Sustainable Development Policy

Details

Policy & Procedure Owner	ERFA Board	
Approved by	ERFA Board of Directors	
Date Approved	Date of Last Revision	Next Review
26 August 2015	March 2023	March 2024

Abbreviations

ACFID	Australian Council for International Development
ERFA	Edmund Rice Foundation Australia
ERFK	Edmund Rice Foundation Kenya
QP	Quality Principle

Definitions

ACFID Member	A not-for-profit organisation that has obtained accreditation with ACFID
Board Members	Voluntary directors of ERFA's Board
Donor	Members of the public including individuals or organisations who contribute to ERFA in cash or in-kind
Partner	Any organisation which has an MOU or contract with ERFA
Program	Programs are overarching development approaches and initiatives that set priorities and guide project outcomes, results and activities. Programs can comprise ministries or entities
Project	Projects are the development activities of a Program
Primary Stakeholder (beneficiary)	Children and adults who participate in and are directly impacted by ERFA partner projects
Staff	Employees, contractors, subcontractors, outworkers, apprentices and trainees, work experience students, volunteers and any other person who performs work for ERFA or ERFK
Stakeholder	Anyone who interacts with ERFA/ERFK and its Partners including but not limited to suppliers, contractors, volunteers, donors, etc.

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1.0 Introduction

Edmund Rice Foundation Australia's (ERFA) Sustainable Development Policy is grounded in ERFA's belief that the principles of sustainable development are pivotal in working to eradicate poverty. Therefore, sustainable development is to be central in the design and implementation of all ERFA supported programs.

ERFA differentiates between development and welfare, evangelism and partisan politics. ERFA recognises that welfare is primarily concerned with support and maintenance, more than with the processes of capacity building and empowerment that are intrinsic to sustainable development.

ERFA's Sustainable Development Policy is grounded in its Vision for access to quality education and life-long learning opportunities for all, supporting empowered communities that determine their own futures.

ERFA's approach to the generation sustainable development has a specific focus on the provision of education for the most vulnerable. For ERFA, this encompasses lifelong learning where skills are imparted and applied, lessons learned and life skills mastered. ERFA's focus on education is not only in life changing education for children, but in skills such as financial literacy, farming, trades, health and human rights for adults. ERFA affirms the link between education and empowered, self-sustaining and healthy individuals and communities; an education that transforms and liberates lives.

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline ERFA's approach to sustainable development in engaging with communities in developing nations and ERFA's expectations of its in-country partners in this respect. This policy also outlines ERFA's approach to sustainable development in its domestic operations.

3.0 Defining sustainable development

The concept of sustainable development has been central in international, national and local development policy since 180 countries committed themselves to the concept at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, which endorsed the 1987 definition of development of the World Commission on Environment and Development.

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

ERFA acknowledges that the concept of sustainable development has since broadened to incorporate economic, social/cultural and environmental sustainability and that a holistic sustainable development approach integrates these.

3.1 Economic sustainability
With respect to economic sustainability, ERFA is focused primarily on:
- establishing long-term project financial viability beyond ERFA's participation;
- building project sustainability through the capacity building, professional development, education and training of local project leadership and staff;
- enhancing employment opportunities through school education and vocational training; and
- working to assist communities to lift themselves out of poverty through delivery of programs which provide education, tools, resources and finance (including micro-credit schemes) to enable the establishment of small businesses and livelihood programs, which in turn enable those communities to achieve a degree of economic independence and to access education and health care.

3.2 Social/cultural sustainability

ERFA acknowledges that:

- Development cannot be sustainable unless the cultural practices of communities are recognised, respected, enhanced and incorporated into development processes.
- Communities will never break the cycle of poverty until their human rights are respected and they have a say in how they are governed.

3.3 Environmental sustainability

ERFA acknowledges that:

- Sustainable development cannot be defined in economic terms alone.
- Poverty and environmental degradation are interwoven and it is the vulnerable who suffer most from such degradation.
- Partners need to consider their impact on the environment and adequate attention needs to be given to potential environmental problems or benefits and appropriate mitigation or enhancement measures need to be considered in project planning and implementation.
- Major threats caused by human destruction of the environment include the impacts of climate change, flooding, salinity, habitat destruction, desertification, pollution and urban expansion.
- Development is not sustainable if it jeopardises future generations.

4.0 Policy

With respect to sustainable development, ERFA is committed to:

- a partnership approach to development characterised by integrity, accountability and transparency;
- undertaking of in-depth community consultations and needs assessments in developing programs with communities;
- ensuring meaningful community participation in program design, implementation and evaluation;
- seeking to understand and respect the perspectives of those with whom it works in partnership;
- fostering self-sustaining positive change through the empowerment and capacity development of all members of the communities with which it works;
- giving priority to projects which engage with the most marginalised and vulnerable;
- enabling the development of resilient, sustainable communities that over time will lead to local management and autonomy;
- being inclusive and offering support in a spirit of human solidarity regardless of race, gender, religious or political beliefs;
- respecting and protecting the human rights of all members of the communities with which it works, including rights of access to education, healthcare, sustainable livelihoods and income-generation opportunities and safety from violence and freedom from discrimination;
- promoting and advocating the rights of women and children; and
- promoting and advocating sustainable living and prudent use of earth's resources.

5.0 Community development

ERFA believes that the principles of community development and the principles of community education are closely aligned and that there cannot be effective community development without community education. Central to both is a collaborative approach through engagement in processes which:

- combine community with development and rely on interaction between people for joint action;
- engage communities in processes aimed at improving their economic, social and environmental circumstances; and
- enable communities, through joint action and participation, to become vital, not just economically but as strong functioning communities in themselves.

In this process, community is both the means and end of community development.

6.0 Capacity building

There can be no genuine sustainable development without capacity building. The building of capacity is achieved through community development, community education and education for sustainable development. Fundamental to these processes is the belief that individuals become engaged in their own development in more sustainable way through functioning in groups. Hence, groups are a critical vehicle in development processes. While community development enables and empowers communities to take joint action; capacity building through community education and education for sustainable development broadens the concept to incorporate the development of the competencies and capabilities of individuals, groups and communities essential for sustained, self-generated development. Education that promotes the development of the knowledge, skills, understandings, values and actions required to create a sustainable world.

Capacity building facilitates communities to realise their own development objectives and is based on the premise that recipients of aid must be empowered to manage their own development agendas. Hence, the foundations of effective capacity building include:
- project ownership and direction by the local community;
- belief that learning and change occur over time and begin at the level of the individual;
- use of participatory approaches at all stages;
- utilising and building on local knowledge and existing capacity to develop a vision for the future;
- sensitivity to the existing environment;
- gender and cultural sensitivity;
- building sustainability through developing strong relationships with and between stakeholders to generate a high level of ownership; and
- a continuous cycle of evaluation.

The relevant capacity building in-country contexts for ERFA are individuals, groups, communities and organisations.

The in-country capacity building methods and techniques utilised by ERFA supported projects include: community development, community education, education for sustainable development, training, mentoring and skills transfer.

7.0 Protection of human rights

ERFA is committed to the respecting and safeguarding of human rights, noting that human rights are for everyone, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, indigeneity, disability, age, displacement, caste, gender, gender identity, sexuality, sexual orientation, poverty, class or socio-economic status.

ERFA recognises that gender rights are human rights and that promoting gender justice is promoting human rights (please refer to ERFA's Gender equality and female empowerment policy).

ERFA believes that sustainable development and human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. For development to be sustainable communities in developing nations need to have secure and long-term access to the resources required to satisfy their basic needs, be they economic, social, cultural or civil. For ERFA, this is enabled through the concept of development education, which enables people to understand and participate in tackling the root causes of injustices and inequalities that block sustainable development. Key components in development education include human rights, social justice and inclusive education.

8.0 Environmental sustainability

8.1 Implementing Partners

ERFA believes that work for sustainable development and work for a healthy, sustainable environment are interconnected and must proceed together. Hence, environmental education is an essential component in development education. Therefore, ERFA requires that:

- where appropriate, its Implementing Partners undertake an environmental assessment prior to the implementation of projects to demonstrate that proposed activities will not have a detrimental effect on land, flora and fauna and traditional culture and practice;
- its Implementing Partners will comply with the relevant environmental laws that prevail in their country;
- its Implementing Partners enable their personnel to avail of in-country education and training opportunities for developing improved knowledge and skills relating to environmental sustainability; and
- its Implementing Partners actively support national and international campaigns and initiatives that promote sustainable environmental management.

ERFA requires partners to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment where their project is determined to pose a high environmental impact risk.

8.2 Staff

ERFA minimises the impact its operations has on the environment by adopting the following policies for Staff in Australia (ERFA) and Kenya (ERFK):

- Turn off the lights and air conditioning when no one is using the office.
- Minimise paper usage. Distribute documents electronically where possible.
- Recycle paper.
- Avoid using products from native forests.
- Avoid using bottled water.
- Hold meetings over phone call or online video where possible. Limit the need to travel.
- Carefully plan field trips overseas. Prioritise the shortest route to destinations in order to limit CO_2 emissions.

9.0 Roles and responsibilities

- The CEO is responsible for communication of this policy to all ERFA personnel and in-country program partners
- The CEO is responsible for ensuring that in-country partners incorporate the policy's requirements into their standard operating procedures
- This policy is to be included in partner compliance documentation
- Knowledge and understanding of this policy is to be included in the induction process for new Australia based and overseas ERFA staff
- ERFA Directors are responsible for the authorisation of this Sustainable Development Policy and the scheduling of its regular review

10.0 Related ERFA Policies and Documents

Related policies:

- Development and non-development policy
- Gender equality and female empowerment policy
- Diversity and inclusiveness policy