

Climate Change

Climate Change
World Vision Australia's
Public Policy Position

World Vision Australia's position on climate change

Climate change and environmental degradation are among the greatest challenges facing humanity. Beyond the direct environmental impacts, World Vision Australia has deep concerns over the development, economic and humanitarian implications of a changing climate. As a child-focused organisation, World Vision argues that **sustainable child wellbeing and development depends on a healthy natural environment.**

World Vision Australia endorses and affirms the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), recognising the impact of human-induced emissions of greenhouse gases and environmental degradation. Caring for the earth, and acting in ways that restore and protect the environment are central values for World Vision Australia.

World Vision Australia is particularly concerned about the impacts of climate change as they relate to global poverty reduction efforts, mainly the anticipated erosion of food and water security for many people around the world. The IPCC's latest report has predicted that climate change is likely to make poverty reduction in developing countries more difficult and create new poverty traps, particularly in urban areas.¹

Climate change is also projected to impact economic growth. In developing countries, the majority of families derive their livelihoods from their environment. Thus World Vision remains concerned that without targeted and immediate action, the impacts of climate change may both erode current development gains, and future development efforts.

Predictions indicate that climate change will also cause more extreme weather situations, and thus more natural hazards (disasters) that disproportionately impact upon the poorest people and nations. As climate change also exacerbates pre-existing vulnerabilities and undermines the potential for economic growth, the risk of conflict and people movement within and between countries is increasingly becoming a reality. As an operational Humanitarian and Development organisation, World Vision Australia is already seeing and responding to the impacts of these many environmental changes on our programs across the world.

World Vision Australia urges all actors to prioritise investment in mitigating and adapting to climate change and supporting communities to strengthen their resilient capacities to adapt to this rapidly changing context.

World Vision's mandate to advocate for climate change

World Vision Australia recognises that our activities have an impact on the global environment and is committed to modifying our operations to avoid or, where this is not practical, minimise, mitigate and remediate our negative environmental impacts, while aiming to build lasting environmental benefits in the regions where we operate. World Vision Australia is committed to ensuring we are not just reducing our environmental footprint, but are also having a positive effect on the environment in a sustainable manner by systematically addressing and integrating disaster risks and climate change related risks in our programming.

In development and humanitarian programs around the world, **the World Vision partnership is committed to working with communities to reduce vulnerabilities, mitigate the impact of hazards and help communities develop adaptive capacities.**²

World Vision Australia seeks to ensure all its development programs are climate risk informed. World Vision Australia also runs numerous programs that specifically aim to limit environmental degradation and support communities to deal with the impacts of a changing climate. These programs are closely aligned with World Vision's disaster risk reduction and resilience programs and approach. These programs include but are not limited to:

Farmer managed natural regeneration (FMNR)

World Vision Australia is a world leader in promoting FMNR in rural communities, by naturally regenerating trees on farmland and forest areas to improve agricultural productivity and reduce the incidence and severity of droughts, floods and landslides³. In Ethiopia, a 10-year World Vision FMNR program in Humbo has been so successful that a community that depended on food aid for two decades has begun selling grain to the World Food Programme.

Climate smart agriculture – promotion

World Vision also works with farmers in developing countries to implement climate smart agriculture interventions. These interventions help make crops more heat-resistant, reduce farmers vulnerability to environmental factors and build assets to help families overcome poverty.

Fuel-efficient stoves

Fuel-efficient stoves improve child health through curtailing the breathing in of smoke from cooking fires, reducing the production of smoke and harmful gasses within households, reducing the use of biomass by up to 60 percent, reducing cooking cycle times, and creating significant household safety and labour benefits. World Vision works with communities around the world to transform communities' energy use to renewable and energy efficient technology, including fuel-efficient stoves.

Children and Climate Change

World Vision focuses on children and how they are affected by climate change and continues to actively educate the public on the existing and future impacts of climate change felt by those living in poverty across the globe.⁴

See also World Vision Australia's Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Public Policy Position for an overview of World Vision's programing approach to DRR and resilience.

World Vision Australia's policy recommendations for change

World Vision Australia calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Develop and implement a Climate Change Strategy for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, that ensures climate change and disaster risks inform and mitigation activities are designed and integrated across all Australian aid investments.
2. Increase Australian Aid funding to community adaptation initiatives to support communities on the frontlines of climate change.
3. Develop mechanisms to calculate the amount of Australian Official Development Assistance (ODA) spent on disaster risk reduction.
4. Increase year on year, the percentage of Australian ODA allocation for Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives, particularly in countries with high vulnerability to natural hazards.
5. Scale up Australia's support to International Climate Finance, including through the GCF by 2020. This funding must be new and additional to Official Development Assistance Australia has previously pledged.
6. Use Australia's leadership of the Green Climate Fund to ensure climate financing is accessible to vulnerable communities and the organisations that support them.
7. Act as a catalyst to facilitate partnerships between NGOs and the private sector to take climate adaptation projects to scale.
8. Review Australia's emissions reduction goal to ensure it aligns with our responsibility under the Paris agreement. World Vision Australia recommends Australia increase its emissions reduction targets to, a minimum, 40-60% reduction on 2000 levels.⁵

Background

Climate Change and Global Poverty

The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) paints a stark picture of the future of climate-change impacts on livelihoods and poverty reduction: impacts of climate change are projected to slow economic growth, erode food security, and exacerbate poverty in most developing countries.⁶ Climate Change is projected to reduce the renewable surface water and groundwater resources in most dry subtropical regions, thereby intensifying competition for water among sectors. Insufficient access to drinking and irrigation water poses a significant risk to rural livelihoods and income and negatively impacts agricultural productivity.⁷ Growing water insecurity also impacts food insecurity. All aspects of food security are potentially affected by climate change, and a significant global temperature increase, combined with increasing food demand, would pose a large risk to global and regional food security.⁸

Reductions in crop yields; migratory changes of fish stocks, a primary source of protein; disruption of rivers, sea level rises and natural disasters and their associated impact on agricultural land, are all linked to the impact of climate change on food production in the Asia Pacific.⁹ Climate change is expected to detrimentally impact on food and water insecurity, significantly undermining global poverty reduction.

The IPCC has also concluded that a changing climate leads to 'changes in the frequency, intensity, spatial extent, duration, and timing of extreme weather and climate events, and can result in unprecedented extreme weather and climate events'.¹⁰ For Australia, this is of concern given that the Asia Pacific region is the most vulnerable to disasters. In 2015, half of all reported global disasters occurred in Australia's region, affecting over 51 million people.¹¹ The 2015 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction calculated that the global burden of disasters is equivalent to major diseases, with an average of 42 million human life years lost each year. This burden is shouldered by the poor, with more than 80 per cent of the life years lost in low and middle income countries.¹²

Beyond the physical damage and disruption to livelihoods, natural hazards cause significant economic losses. In 2011, estimates indicate that natural disasters caused economic losses of approximately US \$366 billion, again, most of which occurred in the Asia Pacific.¹³ Climate Change is anticipated to cause more extreme weather situations, with the potential of more natural hazards (disasters), occurring more often, and predominately in the Asia Pacific.

As a result of significant changes to food and livelihoods, and the increasing risk of natural hazards, climate change is likely to have a strong impact on the movement of people, both within and between states. In 2015, disasters caused twice as much displacement as conflict and violence (19.2m compared with 8.6m).¹⁴ Of those displaced, the majority (85% of incidence) were from South and East Asia, although no region was immune to displacement challenges.¹⁵

Further, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimates that disaster related risk has quadrupled since the 1970s, mostly in the Asian region.¹⁶ New forms and patterns of movement will emerge, exacerbated by a changing climate, that do not easily match with traditional forms of protection related to people movement.

Disruption to livelihoods, increased physical, economic, and psycho-social losses due to natural hazards, and the movement of people within and between countries, may contribute to existing social and political tensions, and become a melting pot for future conflict. Conflicts are driven by complex and interacting driving forces, and while the link is not directly causal, climate changes impact on communities and countries as noted above, may worsen pre-existing tensions, place further stress on a community, and further add to the risk of conflict. Climate change, and its associated impacts on livelihoods, contribute to existing pressures and changes within communities and lead to, or further aggravate, conflict situations. These changes will influence and impact Australia's interests in the world, and demand greater Australian attention, support and resources.

The international framework

The **United Nations Framework Convention on climate change (UNFCCC)**,¹⁷ was adopted in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit and entered into force in 1994. The UNFCCC recognised there was a problem - remarkable given there was less scientific evidence available on the impacts of climate change then there is now - and set a specific goal to stabilise greenhouse gas emissions to prevent dangerous human induced interference with the climate system. The UNFCCC put the onus on developed countries (referred to as 'Annex I Countries') to take the lead in reducing emission levels, and sought to strike a balance between economic development and limiting greenhouse gas emissions of developing countries. Reporting requirements were placed on both developed and developing nations, and formal consideration of climate change adaptation by the international community began. The **Global Environment Facility** was established on the eve of the Rio Earth Summit, to help tackle the most pressing environmental problems.

The **Kyoto Protocol**, adopted in 1997 and coming into effect in 2005¹⁸ committed its Parties to setting internationally binding emission reduction targets. The Protocol emphasises the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities,' thereby placing a heavier burden for action on developed countries.

Established in 2010, the **Green Climate Fund** forms the other main operating entity (alongside the GEF) of the UNFCCC financial mechanism. The GCF is designed to help support the efforts of developing countries to respond to climate change.

The **Paris Agreement** entered into force on 4 November 2016 with the aim of, amongst other goals, strengthening the global response to climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.¹⁹

Australian Context

Current policy on climate change:²⁰

Australia has signed onto all the major international agreements mentioned above. Most recently, Australia committed to a reduction of emissions to 26-28 per cent on 2005 levels by 2030, under the Paris Agreement. These agreements give rise to legally binding obligations to address the effects of climate change.

The form and extent of the Australian Government's measures to meet its commitments have been the subject of extensive domestic political debate.

Australia's international Climate Change Action:

Australia has incorporated assistance for climate change as part of the official Australian Aid program, specifically under the pillar of 'Building Resilience'.

The Australian government has committed \$1 billion over five years (2015-2020) to fulfil its commitment under the Paris Agreement to mobilise support for developing countries to take action on climate change. This commitment includes a \$200 million commitment over four years to the Green Climate Fund.

Australia is presently co-chair of the Green Climate Fund.

Key Resources & References

Key Resources

World Vision Australia Submission to Senate Inquiry on the Implications of Climate Change for National Security, available at: https://www.worldvision.com.au/docs/default-source/publications/government-submissions/20170804_worldvisionaustralia_submission_senate-inquiry-on-climate-change.pdf?sfvrsn=6

World Vision International, The Natural Environment in Development and Well-Being: A World Vision Guide, available at: <http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/The%20Natural%20Environment%20in%20Development%20and%20Well-Being.pdf>

UNFCCC, The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, available at: http://unfccc.int/essential_background/convention/items/6036.php

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch>

Department of the Environment and Energy, Climate Change, available at: <https://www.environment.gov.au/climate-change>

Climate Change in Australia, available at: <http://www.climatechangeinaustralia.gov.au/en/>

References

¹ *IPCC Report, 2014: Summary for policymakers*. In: Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Field, C.B., V.R. Barros, D.J. Dokken, K.J. Mach, M.D. Mastrandrea, T.E. Bilir, M. Chatterjee, K.L. Edri, Y.O. Estrada, R.C. Genova, B. Girma, E.S. Kissel, A.N. Levy, S. MacCracken, P.R. Mastrandrea, and L.L. White (eds.)] Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, p. 20.

² WVI, 'Disaster Risk Reduction,' available at: http://www.wvi.org/disaster-risk-reduction_

³ FMNR is a low-cost land restoration technique. It involves the systematic regrowth and management of trees and shrubs from felled tree stumps, sprouting root systems or seeds. The regrown trees and shrubs – integrated into crops and grazing pastures – help restore soil structure and fertility, inhibit erosion and soil moisture evaporation, rehabilitate springs and the water table, and increase biodiversity. Some tree species also impart nutrients such as nitrogen into the soil.

⁴ World Vision is a member of the Children in a Changing Climate (CCC) coalition. The CCC coalition is a partnership of five leading child-centered development and humanitarian organisations: Child Fund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children, UNICEF and World Vision International.

⁵ This is in line with advice from the Climate Change Authority. *Targets and Progress Review – Final Report*, February 2014, p.119.

⁶ *IPCC Report, 2014: Summary for policymakers*. In: Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Field, C.B., V.R. Barros, D.J. Dokken, K.J. Mach, M.D. Mastrandrea, T.E. Bilir, M. Chatterjee, K.L. Edri, Y.O. Estrada, R.C. Genova, B. Girma, E.S. Kissel, A.N. Levy,

S. MacCracken, P.R. Mastrandrea, and L.L. White (eds.)] Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, p. 20.

⁷ Ibid. pp.13-4.

⁸ Ibid. p.18.

⁹ Ross Garnaut, *The Garnaut Climate Change Review*, 2008, p.145; WWF-South Pacific, *Impacts of Climate on Tuna Fisheries*, May 2013, available at: http://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/climate_change_factsheet_final_1.pdf

¹⁰ IPCC, 2012: *Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation*. A Special Report of Working Groups I and II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Field, C.B., V. Barros, T.F. Stocker, D. Qin, D.J. Dokken, K.L. Ebi, M.D. Mastrandrea, K.J. Mach, G.-K. Plattner, S.K. Allen, M. Tignor, and P.M. Midgley (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, and New York, NY, USA, p.7

¹¹ 152 disasters were reported in Asia, and 22 in Oceania. See, UNISDR, USAID and CRED, *2015 disasters in numbers*, 2015, available at: http://cred.be/sites/default/files/2015_DisastersInNumbers.pdf

¹² UNISDR, *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*, 2015, p.v

¹³ Debby Guha-Sapir, Femke Vos, Regina Below and Sylvian Ponserre, *Annual Disaster Statistical Review 2011: The numbers and trends*, CRED, 2011, p.13.

¹⁴ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *2016 Global Report on Internal Displacement*, 2016, p.7

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Justin Ginnetti, *Disaster-Related Displacement Risk: Measuring the risk and addressing its drivers*, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2015, pp. 8-9.

¹⁷ UNFCCC, *Five steps to a safer future: Introducing The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, available at: http://unfccc.int/essential_background/convention/items/6036.php

¹⁸ Information on the Kyoto Protocol is available at: http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php

¹⁹ Information on the Paris Agreement is available at: http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php

²⁰ Department of the Environment and Energy, *The Australian Government's action on climate change*, 2017, available at: <https://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/f29a8ccb-77ca-4be1-937d-78985e53ac63/files/factsheet-australian-government-action.pdf>. Further detail on Australia's Climate Change policy is available at: <https://www.environment.gov.au/climate-change>