



Striving for a healthy and inclusive society

Environmental Protection and Sustainability Policy

Revised February 2023

1. Introduction: Rwandan Context

Climate change is already clearly noticeable in Rwanda: average temperatures are rising, and heavy rainfall, flooding and landslides are occurring with increasing frequency. According to

the Rwanda Environmental Management Authority, agricultural planting seasons are shifting and becoming less predictable than ever before.

Although among the least developed countries, Rwanda has been a pioneer in climate protection. The country is actively involved in international climate initiatives. The government of Rwanda is proactively committed to green growth. In its Vision 2050, it has set itself the goal of becoming a carbon-neutral, high-income country by 2050.

HDI acknowledges the link between climate change and access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, in particular gender equality. Women and girls, for example, commonly face higher risks and greater burdens from the impacts of climate change than men and boys.

2. Definitions

Biodiversity is the variability among living organisms from all sources, including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems

Climate in a narrow sense is usually defined as the average weather, or more rigorously, as the statistical description in terms of the mean and variability of relevant quantities over a period of time ranging from months to thousands or millions of years. The classical period for averaging these variables is 30 years, as defined by the World Meteorological Organization. The relevant quantities are most often surface variables such as temperature, precipitation and wind. Climate in a wider sense is the state, including a statistical description, of the climate system.

Climate system means the totality of the atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere and geosphere and their interactions.

Climate change means a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.

Environment is defined as the sum total of water, air, land and the inter-relationships that exist among them and with the human beings, other living organisms and materials.

3. Policy Statement

Health Development Initiative (HDI) recognises that environmental protection is a cross-cutting and essential part of any organisations' work and acknowledges the connection between global climate change, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health. With this in mind, HDI formally commits itself to being an environmentally conscious organisation, which takes into account the potential impact of its projects on the environment and actively promotes environmental protection. HDI will focus on continual improvement and aim to set ambitious targets for reducing its impact on the environment.

The aim of this policy is to analyze HDI's impact on the environment and outline specific, measurable, and realistic measures HDI will take to mitigate that impact.

Policy objectives

1. To analyze the potential negative impact of HDI's programming on the environment and set specific measures to mitigate the impact
2. To analyze the potential positive environmental impact of HDI's programming and reinforce those positive elements
3. To analyze potential risks from environmental degradation, climate change and loss of biodiversity affecting the sustainability of the project/programme and propose mitigation strategies for those risks

Policy Scope

This policy applies to all HDI staff members, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, position within the organization, working relationship with HDI, seniority, marital status or any other status. All have the responsibility to be environmentally conscious and analyze any potential impact that their actions have on the environment.

4. Risk Analysis

In conjunction with the HDI Risk Management Plan and Risk Matrix, HDI has identified potential negative impacts on the environment from the implementation of our projects and potential impact on our project from unpredictable climate events.

Potential Risk	Mitigation
Staff and participants burning fuel to and from meeting and event venues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Utilizing carpooling wherever possible ● Look into the possibility of buying electric vehicles for Kigali travel
High use of electricity at the office from non renewable sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reminding staff to turn off lights and electronics when not in use
Use of non-renewable resources, such as papers especially in our clinics and finance office, plastic water bottles during meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhance the use of digital tools wherever possible ● Conduct an analysis of potential venues to gauge the possibility of using glass or recyclable cups
Emerging communicable diseases, Covid-19 for example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop and implement a pandemic response plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure proper knowledge sharing channels are in use so that work is not interrupted ● Hold meeting virtually when necessary
Natural disasters such as heavy rains, floods, storms, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, fire, mudslide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Appoint a qualified climate and safety focal person ● Review natural disaster plans ● Ensure all safety resources are purchased in order to mitigate the effects of natural disasters ● Train staff on emergency response

5. Commitments

In line with national and global efforts to reduce the effects of climate change and reduce our carbon footprint, HDI has identified potential impacts on the environment and strategies to mitigate them.

Programmatically

- Promoting environmental responsibility among staff, interns, volunteers, fellows contractors as a training package during orientation and refresher training for existing staff.
- Whenever possible, HDI will conduct meetings using online platforms, which will minimise burning fossil fuels and reduce HDI's carbon footprint.
- HDI will take every opportunity to raise awareness on environmental protection during its events and community outreach activities
- As HDI conducts activities across the country, HDI will strive as much as possible to incorporate environmental friendly aspects, such as proper waste management and will encourage others to do the same
- HDI will continue to advocate for revision in laws and policies, which could have a negative impact on the environment and will advocate for the development of policies and laws which address the known link between climate change and gender inequality. HDI acknowledges that people cannot be healthy without a healthy environment.
- Acting on environmental and sustainability issues, all project coordinators are aware and commit to comply with environmental aspects of the projects they are leading. In addition, there will be trimestrial meetings to discuss new ideas and possible solutions

for the issues around incorporation of environmental perspectives in projects activities.

- Radio and Television talk shows highlighting the relationship between climate change and SRHR and community roles in mitigating climate change in SRHR perspective.

In the Workplace

- HDI commits to prioritising digitalization in order to prevent the use of non-renewal, non-recyclable materials, including: printing fewer materials, and avoiding plastic packaging, using recycled paper, using water filters instead of plastic water bottles,
- HDI commits to minimising its energy and water usage by depending more on renewable energy such as solar power and by turning off water and electronic devices whenever they are not in use.
- HDI will make every effort to enhance the use of rainwater in activities such as toilet flushing, garden irrigation, washing cars, and mopping floors.
- Minimising the production of waste at the office and meeting venues and always remember sorting wastes such degradable and non-degradable.
- Plants in the offices
- Using local products for the staff catering, and reducing the meat consumption.
- Partner with the environmental centred organisations and offer different contributions such as lending our hall for an environmental health activity such as clothing swaps.
- Soliciting input from Staff, interns, fellows ,suppliers, partners and Board members in meeting its environmental goals.
- Whenever safe and realistic, HDI commits to using public transportation and encouraging staff to carpool

Tools and Resources to Fulfil Commitments

- HDI will use this Environmental and Sustainability Policy to guide analysis of environmental impact in all aspects of HDI's work
- HDI will develop an annual internal Environmental Assessment checklist based on best practices of similar organisations

- HDI will use the Risk Management Plan and Matrix as an overarching framework for mitigating environmental and climate change risks
- Using the systems audit, HDI will continue to implement changes recommended by outside experts
- HDI will continue contracting with a cleaning company to ensure proper waste management at the office level
- HDI nurses are trained waste management, biohazard waste and will receive refresher training when needed
- HDI's climate and safety focal person will be offered opportunities for continuous growth and learning
- The climate and safety focal person will have the capacity to train others in environmental issues
- Following yearly trainings, staff will be able to identify and mitigate risks related to the environment

6. Monitoring and Reporting

To monitor and report on the progress of the commitments HDI is making towards becoming an environmentally conscious organisation, HDI has developed a set of annual environmental protection targets. Although targets are annual, HDI may add implementable improvements at any time.

This policy shall be reviewed yearly in conjunction with creating annual environmental targets. During the review, the policy may also be updated accordingly if necessary.