



Partner Housing Australasia (Building) Incorporated
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 Pro-bono professional services and funding for South Pacific
 village infrastructure, housing, water, sanitation and training.



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Partner Housing is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct, which is a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice. As a signatory we are committed and fully adhere to the ACFID Code of Conduct, conducting our work with transparency, accountability and integrity.

Sustainability Policies and Procedures



Declaration – These policies and procedures have been approved by the Partner Housing Australasia (Building) Incorporated Annual General Meeting of 4 December 2023. They set out the means of complying with the “Constitution & Code of Conduct”, and the requirements of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID).

Signed

Rod Johnston, President, Partner Housing Australasia (Building) Incorporated

Adoption of Document Revisions

Reference	Revision	Date of Adoption	Principal Amendments
P23040327	1	3 April 2023	Revision to align with Vision, Mission, Values & DFAT requirements
P24010127	1	1 January 2024	General review and update

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Vision

Partner Housing Australasia is an entirely voluntary organisation, which aims to transform the lives of people living in Asia-Pacific villages by improving the cyclone, earthquake, and tsunami resistance of their houses, clinics, schools, and community buildings; and by providing clean water supplies and hygienic sanitation.

Commitment

Consistent with the vision, Partner Housing Australasia and its Partner Organisations are committed to designing policies, procedures and programs that transforms the lives of people living in Asia-Pacific villages, through a meaningful contribution to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 13, 14 and 17.

Code of Conduct

Partner Housing Australasia is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct, which is a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice. As a signatory, we are committed and fully adhere to the ACFID Code of Conduct, conducting our work with transparency, accountability, and integrity. The following policies and procedures have been developed to reflect the vision, and to simultaneously ensure consistency with the ACFID Code of Conduct.

Scope

These Policies and Procedures apply to Partner Housing Australasia, its Partner Organisations, Representatives, and any guests who might accompany these people to the locations where the programs are implemented. The “Policy” expands the organisation’s vision, mission, and values; together with satisfying the DFAT and ACFID requirements, and the “Procedures” set out the means of implementing policy. An associated “Training” document provides additional material and background, and “Compliance and Audit Record” documents provide the relevant records of compliance and verification.

Definitions

A comprehensive set of definitions is set out in “Constitution & Code of Conduct”. Definitions specific to this policy are set out below.

Partner Organisations are those bodies working with Partner Housing Australasia to implement the programs. For purposes of this document, they include (but are not limited to) Vision for Homes [PNG] and South Ranongga Community Association [SRCA].

Representatives is the term used to describe collectively the Board Directors, Managers, Volunteers, Staff (if so engaged), Contractors and Consultants who administer the programs and projects.

Volunteer means a person who carries out executive, management, administrative, operations, design, project management and/or similar functions (whether executed in Australia or overseas) on a pro bono basis, under the direction of the Chief Executive Officer (on behalf of the Board). A Volunteer may also be a Member or a Director. Partner Housing Australasia is an entirely voluntary organisation. Volunteer does not include “Contractors” or “Consultants”, who provide goods or services on a pro bono or commercial basis, or people who provide minor assistance on a casual and infrequent basis.

Risk Analysis is a systematic use of available information to determine how often specified events may occur and the magnitude of their likely consequence. For purposes of this policy, Risk Analysis, and associated terms (including those listed herein) are as defined in ISO 31000 and AS/NZS 4360.

Development means the improvement of the conditions of communities in a sustainable way. It is based on working with communities, rather than for or on behalf of communities.

Sustainability means the ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level. In the context of this policy, sustainability is used in the context of avoiding the unnecessary replacement of built infrastructure that becomes unusable (due to deterioration or collapse) in an unreasonable short period of time, and avoiding the depletion of natural resources, in order to maintain an ecological balance.

Sustainable Development means ‘Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ as defined by World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987.

Effectiveness means the sustainable change that addresses the causes as well as the symptoms of poverty and marginalisation.

Cross-cutting themes are additional issues or areas that intersect with the main project or can be easily integrated into the project without losing focus of the main goal. These themes can be an effective tool for explaining how targeted impact in one project area can also have a much wider effect ... cross-cutting themes is one method to balance the need for focus with the need for broader coverage. These include gender equality, diversity and inclusion, environmental sustainability, livelihood development, poverty reduction, general well-being, technology ... For example, an NGO may propose a project to bring electricity to a rural village. In this case, the overall goal of the project is to improve standards of living in rural areas. However, the project can also easily be designed to install solar panels and ensure women and girls receive equal access to the benefits. Here, the cross-cutting themes used are environment and gender. Additionally, the NGO could train local community members on how to build and maintain the solar panels, which could promote vocational training and job growth. Reference: <https://proposalsforngos.com/what-are-cross-cutting-themes/>

Policy

B 3.5 Sustainability

Partner Housing Australasia recognises that the survival and living standards of people living in South Pacific villages are tied to the preservation of the natural environment. But this is increasingly under threat from insensitive and uncontrolled infrastructure development, which can disrupt food security, decimate tree cover, promote erosion, and accelerate climate change.

Partner Housing Australasia is committed to a “Do No Harm” approach, and supports the following sustainability Development Goals through our programs.

SDG 3 – Good health and well-being are promoted through construction of village community health buildings.

SDG4 – Quality education is made possible through the construction of remote school buildings.

SDG5 – Gender equality is achieved by sensitive infrastructure design, and consultation with women and men.

SDG6 – Clean water and sanitation are provided to villages, employing sound engineering design principles.

SDG10 – Reduced inequalities are facilitated by concentrating our programs in poor remote villages.

SDG11 – Climate action is assisted by construction with minimal energy consumption and low embodied carbon.

SDG 14 – Life below water is preserved by low-impact construction, minimising soil erosion and runoff.

SDG17 – Partnerships for the goals are fostered by close relationships and mentoring of partner organisations.

The Partner Housing Australasia Vision is – *“Partner Housing Australasia is an entirely voluntary organisation, which aims to transform the lives of people living in Asia-Pacific villages by improving the cyclone, earthquake and tsunami resistance of their houses, clinics, schools and community buildings; and by providing clean water supplies and hygienic sanitation.”*

Key to this policy is the wording – *“... aims to transform the lives of people living in Asia-Pacific villages ...”*.

This is achieved through a range of built infrastructure options, and the cross-cutting improvements that flow from that improved infrastructure. These include, but are not limited to –

- Increased health and safety are achieved through building that do not collapse under cyclonic wind, earthquake and/or tsunami.
- Increased health and education are achieved through the construction of community health buildings, educational buildings and the like.
- Improved community health is achieved through the construction and use of improved community water supplies and community sanitation.
- Improved living conditions are achieved for people, whose role is normally to fetch water (in many cases women and girls).
- Environmental harm is reduced by ensuring that construction is properly monitored in accordance with a strict environmental policy.
- There is an increase in local building and plumbing skills, through participation in the construction process, vocational training, and job growth.

Responsible Personnel

The person with overall responsibility for implementing this policy is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), with delegated responsibility to the Regional Managers in respect of construction and the Professional Services Manager and Humanitarian Engineering Manager for engineering and architectural design.

Procedures

Review of these Policies and Procedures

The policies and procedures set out in this “Policies and Procedures” document shall be reviewed at each Annual General Meeting, as part of the scheduled general policy review.

Risk Analysis

The CEO shall implement the following:

Prepare a Risk Analysis for the risk of failing to make a meaningful contribution to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 13, 14 and 17.

- Assess and prioritize the risk associated with each program and its component projects, and determine the appropriate mitigation actions.
- Record the Risk Analyses in the Strategic Plans appropriate to each program.
- Summarize the Risk Analyses and the mitigations in a Risk Register.

Sustainable Infrastructure Design

The Professional Services Manager and Humanitarian Engineering Manager shall implement the following, in consultation with the Regional Managers –

Infrastructure Design Life

Built village infrastructure shall have an appropriate design life (unless agrees otherwise)

- 50 years for community health and educational buildings,
- 25 years for water supply and reticulation, and
- 5 years for latrines.

The purpose is to ensure that these structures remain serviceable during the stated periods, ensuring the sustainability.

All designs shall be in accordance with the Partner Housing Australasia “DANCER Building Systems” manual and the “VILLAGE AQUA Water Reticulation and Sanitation” manual.

Environmental Impact

Built village infrastructure shall be constructed to have minimum environmental impact, though strict adherence to the policies and procedures in P23040325-1 Environmental Impact Policies & Procedures.

Humanitarian Impact

Ensure strict adherence to policies on gender issues, disability inclusion, and child protection when designing the programs. This is to ensure minimum negative impact and maximum positive impact on humanitarian issues, including, but not limited to, gender issues, disability inclusion, and child protection).

Monitoring and evaluation functions shall be in accordance with the policies and procedures specific to these matters.

Compliance and Auditing

The Responsible Personnel shall implement the following:

- Initiate the required monitoring, evaluation and learning functions associated with this “Policies and Procedures” document.
- Initiate both internal and external auditing, consistent with ISO 9001 principles of the policies and procedures herein.
- Ensure that the compliance with the policies and procedures herein, and the associated internal and external audits, are recorded in the associated “Compliance and Audit Records” documents.

Training

The Responsible Personnel shall implement the following:

- Distribute a reference and link to this “Policies and Procedures” document to all Directors, Regional Managers and Partner Organisation Managers, and other personnel working on behalf of the organisation. (Partner Housing Australasia is a voluntary organisation and does not employ staff).
- Distribute a reference and link to the associated “Training” package. Request that all Directors, Regional Managers and Partner Organisation Managers use this to increase their awareness and understanding of these policies and procedures.
- Include a reference and link to this “Policies and Procedures” document in all Memoranda of Understanding with Partner Organisations.
- Table this “Policies and Procedures” document at the Annual General Meeting, for discussion and adoption.
- Review the training effectiveness at the February Board Meeting.

Further Guidance

Guidance on the context of sustainability is provided in –

Building Regulations of Papua New Guinea (reproduced in other documents), and available to Partner Housing from the Quasar technical library.

Solomon Islands Western Province Buildings Standards Ordinance 1991 (reproduced in other documents), and available to Partner Housing from the Quasar technical library.

Solomon Islands Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Policy (Ministry of Health and Medical Services) February 2014

The following are sustainability and cross-cutting extracts from the Solomon Islands RWSSH policy, and therefore govern the water and sanitation infrastructure provided. It is available to Partner Housing Australasia from the Quasar technical library.

A *no-subsidy approach* to sanitation is the second key sanitation principle of this policy. Decades of fully subsidizing sanitation has produced little to no results with many of the installed toilets not used anymore and households returning to practice open defecation, and has merely **sustained** the handout mentality. Promoting basic, low cost sanitation such as dry pit latrines and VIP latrines which have proven to be **sustainable** and effective worldwide, with no subsidy provided shall be the preferred option. Behaviour change cannot be achieved using a handout approach;

The estimate of 50% of all installed water supply schemes not functioning now, the majority of which due to lack of maintenance, clearly demonstrates the challenge the sector faces with regards to the **sustainability** of WASH infrastructure. Several aspects contribute to the lack of **sustainability**, including: sporadic awareness of communities of their responsibility to maintain the system, lack of resources at (government) level to effectively maintain systems, inappropriate or absence of design and construction standards, lack of technical and managerial skills in communities, challenging logistics, and poor access to supply chains.

6. Community Preparation and Training

It is essential that the recipient community has the required skills and knowledge to effectively own and manage their scheme, as well as awareness aimed to ensure **sustainability** and water security. Implementing agencies must ensure that their projects and programs comply with the procedures and components as set forth in the '*Solomon Islands Rural WASH Community Engagement Guidelines*'.

The following general principles apply to all community training/awareness:

- A focus on and preference for *participative* training methods where applicable;
- *Inclusiveness*: members of all levels within a community must be involved – men, women, children and vulnerable groups such as people living with disabilities. To effectively target these groups, separate sessions/groups if necessary. The role of **women** in the decision making process, management, operation and maintenance shall be encouraged and developed as water and sanitation infrastructure often has the most positive impact upon the lives of women and children.
- To be done *prior* to construction of the infrastructure, with repeat messages/sessions allowed during or immediately after the construction. This is to ensure communities are aware, prepared and can implement newly gained skills during the remainder of the project;

RWASH will take the lead on the development of the training/awareness components.

7. Cross-cutting issues

7.1 Climate change

The *National Water and Sanitation Sector Plan* states that while global evidence of climate change (CC) is increasing, there remain uncertainties regarding the magnitude and timing of climate change, its impacts and details of impact on ecosystems in Pacific Islands Countries (PICs). The best adaptation strategy therefore is to develop the general capacity of a society by building up its institutional structures and human resources while maintaining and enhancing the integrity of ecosystems.

There is considerable capacity to adapt to climate change in PIC communities with their well-developed local institutions, resilient social systems, sensitivity to environmental change, their high degree of equity, and their kinship-based transnational networks.

This mainstreaming of climate change adaptation links well with the Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) approach, which is based on recognition of the interconnectedness of the hydrogeological, geographical, health, economic, social, cultural, governance, legal and political aspects of water and the importance of an integrated, collaborative approach to achieving sustainable, equitable and fair outcomes. The MMEWR is leading the IWRM approach and its more PIC-relevant "ridge-to-reef" concept, which includes all of Solomon Islands its environments and all levels of society, from community to cabinet.

As changes in climate are amplified in the water environment, the rural WASH sector needs to:

1. Closely collaborate with national and international stakeholders in climate change adaptation. This includes broadening the WASH Stakeholders Group (WSG), a sector coordination committee consisting of sector stakeholders, with representatives from relevant ministries (MMEWR, MECDM, MID) involved in CC, and EHD being the leading representative for the rural WASH sector in CC discussions and collaboration;
2. Incorporate climate change references in the *Solomon Islands Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Design and Construction Standards* and adopt a flexible approach to technical design and construction standards, acknowledging that simple technical fixes do not exist and technical standards may require adjustments;
3. Make use of the opportunity to create awareness at community level on climate change and related subjects such as water security, water use efficiency and disaster preparedness, by including in the *Solomon Islands Rural WASH Community Engagement Guidelines* training modules to this effect;
4. Include climate change in M&E of all aspects of the sector's activities, including technical standards, community engagement practices, and management;

7.2 Gender

In the Solomon Islands, as in many parts in the world, collecting water is traditionally the role of women and children (girls). Many household tasks, such as cleaning, cooking, laundry, and looking after young children is also commonly the responsibility of women. Women are therefore the prime users of WASH facilities.

However, equally traditionally, women are often not involved in the decision making process or in management activities. Consequently, WASH projects and facilities may not be best suited to those who use it the most, and women may not have adequate access to those managing the facilities or scheme when issues arise. Thus the sustainability and impact (improved health and livelihood) of the WASH scheme are adversely affected.

Recent studies in Melanesia on gender in rural WASH programs, showed that participatory planning processes (explicitly involving women and men) and advocacy of gender equity in water and sanitation committees resulted in increased rights to, space for and trust in women's involvement in decision making. Together with an increased appreciation and acknowledgement of women's tasks in a community, this may lead to increased sustainability of the WASH scheme.

The sector stakeholders must ensure that gender is a key component of every WASH project and program. Through participatory approaches, the involvement of women must be encouraged and promoted at every stage of a project and for all activities and roles, from survey & design to implementation and (financial) management and O&M. Women's participation in WASH committees should be encouraged but should be seen as more of an indicator of effective gender approaches than an objective or a criteria for assistance.

7.3 People living with disability

A survey conducted in 2005 recorded 14,400 people with a disability of which approximately 85% (12,240 people) live in the rural areas. Thirty percent of the people with disability are physically impaired (3,672 persons), 80% of which (2,938 persons) have a wheel chair.

People with special needs are often overlooked in projects. With a significant portion of the physically disabled population using wheelchairs, and a policy to provide more, access to appropriate WASH infrastructure is of great importance.

For rural WASH projects, the following applies:

1. People living with disabilities in the target community must be identified at the initial stages of the project, and the type of disability recorded so that appropriate measures can be included in the project design;
2. Appropriate WASH facilities must be constructed for the person living with a disability. The MHMS will take the lead on the development of appropriate technical standards;
3. The no-subsidy rule for sanitation does not apply to most, if not all, toilet facilities for persons with special needs, as the cost of adapted facilities quickly fall outside the financial and technical means of the average family;
4. Clear discussions and understanding between the project implementer/designer and the disabled person, his/her household *and* community must take place. Often specially constructed facilities for disabled people may be of higher standard or be more convenient and as a result are being used extensively by others in the community or household. This may lead to the disabled person in question not having the access to the facility as required.