

Environmental Stewardship Policy

Purpose

Safe water for people depends on the availability of clean water in the environment. If water sources dry up or are too contaminated to treat affordably, there is no water available for safe human consumption. Protecting the environment is core to our work.

Climate change further threatens the availability of clean water, most critically in low- and middle-income countries. No place where we work is immune to the impacts of climate change. Our Everyone Forever model and commitment to [Destination 2030](#) require us to consider climate change as a critical factor impacting the achievement of universal and sustainable water and sanitation services. Understanding the context-specific risks and adapting programming to respond to those risks is core to our work, which is described further in our joint paper with IRC on [Climate Change, Water Resources, and WASH](#).

Although environmental protection and climate action is a core component of our systems-strengthening approach to WASH, we must also go beyond our programmatic approach and look more critically at how our operations could unintentionally harm the environment and contribute to climate change. We work in countries that suffer the most from and contribute the least to climate change. The opposite is true in the U.S., which has the highest emissions and lower vulnerability ratings. **This growing inequity demands urgent action.**

This Policy states the principles that guide Water For People and our commitments to do our part in being a better steward of the environment and combating climate change in the ways we operate. These commitments set minimum expectations for the organization globally, which can be expanded on and contextualized in specific countries to align with national and local environmental and climate laws, regulations, and initiatives.

The goal of this Policy is to reduce Water For People's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and elevate environmental and water resources impact as critical factors in operational decisions. We have a secondary goal to influence other organizations, partners, and vendors to also commit to climate action, water resources management, and environmental protection.

Applicability

This Policy applies to all Water For People employees and operations globally.

Definitions

"Greenhouse Gases" or "GHG" means gases in the atmosphere that are capable of absorbing infrared radiation, thereby trapping and holding heat in the atmosphere and includes carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), and ozone.

“Net Zero” means to reduce GHG emissions as close to zero as possible, with any remaining emissions removed from the atmosphere.

Principles

- We believe climate change is one of the most urgent challenges facing our planet and directly impacts the availability of clean water.
- Accountability and transparency are organizational values that are key principles for this Policy that require us to share our targets and measure and share our progress internally and externally.
- We share long-established environmental principles that prioritize precautionary planning based on environmental threats, prevention of pollution, integration of environmental protection across other disciplines, and addressing pollution at its source.
- We have a principle of [Net Zero](#), which means making changes to reduce GHG emissions to the lowest amount possible and purchasing offsets as a last resort. It is more ambitious than carbon neutral, which can be achieved by purchasing offsets with no emission reductions and is focused only on carbon versus all greenhouse gases.
- We support the environmental principle that parties should pay for the pollution they generate. We have a responsibility to fight the growing inequity created by the disproportionate use of natural resources and GHG emissions by high-income countries, while vulnerable communities, particularly in low and middle-income countries, are more likely to be disproportionately harmed and burdened by climate change hazards and environmental degradation.
- We recognize the increased burden on women and children as water becomes scarcer as a result of environmental degradation and climate change.
- We are committed to integrating Water For People’s Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) policy and associated guidelines into decisions and procedures associated with this Policy.
- We are part of a global movement that calls for everyone – companies, nonprofits, governments, and individuals, to work towards goals established through the United Nations’ (UN) [Sustainable Development Goal 13](#) and updated agreements during the [UN Climate Change Conferences \(COP\)](#).
- Our responsibilities do not stop with what is within our direct control. We also have a responsibility to select partners and vendors who engage in appropriate, ethical, and legally compliant environmental practices. This extends to donor partners as well.
- As a consumer of equipment, products and materials and a generator of waste, Water For People will consider measures that it can institute in its programs and offices to reduce waste and the natural resources that we consume.
- We will base our decisions on accepted scientific information and recommendations regarding climate change causation, mitigation, and adaptation.
- We believe local, traditional and indigenous knowledge is useful in decision making with regards to climate change adaptation and mitigation and will encourage its incorporation with science.

Policy

Water For People's policy is to make environmental stewardship an organizational priority by embedding it into our internal operations. More specifically, Water For People is committed to climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, evaluating our supply chain for environmental impacts, reducing waste generated by Water For People, and evaluating the environmental impacts of our donor partners.

1. **Climate Change Mitigation**

Water For People is committed to tracking and reducing GHG emissions in our operations. During FY2023, Water For People will establish reduction targets through 2030 that include a phased commitment to reduction, in line with Net Zero principles. Key commitments to reduce emissions include:

1.1. **Awareness and Engagement**

Increase awareness on how to reduce GHG emissions amongst all employees as individuals and as an organization and transparently communicate our progress internally and externally.

1.2. **Tracking GHG emissions**

Tracking GHG emissions against our targets according to the [Greenhouse Gas Protocol \(GGP\)](#) guidelines, which categorize emissions into 3 scopes.

- Scope 1 emissions directly produced by the organization or emissions associated with the operation of buildings or vehicles that are owned by the organization. For Water For People, scope 1 emissions consist only of fleet vehicle usage as no buildings are owned and there are no other direct emissions.
- Scope 2 emissions are for the purchase of electricity and natural gas from buildings or offices rented by organizations. Water For People has Scope 2 emissions.
- Scope 3 emissions are associated with the value chain of the business and primarily include business travel, employee commuting, and materials purchased. Water For People has Scope 3 emissions.

While Water For People is committed to tracking relevant emissions relating to all three scopes in all offices, our initial priority will be tracking our two leading sources of emissions: mileage driven in fleet vehicles and business travel.

1.3. **Business Travel**

With business travel as one of our leading sources of emissions, we commit to take a highly critical approach to travel-related decisions with an overall goal to reduce GHG emissions generated by travel. We will:

- Actively promote video conferencing as a means for reducing travel
- Employ travel options that are both efficient and produce less carbon.
- Encourage employees who can, to conduct longer duration trips (including multiple nearby countries) if it can avoid future trips.

- Include GHG emission estimates when comparing cost to decide locations for meetings, workshops, conferences, etc

1.4. Vehicle fleet emissions

Consider GHG emissions when making vehicle purchase decisions and when planning for transportation with consideration of vehicle occupancy and fuel efficiency.

1.5. Commuting

Promote the use of work from home options, when consistent with roles and responsibilities, to reduce commuting and encourage the use of biking and public transit when available, efficient, and safe. Commuting implications are also considered in office location decisions. Public transportation options, other commuting options, and distance to partners and employees are important factors when deciding on office locations.

1.6. Carbon Offset

By adopting a Net Zero principle, purchasing carbon offsets will be the last resort for Water For People. We recognize that our essential business functions will require GHG emissions and will consider purchasing offsets in our phased approach to establish emission reduction targets. We also have a commitment to continue tracking mitigation activities in partner areas that could lead to potential offsets (such as tree planting and alternative fuel sources). If emission offsets from such activities are significant, we will consider how those offsets could be used by local water and sanitation service providers to advance towards neutrality or be valued monetarily to incentivize increased investments in resilient WASH in the same location where the offset occurs. We will not use such offsets to achieve neutrality in our operations.

1.7. Program Priorities

Although we must apply a climate change mitigation lens to our work to strengthen water and sanitation service delivery, our principles clarify that we believe the burden of mitigation should be focused on high-income countries. The following measures describe how we can continue prioritizing mitigation activities within WASH, without placing increased burden in the countries where we operate by setting reduction targets.

- Shifting to renewable energy sources such as solar energy.
- Increasing energy efficiency across the entire service chain, from source to household for water services and from household to disposal/re-use for sanitation services.
- Promoting less environmentally damaging alternatives to burning wood for water treatment.
- Continuing to explore re-use of fecal sludge for fuel (i.e. briquettes).
- Engaging and advocating with governments to increase political will for climate change mitigation practices with linkages to WASH.

2. Climate Change Adaptation

Many of the communities where we work are currently, and projected to be, the most vulnerable to the hazards of climate change including water scarcity, drought, sea level rise, flooding, increase in extreme weather conditions, increase in temperatures, and more unpredictable rains. We will prioritize climate change adaptation, with the following organizational commitments.

2.1. Awareness and Advocacy

Help all who invest in WASH understand that climate resilient WASH and our broader systems-strengthening approach is climate action. Community resilience is the goal of climate adaptation, and community resilience cannot be achieved without resilient WASH services.

2.2. Program Priorities

Continue prioritizing the application of a climate adaptation lens across all building blocks of the WASH system at the local and national level. For example, we will, with local and national governments:

- Assess climate-related risks and plan for too much, too little, or more polluted water depending on the context.
- Protect sources considering the broader recharge zone through catchment and aquifer management.
- Design service delivery schemes that can respond to unpredictable rains and droughts.
- Build climate-resilient infrastructure that considers extreme weather events and floods. Include climate-resilient WASH in national finance strategies and local planning.
- Improve sustainability and efficiency of water quality and quantity monitoring systems to improve decision-making.
- Engage and advocate with local and national governments to increase political will for climate change adaptation with linkages to WASH.

2.3. Operational Flexibility

Extreme weather events will continue to increase and will require offices and plans to pivot to have continued impact in changing conditions. Examples include:

- Ability to shift timing of activities and priorities in country operational plans after natural disaster.
- Identification of back-up communication channels when normal systems are disrupted.
- Improve back-up power supplies for offices in disaster-prone areas, preferably with energy-efficient power supplies.

3. Waste Reduction

Creating demand for post-consumer waste materials, reducing consumption, and following environmentally safe disposal practices of technology and solvents are important components for an environmentally sustainable organization. Water For People is committed to reducing waste in its operations and encouraging recycling and reuse through the following waste reduction actions:

3.1. Awareness and Engagement

Increase awareness on how to reduce waste amongst all employees as individuals and as an organization and transparently communicate our progress internally and externally.

3.2. Post-Consumer Waste

Increase procurement of products that incorporate postconsumer waste and minimize single-use plastics. For example, using water dispensers to avoid use of plastic water bottles.

3.3. Reduction in Consumption

Whenever possible, implement paperless and eco-friendly strategies in operations.

3.4. Safe Disposal

Ensure the safe disposal of electronic waste and other hazardous materials such as solvents.

4. **Supply Chain and Procurement.** The environmental track record of our partners and vendors is one area where Water For People can influence behavior and protect against business practices that degrade the environment. Water For People commits to the following supply chain and procurement actions:

4.1. Due Diligence

Where publicly available information is reported for a vendor regarding sustainability, corporate social responsibility, or environmental stewardship (including sustainability certifications), evaluate the organization's commitment and performance for procurements over USD\$ 50,000.

4.2. Contractual Safeguards

Incorporate standard environmental compliance provisions regarding legal compliance, waste generation and disposal in all construction agreement templates for all country programs. This includes adhering to water abstraction regulations/permits and requirements relating to environmental impact assessments and mitigation for construction activities (such as drilling) and promoting the same when requirements do not exist.

4.3. Minimize Transportation

Increased use of in-country or in-region procurement of materials and equipment to reduce transportation energy requirements.

4.4. Fuel Efficiency

Consistent with climate change mitigation commitments in Section A, evaluation of fuel efficiency and emissions of vehicles should be integrated into vehicle procurement processes.

5. Donor Stewardship

Water For People's Gift Acceptance Policy includes evaluation of large corporate donors for sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and environmental stewardship.

Turning Commitments into Action

The commitments stated in this Policy will be integrated into our operations in a phased manner. Key actions include:

- Establishing a community of practice to continue growing awareness and engagement
- Tracking of GHG emissions
- Setting specific targets for reducing GHG emissions
- Establishing a work plan to shift operations to the stated commitments in this Policy
- Changes in procurement policies
- Changes in relevant templates

Questions, Interpretation and Enforcement

Questions regarding this Policy should be directed to Chief Administrative Officer and Global Advisor, Climate and Water Resources Management who are responsible for Policy interpretation, administration, and enforcement. All managers are responsible to observe, report and assist in the administration of this Policy.

Related Documents

[Water For People Code of Conduct](#)

[Water For People Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy](#)

[Water For People Gift Acceptance Policy](#)

GHG Emissions Tracking Procedure [TBD]