



DACAAR Environmental Policy

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DACAAR Policy on Environment



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Preamble

DACAAR is committed to improving the quality of life for Afghans, especially those in conflict-affected and underserved communities. This Environmental Policy builds on DACAAR's decades-long work in vital areas such as Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), Natural Resource Management (NRM), Women's Empowerment (WE), and Small Scale Enterprise Development (SSED) across Afghanistan. Recognizing the severe environmental challenges the country faces—including deforestation, water scarcity, and land degradation—DACAAR integrates sustainable practices into its projects to ensure that today's development does not compromise the needs of future generations. The policy emphasizes DACAAR's role in supporting communities to become more resilient in the face of climate change, addressing both immediate needs and long-term environmental sustainability.

Afghanistan's unique environmental vulnerabilities, compounded by climate change impacts, require a coordinated response that aligns with both national and international environmental frameworks. DACAAR's Environmental Policy is designed in accordance with ¹the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA), ensuring local relevance and compliance. Furthermore, it incorporates global commitments like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs), particularly those related to climate action and women's involvement in peacebuilding and environmental governance. Through this alignment, DACAAR ensures that its work not only addresses pressing environmental issues but also contributes to inclusive and sustainable development for all Afghan communities.

This policy underscores DACAAR's recognition of the critical importance of protecting and preserving the environment as an integral part of its humanitarian and development work. DACAAR's approach to environmental sustainability, climate adaptation, and social inclusion is grounded in the specific challenges Afghanistan faces, while adhering to global standards. By embedding these principles in all its operations, DACAAR supports the development of climate-resilient communities, helps restore ecosystems, and promotes the equitable use of natural resources, ensuring that the most vulnerable populations are included in the country's path toward sustainable development.

1. Objectives

DACAAR's Environmental Policy outlines a framework for responsible environmental stewardship, reflecting DACAAR's dedication to protecting the natural resources on which communities in Afghanistan depend. The objectives of this policy guide our actions towards a greener and more sustainable future, supporting the well-being of present and future generations. These objectives include:

Ensuring that DACAAR's operations, projects, and activities reduce negative environmental impacts through responsible resource use, waste management, and sustainable practices.

Promote the efficient utilization of energy, water, and materials in all organizational activities to minimize our ecological footprint.

Integrate sustainability into program and project designs to ensure interventions promote long-term environmental health and community resilience by reducing vulnerability to climate-related risks, such as droughts, pests, and diseases, while improving adaptive capacity to withstand and grow amid long-term stresses like erratic weather and shortened seasons.

- Enhance the environmental awareness and capacity of staff, partners, and beneficiaries through training and education on sustainable practices.
- Develop and implement strategies that support communities in adapting to climate change impacts, while being mindful of DACAAR's contribution to environmental sustainability, by focusing on practical measures, such as responsible disposal of old equipment like solar panels and fuel-powered machines ensuring they do not harm the environment.

¹ nepa.gov.af/indexen



- Enhance agricultural resilience and rural livelihoods by promoting drought-resistant crops to ensure food security and sustainable income in drought-prone areas.
- Ensure compliance with national and international environmental laws, standards, and best practices to promote sustainability in humanitarian and development efforts.

2. Policy Statement and Principles

2.1 Policy Statement

DACAAR is committed to protecting and enhancing the environment in all its operations, recognizing the vital role of natural resources in the well-being and livelihoods of Afghan communities. This policy aims to ensure that DACAAR's interventions promote environmental sustainability, reduce ecological degradation, and contribute to the responsible management of natural resources. We strive to align our programs with international environmental standards and national regulations to safeguard Afghanistan's ecosystems.

2.2 Principles

- **Sustainable Resource Management:**
DACAAR will ensure that all projects prioritize the sustainable use of natural resources, such as water, land, and forests, to protect against depletion and degradation. This aligns with our aim to support long-term community resilience and environmental health.
- **Climate Change Adaptation:**
Integrate climate change adaptation strategies into programs, addressing the growing risks posed by environmental changes. This includes supporting communities in adopting practices that mitigate the impacts of climate variability on their livelihoods.
- **Biodiversity Protection:**
DACAAR will actively contribute to the conservation of biodiversity by preventing activities that cause habitat destruction and by promoting practices that enhance ecosystem health.
- **Waste Reduction and Pollution Control:**
Reduce waste generation, promote recycling, and ensure that pollution (air, water, and soil) is minimized through environmentally friendly practices in our operations.
- **Environmental Awareness and Capacity Building:**
Build environmental awareness among staff, beneficiaries, and partners to encourage the adoption of sustainable practices. This involves training and promoting environmental stewardship at all levels.
- **Compliance with International and National Standards:**
DACAAR adheres to relevant environmental conventions, national laws, and regulations, including those set by NEPA (National Environmental Protection Agency), ensuring full compliance in all programs.
- **Do No Harm to The Environment:**
In line with the principle of "Do no harm policy," DACAAR's will ensure its environmental interventions do not cause unintended harm by avoiding, minimizing, and managing the damage caused to the environment and the climate, while maintaining its ability to provide timely and principled humanitarian assistance.

3. Guiding International and National Environmental Standards

3.1 International Covenants and Agreements

DACAAR acknowledges and adheres to key international environmental conventions that frame global environmental action, which include but are not limited to:

- **The Paris Agreement (2015)** guides DACAAR's efforts to support Afghanistan in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building climate resilience. In regions severely impacted by climate change, DACAAR's focus on water resource management and climate adaptation aligns with the agreement's goals to limit global warming and bolster adaptive capacities.



- **The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** underscores DACAAR's commitment to conserving Afghanistan's biodiversity, particularly in regions like the Hindu Kush, where deforestation and loss of biodiversity are critical concerns.
- **The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)** is central to DACAAR's approach to land degradation, a growing issue in Afghanistan due to overgrazing, deforestation, and agricultural pressures. By promoting sustainable land management practices, DACAAR contributes to the restoration of degraded lands.
- **The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** guides DACAAR's Environmental Policy by providing a global framework for addressing climate change, which is integral to DACAAR's operations in Afghanistan. Specifically, the UNFCCC influences DACAAR's policy in climate change mitigation and developing climate adaptation strategies.

3.2 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

DACAAR's programs are aligned with multiple SDGs, particularly those related to the environment and social inclusion:

- **SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation):** DACAAR's WASH programs ensure access to clean water and improved sanitation, vital in combating water scarcity and preventing disease outbreaks in Afghanistan's conflict-affected regions².
- **SDG 13 (Climate Action):** Through natural resources management and climate-resilient infrastructure projects, DACAAR actively contributes to national climate adaptation strategies. These efforts are essential for communities that are disproportionately affected by climate-related disasters, including floods and droughts³.
- **SDG 15 (Life on Land):** DACAAR's emphasis on sustainable agricultural practices and reforestation efforts ties directly into SDG 15, which calls for protecting, restoring, and promoting the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems⁴.
- **SDG 5 (Gender Equality):** Gender mainstreaming is embedded in all of DACAAR's projects, particularly in natural resource management, where women are involved in decision-making processes related to water resource allocation and environmental conservation⁵.

3.3 UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs)

DACAAR's environmental policy also draws on UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security, which highlight the disproportionate impacts of environmental degradation and conflict on women and call for their active involvement in peace-building and sustainable development processes. In Afghanistan, where environmental degradation exacerbates conflict over resources, engaging women in environmental governance is crucial. DACAAR ensures that women play leading roles in water resource management committees and other environmental initiatives.

Furthermore, UNSCR 2349 (2017), which addresses the nexus between climate change, conflict, and security, informs DACAAR's approach to mitigating environmental risks in conflict zones. This resolution recognizes that environmental challenges, such as water scarcity, can exacerbate conflict, making

²<https://globalgoals.org/goals/6-clean-water-and-sanitation/>

³<https://globalgoals.org/goals/13-climate-action/>

⁴<https://globalgoals.org/goals/15-life-on-land/>

⁵<https://globalgoals.org/goals/5-gender-equality/>

DACAAR's work on sustainable water management in Afghanistan critical to both environmental sustainability and peace-building efforts.

By aligning its operations with these international agreements, SDGs, and UNSCRs, DACAAR is committed to advancing a holistic approach to environmental governance in Afghanistan. This approach not only tackles immediate environmental issues but also promotes inclusive, climate-resilient development that empowers marginalized populations, especially women, while ensuring long-term sustainability.

3.4 National Environmental Protection Agency

DACAAR's programs adheres to the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) guidelines in the following ways:

- **Compliance with Environmental Laws and Regulations:** DACAAR ensures that all its projects and programs comply with the national environmental laws and regulations set forth by NEPA while aligning the strategies of various ministries, such as The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock(MAIL), Ministry of Energy and Water(MEW), and Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). This includes abiding by environmental protection standards in sectors like Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), Natural Resources Management (NRM), and infrastructure projects.
- **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs):** In compliance with NEPA's requirements, DACAAR conducts Environmental Impact Assessments for its development projects to identify potential environmental risks. These assessments ensure that DACAAR's interventions do not negatively affect Afghanistan's ecosystems and that mitigation measures are implemented when necessary.
- **Sustainable Resource Management:** DACAAR's Natural Resources Management (NRM) programs are designed in alignment with NEPA's focus on the sustainable management of natural resources such as water, land, and forests. DACAAR promotes practices like reforestation, soil conservation, and water management to preserve Afghanistan's natural resources.
- **Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation:** DACAAR's environmental initiatives incorporate NEPA's guidelines on climate change adaptation, ensuring that projects contribute to building climate resilience within Afghan communities. This includes adopting climate-smart agricultural practices and promoting renewable energy.
- **Collaboration with NEPA:** DACAAR works closely with NEPA to align its activities with national priorities, actively participating in consultations and policy workshops to provide guidance and integrate its programs with Afghanistan's environmental strategies. Notably, DACAAR contributed valuable insights, particularly in groundwater monitoring, during NEPA's policy workshops.
- **Capacity Building and Awareness:** In alignment with NEPA's public awareness mandate, DACAAR conducts environmental education and training within communities to promote sustainable practices. These efforts help raise awareness about environmental conservation and resource management among beneficiaries and local stakeholders.

4 Scope and Purpose

This Environmental Policy encompasses all of DACAAR's operations in Afghanistan, ensuring alignment with international and national best practices and global environmental agreements. It provides a



framework for integrating environmental sustainability, climate adaptation, and social inclusion into DACAAR's diverse humanitarian and development programs.

4.1 Promote Environmental Sustainability in Humanitarian and Development Efforts

In Afghanistan, environmental degradation exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, especially in areas reliant on agriculture and natural resources for livelihoods. DACAAR is committed to embedding environmental sustainability across all its interventions, particularly in Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), Natural Resource Management (NRM), Small Scale Enterprise Development (SSED), and Women's Empowerment (WE). By focusing on sustainable practices, DACAAR ensures that resource used today does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This includes:

- Prioritizing sustainable water management, essential in Afghanistan, where water scarcity is a persistent challenge. Afghanistan faces severe depletion of groundwater resources, making DACAAR's work in WASH programs, especially in arid regions.
- Promoting sustainable agriculture and reforestation through NRM programs, particularly in regions vulnerable to deforestation and land degradation. By adopting sustainable farming techniques and planting native trees, DACAAR helps restore ecosystems, protect biodiversity, and improve food security.

This holistic approach aligns with international frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), which calls for sustainable management of natural resources and reducing waste generation.

4.2 Mitigate Environmental Degradation and Adapt to the Effects of Climate Change

In alignment with the *Do No Harm* principle, as referenced in Annex 9.2 of the Adaptive Management and Risk Mitigation Framework in Conflict Sensitivity and Do No Harm Policy, DACAAR acknowledges Afghanistan's vulnerability to climate change, particularly extreme weather events like droughts, floods, and desertification. These challenges, exacerbated by ongoing conflict, demand a focus on both immediate and long-term environmental risks. We are dedicated to avoiding, minimizing, and managing environmental damage while maintaining our ability to deliver principled humanitarian and development aid. In line with the Paris Agreement, DACAAR also integrates climate adaptation into its projects to strengthen the resilience of communities and ecosystem. Key actions include:

- Supporting climate-resilient agricultural practices to help communities withstand unpredictable weather patterns and reduce dependency on rain-fed agriculture, which is becoming increasingly unreliable.
- Encouraging natural disaster risk reduction (DRR) by incorporating climate risk assessments into infrastructure projects and designing systems that can withstand climate-related shocks.

DACAAR's focus on mitigating degradation also connects to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which prioritizes adaptation for countries vulnerable to climate impacts. DACAAR's efforts are guided by frameworks such as the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) of Afghanistan, ensuring local adaptation strategies align with broader global commitments.

4.3 Ensure Inclusive Participation in Environmental Governance

DACAAR recognizes that effective environmental governance requires the inclusion of vulnerable populations, particularly women, children, and marginalized ethnic groups, in decision-making processes.

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In a country like Afghanistan, where natural resource conflicts can exacerbate social tensions, it is crucial that environmental governance incorporates Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI). DACAAR's policy ensures:

- Women's participation in natural resource management, water governance, and agricultural projects, providing leadership opportunities and building capacities in communities to manage their own resources sustainably.
- Special attention to marginalized groups, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and rural populations disproportionately affected by environmental degradation. This aligns with international covenants like the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which emphasizes the rights of all communities to benefit equitably from natural resources.

This aligns with SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), reinforcing the global commitment to equitable access to resources and participation in environmental decision-making.

4.4 Align DACAAR's Activities with Global Environmental Agreements

DACAAR's activities are aligned with the following key international environmental agreements:

- The Paris Agreement (2015), which provides a roadmap for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving resilience to climate impacts. DACAAR incorporates the agreement's principles by promoting low-carbon solutions, such as the use of solar-powered water systems, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, and enhancing community resilience to climate-induced disasters.
- The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which prioritizes the protection of biodiversity and sustainable land management practices. DACAAR's focus on biodiversity conservation through reforestation and sustainable agriculture is directly tied to the global target of halting biodiversity loss and restoring ecosystems.
- UN Security Council Resolution 1325, emphasizing the role of women in peace-building and conflict resolution, extends to environmental governance. DACAAR's inclusion of women in leadership roles in resource management helps build local capacity while promoting peace in resource-scarce areas.

5 Definition of Terms

To ensure clarity and consistency across DACAAR's environmental policy and projects, the following key terms are defined, incorporating global best practices, international agreements, and context-specific challenges in Afghanistan. This comprehensive set of definitions ensures that DACAAR's environmental policy is grounded in globally recognized concepts and adapted to the unique environmental and social challenges of Afghanistan. These definitions provide a foundation for developing targeted strategies that promote sustainability, inclusion, and resilience in all of DACAAR's programs.

- Sustainability: The ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This involves the responsible management of natural resources to avoid long-term environmental degradation while fostering economic and social development. In Afghanistan, this is particularly crucial in managing scarce water resources and reducing land degradation.
- Climate Resilience: The capacity of systems, communities, and ecosystems to anticipate, absorb, and recover from the impacts of climate-related hazards, such as floods, droughts, and heatwaves. DACAAR's climate resilience efforts include promoting adaptive agricultural practices and designing

infrastructure that withstands climate-induced disasters. The goal is to safeguard livelihoods and minimize the vulnerability of at-risk communities.

- **Environment:** This encompasses all external conditions, resources, and influences affecting the life, development, and survival of living organisms, including air, water, soil, ecosystems, and biodiversity. DACAAR's Environmental Policy prioritizes protecting and improving the environment by addressing challenges like pollution, climate change, and natural resource degradation. This commitment ensures sustainable development, resilience, and improved well-being for vulnerable communities in Afghanistan.
- **Environmental Justice:** A principle ensuring that no group, particularly vulnerable or marginalized populations, bears an undue burden of environmental hazards while being denied access to environmental benefits. This concept promotes the fair and equitable distribution of environmental risks and resources, such as access to clean water, land rights, and energy. DACAAR's commitment to environmental justice is critical in areas where resource conflict and environmental degradation disproportionately affect poor and rural communities.
- **Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI):** GESI ensures that all genders and marginalized groups have equal access to decision-making processes, resources, and benefits derived from development projects. In environmental governance, this means involving women and socially excluded groups in resource management, climate adaptation, and disaster preparedness programs. GESI also aims to address the disproportionate impacts that environmental degradation and climate change have on women and marginalized communities.
- **Natural Resources Management (NRM):** The sustainable utilization and management of critical natural resources, including land, water, soil, and biodiversity. NRM involves maintaining a balance between resource use and conservation to prevent depletion or degradation, particularly in Afghanistan's fragile ecosystems. DACAAR's NRM programs focus on sustainable agriculture, reforestation, and community-led resource governance to ensure long-term environmental stability.
- **Adaptation (to climate change):** This is what we do to adjust to the changing climate – that is the actual or expected climate and its effects. DACAAR's Environmental Policy reflects the concept of adaptation by emphasizing adjustments in ecological, social, and economic systems in response to the impacts of climate change. The policy focuses on implementing changes in practices, processes, and structures to mitigate environmental damages and enhance community resilience.
- **Ecosystem:** This is a dynamic complex of living organisms and their non-living environment, interacting as a functional unit. In the context of DACAAR's Environmental Policy, the concept of ecosystems is central to promoting sustainable natural resource management. By protecting and restoring ecosystems, DACAAR aims to enhance biodiversity, mitigate the impacts of climate change, and ensure the sustainable provision of essential services such as clean water, fertile soils, and resilient livelihoods for communities in Afghanistan.
- **Ecosystem Services:** The benefits that ecosystems provide to humans, including clean water, air, fertile soil, and biodiversity. In Afghanistan, the degradation of these services—through deforestation, soil erosion, and biodiversity loss—directly impacts the livelihoods of rural communities. DACAAR's policy focuses on restoring and preserving these ecosystem services to support sustainable development.
- **Paris Agreement:** A global accord that aims to limit global warming to below 2°C, with efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. The agreement emphasizes reducing carbon emissions, enhancing climate resilience, and supporting developing countries in their climate actions. DACAAR's environmental policy is aligned with the Paris Agreement's goals, particularly in supporting Afghanistan's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and promoting renewable energy use.

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- **Biodiversity:** The variety of plant and animal life in a particular habitat. DACAAR's activities support biodiversity conservation in Afghanistan, where deforestation, overgrazing, and unsustainable agricultural practices threaten ecosystems. The policy aligns with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, aiming to halt biodiversity loss and restore ecosystems.
- **Environmental Governance:** The systems, processes, and institutions through which decisions related to environmental management and policy are made and enforced. Good environmental governance ensures the participation of all stakeholders, including governments, civil society, and local communities, in the protection and sustainable use of natural resources.
- **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR):** A systematic approach to identifying, assessing, and reducing risks of disaster. In Afghanistan, where environmental hazards like droughts and floods are frequent, DACAAR integrates DRR strategies into its programs to enhance community resilience and reduce vulnerability to environmental disasters.
- **Mitigation (of climate change):** Action that limits or prevents greenhouse gas emissions and enhances activities that remove these gases from the atmosphere through sustainable practices, such as promoting energy efficiency, reducing deforestation, and implementing renewable energy solutions. DACAAR focuses on minimizing environmental degradation by encouraging sustainable agriculture, water management, and reforestation projects. These mitigation strategies are designed to help reduce Afghanistan's environmental footprint, contribute to global climate goals, and safeguard natural resources for future generations.

6 Key Policy Areas

6.1 Environmental Sustainability

DACAAR's approach to environmental sustainability is based on the pressing need to address Afghanistan's fragile ecosystems while enhancing livelihood resilience for communities that are dependent on natural resources. This entails promoting resource-efficient, low-impact methods across all areas of intervention, particularly in the context of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), Small Scale Enterprise Development (SSED), Natural Resource Management (NRM) programs.

- **Sustainable Water Management:** Given Afghanistan's chronic water scarcity, exacerbated by climate change and over-extraction of groundwater, DACAAR will promote community-based water resource management, focusing on building local capacity to manage water systems sustainably. This includes the rehabilitation of damaged water infrastructure in rural and under-served regions, especially in conflict-affected areas, where access to water is a critical challenge.
- **Waste Management:** In response to growing pollution in urban and displaced populations, DACAAR will implement community-based waste management systems that promote recycling, composting, and safe disposal of waste. These systems will be tailored to both urban centers and IDP camps, where inadequate waste disposal leads to severe public health and environmental hazards.
- **Energy Efficiency:** DACAAR will incorporate renewable energy solutions in its operations, particularly solar power for water pumping systems and community infrastructure. This aligns with Afghanistan's national priorities for increasing access to clean energy while reducing dependence on unsustainable fuel sources such as wood and coal.

6.2 Climate Action and Resilience

Afghanistan is one of the countries with most vulnerable to climate change, frequent droughts, floods, and extreme weather events posing a serious threat to agriculture and water resources. DACAAR's climate action strategy focuses on building resilience in the most affected areas.

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- **Climate Adaptation:** DACAAR will support climate-smart agriculture and promote resilient farming practices, such as drought-resistant crops, efficient irrigation systems, and the construction of check dams to manage water resources effectively. These efforts are critical in ensuring food security for rural Afghan communities. By integrating these measures, DACAAR aims to enhance climate resilience in regions highly exposed to environmental stressors.
- **Pollution Mitigation:** As part of its environmental commitment, DACAAR will concentrate on measures, such as adopting renewable energy where feasible, advocating for energy efficiency, and properly disposing of old equipment like solar panels and fuel-powered machines to prevent environmental harm and pollution.
- **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR):** DACAAR will integrate disaster risk reduction strategies into its development programs, focusing on building community resilience to natural disasters such as floods, landslides, avalanches, sand stabilization etc, which are becoming more frequent due to climate change. Early warning systems and community-based preparedness plans will be key components of this strategy.

6.3 Environmental Justice and Human Rights

DACAAR's commitment to environmental justice ensures that marginalized groups—particularly women, ethnic minorities, and internally displaced persons (IDPs)—have equitable access to natural resources and are actively engaged in environmental governance processes.

- **Inclusive Governance:** DACAAR will ensure that women and marginalized communities play a central role in natural resource management and decision-making processes. In regions where resource scarcity fuels conflict, inclusive governance mechanisms can promote cooperation and peaceful resource-sharing.
- **Equitable Access:** DACAAR will advocate for equitable access to essential natural resources, ensuring that vulnerable groups are not excluded from development benefits. Special attention will be given to women-headed households and IDPs, who often face barriers in accessing these resources.
- **Right to a Healthy Environment:** In line with UN Human Rights Council resolutions that recognize the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, DACAAR will promote environmental rights in all its project areas. This includes advocating for clean water, air, and sustainable land use for all communities.

6.4 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

Recognizing the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation and climate change on women and marginalized groups, DACAAR integrates Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) across all its programs. This is crucial in empowering women to become leaders in climate adaptation and natural resource management.

- **Empower Women in NRM:** DACAAR will increase women's participation in natural resource management by promoting female leadership within water user associations and community-based conservation efforts. Training and capacity-building initiatives will ensure that women are well-equipped to manage these resources sustainably.
- **GESI-sensitive Climate Programs:** DACAAR's climate adaptation and mitigation programs will be gender-sensitive, ensuring that women, children, and marginalized groups—who are often the most vulnerable to environmental shocks—are prioritized in project design and implementation.

- **Capacity Building for GESI:** DACAAR will provide training for targeted communities particularly women and marginalized groups, empowering them to fully participate in environmental decision-making and climate resilience activities. This will include technical training on sustainable practices, as well as leadership and governance skills.

7 Implementation Strategies

To ensure the success of the policy, DACAAR will adopt a multi-pronged implementation strategy:

- **Capacity Building:** This will involve training staff and community leaders on environmental sustainability, climate adaptation, and GESI principles, ensuring that all stakeholders are well-prepared to contribute to the implementation of environmentally sustainable projects.
- **Partnerships:** DACAAR will work with both national and international stakeholders, including the Afghan government, UN agencies, and local communities, to implement environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive practices. Collaboration with multilateral environmental frameworks, such as the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), will help DACAAR align its activities with global environmental standards.
- **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting:** DACAAR will put in place a robust monitoring and evaluation system to assess the environmental impacts of its operations. This system will include specific GESI indicators, targets for reducing waste generation, and resource conservation metrics. Annual reports will be shared with stakeholders to ensure transparency and accountability.

By embedding environmental sustainability, climate resilience, and social inclusion into all its activities, DACAAR contributes to a greener, more just future for Afghanistan, while adhering to international environmental and human rights standards.

8 Accountability and Governance

DACAAR recognizes that the success of this Environmental Policy hinges on strong governance, transparent monitoring, and consistent accountability. To achieve this, an Environmental Sustainability Committee (ESC) will be established in accordance with the Terms of Reference outlined in Annex 10.1. The ESC will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policy, ensuring compliance with global environmental standards, and continually improving environmental performance in line with international best practices.

- **Governance Structure:** The ESC will be composed of senior leadership, technical environmental experts, gender specialists, and local community representatives. This ensures that the policy remains inclusive, context-sensitive, and aligned with DACAAR's mission of community-driven development.
- **Oversight and Reporting:** The ESC will be tasked with reviewing DACAAR's environmental activities quarterly. Annual Environmental Performance Reports will be published and shared with donors, stakeholders, and the Afghan government, ensuring transparency and promoting dialogue on areas for improvement. These reports will include key performance indicators (KPIs) related to carbon emissions, resource management, GESI integration, and project-specific environmental impacts.
- **Continuous Improvement:** The committee will ensure that the policy evolves in response to emerging environmental challenges, technological advances, and global shifts in environmental governance. For instance, the ESC will keep pace with developments in international agreements, such as updates to the Paris Agreement, SDGs, and other multilateral environmental treaties.

9 Policy Review and Updates

The dynamic nature of environmental challenges, particularly in conflict-affected regions like Afghanistan, demands a flexible and adaptive policy approach. DACAAR will undertake an annual review of this Environmental Policy to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. This review will be informed by input from the Environmental Sustainability Committee, local communities, and key stakeholders, including government authorities and international partners.

- **Stakeholder Consultation:** To align with best practices in environmental governance, DACAAR will conduct wide-reaching consultations during the review process. This will involve gathering feedback from beneficiaries, particularly women and marginalized groups, to ensure that the policy reflects their needs and perspectives.
- **Alignment with Global Standards:** DACAAR will ensure that policy updates align with emerging international frameworks such as the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework and any newly ratified UN resolutions related to environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

By maintaining a proactive and adaptive policy review process, DACAAR ensures that its environmental initiatives not only address current challenges but are also resilient enough to handle future shifts in both environmental conditions and global standards. This ongoing policy evolution guarantees that DACAAR remains at the forefront of sustainable development and inclusive environmental governance in Afghanistan.

ANNEX A

Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Environmental Sustainability Committee (ESC)

Introduction:

The Environmental Sustainability Committee (ESC) is established under DACAAR's Environmental Policy 2024 to ensure environmental sustainability, compliance with international standards, and the integration of climate resilience into all operational and programmatic activities. This ToR outlines the roles, responsibilities, structure, and functioning of the ESC to achieve DACAAR's commitment to sustainable development in Afghanistan.

Specific Tasks and Responsibilities of the ESC:

- Oversee the implementation and monitoring of DACAAR's Environmental Policy.
- Promote environmental sustainability and climate resilience across all DACAAR projects.
- Facilitate inclusive participation in environmental governance, prioritizing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI).
- Oversee the alignment of DACAAR's programs with the Environmental Policy.
- Develop and implement strategies to mitigate environmental degradation and enhance climate resilience.
- Monitor compliance with national and international environmental laws and standards.
- Review and approve annual environmental performance reports.
- Build the capacity of staff, partners, and communities in environmental sustainability.
- Promote environmental awareness among stakeholders.
- Provide guidance on integrating environmental sustainability into program design and operations.
- Ensure meaningful engagement of marginalized groups in environmental governance.

Composition of the ESC:

Role in ESC	Designation	Responsibilities
Chairperson	Technical & Coordination Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Chairperson is responsible for convening meetings and ensuring the implementation of decisions. ● Lead and represent the ESC in internal and external forums. ● Ensure alignment of ESC activities with DACAAR's strategic priorities.
Member	Women Empowerment Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participate in decision-making processes and contribute expertise. ● Monitor and evaluate environmental performance in assigned areas. ● Organize meetings, document decisions, and follow up on action points. ● Support the preparation of reports and other communication materials.
Member	East Region, Field Coordinator	
Member	Donor Compliance and Project Information Officer	
<p>The ESC will track and report on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduction in environmental impacts such as waste generation. ● Increased capacity of staff and communities in sustainability practices. ● Number of women and marginalized groups participating in governance processes. ● Progress in aligning programs with international frameworks such as SDG 		

Meetings:

Quarterly meetings, with additional sessions as needed.

Dear All,

Hereby, I approve **DACAAR Environmental Policy**, effective 1st December 2024. This document consists of 14 pages.

Best Regards

Eng. Shah Wali, DACAAR, Acting Director

23.12.24

DACAAR Environmental Policy