1.1 Environment in this policy refers to the natural environment. This includes the air, land and living organisms.
- 3.1.2 We are concerned with the impact that we have on the environment, and the impact that changes in the environment have on our activities.
- 3.1.3 This policy includes Sightsavers offices and programmatic activities.
- 3.1.4 Due to the nature of our work our primary environmental concern is the effects of climate change on our activities, and this is the main focus of this policy.

3.2 Objectives

- 3.2.1 Ensure compliance with all relevant environmental legislation and contractual obligations, including reporting to external bodies and organisations.
- 3.2.2 Ensure that environmental risks that may affect staff, and other people, as a consequence of our activities, are assessed and mitigated.
- 3.2.3 Reduce our carbon impact from energy, water, waste, travel, and paper use, as well as other identified sources, as appropriate.
- 3.2.4 Reduce our carbon impact from procurement.
- 3.2.5 Consider climate change adaptations in our programmes, where appropriate.
- 3.2.6 Retain ISO 14001 certification for the UK environmental management system (EMS).

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Management

- 4.1.1 Sightsavers management team are responsible for ensuring that its environmental commitments are met.
- 4.1.2 Operational and programmatic responsibilities are delegated to our main organisational environmental and climate action groups.

4.2 Environmental Operations Steering Group (EOSG)

- 4.2.1 Representatives of the management team are members of the EOSG and therefore have management team responsibilities for the environmental policy.
- 4.2.2 The EOSG ensures that Sightsavers complies with regulations and guidance relating to monitoring and reporting on our environmental activities.
- 4.2.3 The EOSG is responsible for delivering on regulatory environmental and climate change objectives.
- 4.2.4 The EOSG is responsible for the UK EMS.

4.3 Climate Action Strategy Team (CAST)

- 4.3.1 Representatives of the management team are members of CAST and therefore have management team responsibilities for climate action.
- 4.3.2 CAST is responsible for leading the organisation's programmatic climate action work.
- 4.3.3 CAST is responsible for delivering on climate action programmatic objectives.

4.4 Environmental leads

- 4.4.1 There are environmental leads in each office. They are responsible for promoting environmental good practice in the office.

4.5 Staff

- 4.5.1 All staff are responsible for complying with the environmental policy and observing good practice when it comes to environmental impacts.

5. Climate resilience

- 5.1 In order to be climate resilient, we must ensure that we are prepared for extreme weather events as these are happening more frequently; we must recover successfully from these events; and we must adapt to the impacts that have been experienced due to changes in the climate. Mitigation is included as a climate resilience strategy (per the UNFCCC) due to the need to address any contribution that we make towards the root cause of climate change.
- 5.2 Our approaches need to recognise the impacts on persons with disabilities and other marginalised communities.
- 5.3 Three approaches we are taking that improve climate resilience are:

5.4 Mitigation

- 5.4.1 We are working to reduce carbon emissions in our country offices by calculating the carbon footprint for each location and monitoring changes over time. To do this we are using the methodologies as outlined in The Greenhouse Gas Protocol, A Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard. We use an operational control boundary. This means that we do not calculate the carbon footprint for the programmes that we support as partners have their own operating policies.
- 5.4.2 For some programmes, where there have been efforts made to reduce carbon emissions as part of the programme, we will support the partners to calculate carbon savings as a consequence of actions taken, if this is considered a useful output for the programme.
- 5.4.3 Programmes are being planned with climate risks in mind, and some of the activities planned will mitigate against climate change.
- 5.4.4 Mitigation is not the primary concern for our programmes as most of the countries where we have programmes have low carbon emission levels.

5.5 Adaptation

- 5.5.1 It is necessary to adapt to a changing climate. These adaptations may be physical or behavioural and tailored towards living with current or future impacts.
- 5.5.2 Through our thematic programmes in health and inclusion, Sightsavers will support partners and communities to adapt to climate-related pressures while safeguarding equitable access to essential services.

5.6 Response

- 5.6.1 Each of our country offices is assessed for risks, and where a specific risk has been identified then there will be disaster preparedness and emergency response plans. Country security plans also have details about office evacuation.

- 5.6.2 We are working on assessing the resilience of each country office using a standard resilience checklist. This covers security situations as well as situations arising from environmental incidents.
- 5.6.3 We work with partners and communities to assess the climate change risks for each programme, in order to reduce the impact on essential services of climate related incidents.

6. Office activities

- 6.1 For office activities the main aspect of the resilience approach is mitigation.
- 6.2 We measure the carbon footprint for each of our offices. We have a defined operational boundary including scope 1, scope 2 and significant scope 3 categories (per The Greenhouse Gas Protocol).
- 6.3 In the UK there are other regulatory reporting requirements that we adhere to with differing boundaries such as the Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR), Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP) and Energy Saving Opportunity Scheme (ESOS).
- 6.4 Sources of some of our highest emissions are business travel and paper usage.
- 6.5 In terms of response, if a specific office is in an area where it may be impacted by environmental changes e.g., flooding or wildfires, then the risks will be assessed and a disaster preparedness plan put in place if appropriate.

6.6 Business travel

- 6.6.1 There are two types of business travel, direct business travel which is due to Sightsavers owned vehicles used for activities in the countries where we have programmes, and indirect business travel which is where we use transport owned and operated by a third party.
- 6.6.2 Business travel is our biggest carbon hotspot, in particular air travel. The international nature of our operations means that there will continue to be a need to visit programmes by the staff in the country, or by international visitors, therefore we recognise that we cannot eliminate all air travel or other business travel.
- 6.6.3 We are concerned about staff safety when travelling, therefore, for example, taxis may be used rather than local transport, even if this means increasing our carbon footprint.
- 6.6.4 We have put in place some checks to encourage staff to only undertake necessary travel, and all international travel must be signed off by senior staff. We have also put a limit on the number of staff who should attend international conferences.
- 6.6.5 Video conferencing is available to all staff, and we have many staff working from home who use this facility frequently.

6.7 Paper

- 6.7.1 Fundraising and marketing activities include printing. It is not possible to become paper free currently. However, we make sure that we use Forest Management Certification (FSC) accredited paper, printed by FSC-approved printers, using vegetable-based inks.
- 6.7.2 We carefully target the recipients of fundraising materials enabling us to reduce waste and costs. We also carefully consider whether communications such as reports and proposals should be produced and shared electronically or in hard copy. Where hard copies are required, we strive to follow the commitment to use sustainable materials.

7. Supply chain

- 7.1 Sightsavers is committed to minimising the environmental impact of its global supply chain by integrating sustainability into procurement, logistics, and asset management. This includes prioritising suppliers that demonstrate responsible environmental practices, reducing emissions through vehicle fleet rationalisation and route optimisation, and minimising waste from packaging and consumables wherever possible.
- 7.2 We will seek to consolidate shipments, understand and favour lower-carbon transport modes where feasible, and extend the lifecycle of vehicles and equipment through efficient maintenance and disposal procedures. Our goal is to balance operational effectiveness with a measurable reduction in our carbon footprint, while ensuring that environmental considerations are embedded in supply chain decisions across all country offices.
- 7.3 The priority is planning and embracing whole life procurement that considers options involving sourcing, delivery, use, maintenance and disposal. Environmental impact is one of the key decision factors when determining value for money, alongside quality, time and cost.

8. Digital

- 8.1 We carefully consider the environmental impacts of our websites. We strive to make sustainable technical choices that balance performance, maintainability and environmental impact, for example, slim efficient page builds to ensure an energy efficient site, and a reduced reliance on plugins and unnecessary third-party scripts which add bloat to pages.
- 8.2 We have an AI policy and an AI usage guide. We are aware that data centres (both hosting AI and other data) are impacting the environment and that we need to be judicious in our use of AI, however, this is currently out of scope for our environmental policy.
- 8.3 We have access to carbon footprint data for Microsoft services but this is not currently within our carbon footprint boundary. This remains under review.

9. Programmes

- 9.1 For programmes the main aspect of the resilience approach is adaptation.
- 9.2 CAST is responsible for leading the organisation's programmatic climate action work.

9.3 Environmental integration

- 9.3.1 Environmental considerations will be integrated into programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation where relevant.
- 9.3.2 Programmes will consider both the environmental impacts of activities and the environmental risks that may affect programme outcomes.
- 9.3.3 Environmental action should be proportionate to programme scale, location and risk.

9.4 Climate resilience and adaptation

- 9.4.1 Programme design should consider current and projected climate risks.
- 9.4.2 Programmes should strengthen the resilience of persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups to climate-related shocks and stresses.
- 9.4.3 Programmes should support inclusive adaptation approaches and participation in decision-making.

9.5 Environmental risk and safeguards

- 9.5.1 All programmes should assess environmental risks during design.
- 9.5.2 Actions should be taken to avoid, minimise or mitigate identified risks.
- 9.5.3 Significant environmental risks should be monitored throughout implementation.

9.6 Partnerships and capacity strengthening

- 9.6.1 Sightsavers will work with partners to improve environmental awareness and practice.
- 9.6.2 Environmental expectations will be reflected in relevant partnership arrangements and guidance.
- 9.6.3 Where appropriate, partners will be supported to build capacity in environmental and climate resilience approaches.

9.7 Learning and evidence

- 9.7.1 Sightsavers will seek to strengthen evidence on disability-inclusive climate adaptation and environmental sustainability.
- 9.7.2 Lessons learned will be shared to improve future programming and influence wider practice.

10. Related policies

- 10.1 Global expenses policy
- 10.2 Open information policy
- 10.3 Procurement policy
- 10.4 Global travel policy
- 10.5 Vehicle disposal policy