



Good Practice Note: Environment Protection

Principle 6: Promote improved environmental outcomes

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This Good Practice Note is for DFAT staff, delivery partners and environment specialists involved in delivering Australia's aid program. It is one of a series of notes which explains the principles of the aid program's [Environment Protection Policy](#) and how they should be addressed. The notes complement the [Operational Procedures of the Environment Protection Policy](#).

6 Improving environmental outcomes

6.1 Why invest in good environmental outcomes

Australian aid investments can improve environmental outcomes in ways that benefit target communities, such as by enabling resources to be managed more efficiently or protecting important environmental assets.

Investing in improved environmental outcomes can:

- Lead to more sustainable and resilient development outcomes
- Promote good practice in environmental management including for development partners
- Build on Australia's environmental protection obligations under partner country and Australian environmental legislation
- Foster the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

The Integrated Coastal Management Program in the Mekong Delta (ICMP) addressed rapid coastal erosion through a combination of methods including low-cost dykes and mangrove reforestation. This avoided the need for expensive and complex dyke construction and contributed to biodiversity conservation and the local economy (70-80 per cent of all fish being caught offshore spend a part of their lifecycle in mangroves).

6.2 What are the obligations?

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) promotes ecologically sustainable development through the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of natural resources.

The EPBC Act provides for Australian government agencies to report annually on progress towards achieving ecologically sustainable development. [Guidance](#) has been published to help agencies meet their reporting requirements. It sets out the information needed, including the measures to ensure environmental risk assessments are incorporated in activity planning.

Australia also reports on environmental performance and progress towards sustainable development commitments to international agencies such as:

[Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development \(OECD\)](#)

[United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development](#)

6.3 What are the principles of ecologically sustainable development?

Ecologically sustainable development underpins Australian environmental law and that of many partner countries. The principles are:

- Decision-making processes should effectively integrate both long-term and short-term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations
- If there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation
- Inter-generational equity – that the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations
- The conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity should be a fundamental consideration in decision-making
- Improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms should be promoted.

6.4 You are following good practice if the investment:

Considers opportunities to create positive environmental outcomes in concept and design and the assessment and management of environmental risks

Incorporates measures that promote economic development and sustainability such as:

- **Efficiencies in the use of natural resources** – including efficient water use practice and technology
- **Energy efficiency** – in transport, construction and manufacturing
- **Cost-effective clean energy** – such as small scale solar in remote rural areas
- **Demand side resource management measures** – to reduce waste
- **Environmentally positive alternatives** to potentially harmful substances – such as integrated pest management practices

- **Technology to maintain and build productivity** in the resource base and sustain ecosystem functions – such as conservation farming technology to control weeds and incorporate organic fertilisers.

Includes indicators of these positive environmental outcomes in the monitoring and reporting frameworks

Builds capacity in local environmental agencies and civil society groups to identify and foster win wins for economic development and the environment.