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Barnfonden Environment Policy

SUMMARY

This policy document:

- Outlines Barnfonden's climate and environment responsibilities and commitments.
- Provides a background on why this is so important to Barnfonden as a child rights organisation.
- Describes documents this policy responds to and relates to.

Rationale for the policy

The accelerating climate and environmental crisis presents an unprecedented threat to the well-being of children, communities, and ecosystems worldwide. Rising global temperatures, increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters, loss of biodiversity, and environmental degradation disproportionately impact vulnerable populations, including children. These challenges compromise their rights to health, education, and protection, as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

At a global level, frameworks such as the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment 26 emphasize the urgent need for transformative action to address environmental challenges and uphold intergenerational equity.

For Barnfonden, environmental stewardship is central to our mission of safeguarding children's rights and fostering sustainable, resilient communities. Our commitment aligns with the organization's strategic priorities, recognizing that environmental sustainability is critical to achieving child well-being and empowering future generations.

This policy serves as a roadmap for addressing both global and organizational environmental challenges. It sets clear objectives and actionable measures for reducing our ecological footprint, integrating sustainability across our programs and operations, and empowering children and communities as agents of change in the green and just transition.

By adopting this policy, Barnfonden reaffirms its leadership role in addressing climate and environmental issues and underscores its commitment to a sustainable future that prioritizes the rights and well-being of children.

Definitions

Anticipatory Action: Proactive measures taken to reduce risks and mitigate the impacts of potential disasters or crises, particularly in the context of climate change and environmental challenges, to protect vulnerable populations.

Carbon Footprint: The total greenhouse gas emissions caused directly or indirectly by an individual, organization, or activity, expressed in carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e).

Carbon Offsetting: The process of compensating for carbon emissions by investing in verified projects that reduce or remove an equivalent amount of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, such as reforestation or renewable energy initiatives.

Child Rights: The fundamental rights of children, as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ensuring their survival, development, protection, and participation in all matters affecting their lives.

Circular Economy: An economic model aimed at minimizing waste and maximizing resource efficiency by reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling materials and products, while reducing reliance on finite resources.

Climate Change Mitigation: Actions to reduce or prevent greenhouse gas emissions and limit global warming to internationally agreed targets, such as reducing energy consumption, promoting renewable energy, and enhancing carbon sinks.

Cross-Cutting Issues Handbook: An internal Barnfonden resource that integrates key principles such as environmental sustainability, child protection, gender equity, and inclusivity across all areas of work.

Environmental Degradation: The deterioration of the environment through the depletion of natural resources, pollution, loss of biodiversity, and ecosystem disruption caused by human activities or natural disasters.

Environmental Point Person: A designated staff member responsible for ensuring environmental training, overseeing environmental initiatives, and serving as a contact for environmental issues and complaints within Barnfonden.

Environmental Stewardship: The responsible use, care, and management of natural resources to ensure their sustainability for current and future generations, encompassing practices such as conservation, restoration, and sustainable development.

General Comment 26: A framework issued by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child addressing children's rights in the context of environmental and climate crises, emphasizing intergenerational equity and state obligations.

Pact for the Future: A 2024 global declaration, adopted at the UN Summit of the Future, emphasizing the need for immediate action to safeguard future generations by accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement, and fostering global partnerships.

Safe Schools: Programs and initiatives aimed at ensuring schools are resilient to environmental and climate risks, aligned with frameworks like the Comprehensive School Safety Framework, providing a safe and secure learning environment for children.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A set of 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations to achieve a sustainable and equitable future by 2030, addressing issues such as poverty, health, education, climate action, and environmental protection.

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Introduction

Since adopting the 2021 Strategic Plan, Barnfonden has placed climate and environmental issues at the heart of its work, guided by a commitment to children's rights. The profound impact of these issues on children's health, education, protection, and well-being is evident. However, nothing illustrates this more powerfully than the voices of young people themselves:

"The sun grows stronger these days. Rivers dry up, and the air is no longer pure. What are we doing to our Earth?" writes Vaneza, 18, from Bolivia.

"If we don't band together to fight climate change, it will continue to encroach on our lives. Despite these changes, I have hope. The future is unpredictable in this interconnected world, but one thing is certain: climate change is a serious issue that needs immediate action. It is not an abstract concern. Only our shared efforts can build a safer future," says Bement, 19, from Ethiopia, in a statement prepared for COP29.

This policy outlines Barnfonden's commitment to shaping a better present and future for children. It provides guidance on preventing environmental harm and ensuring our daily work restores and protects nature while mitigating the effects of climate change.

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Alignment

ChildFund Alliance: As an organisation, we endorse the [ChildFund-Alliance-Environmental-Sustainability-Standards-1.pdf](#). In our programme work, we also adhere to the ChildFund Alliance Programme Standards:

- We take action to address climate change and environmental degradation in our program work.
- We support communities to restore and improve the environment while helping them to anticipate, respond to, cope with, recover and adapt to build resilience against the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation.
- We empower children and youth as drivers of change in green and just transition¹ efforts, leveraging nature and restoring ecosystems to foster equitable social and environmental progress.

Global Frameworks: Two globally adopted frameworks emanating from the UN provide additional foundations for integrating child rights with climate and environmental programming. These are:

[General Comment 26](#) on children's rights and the environment which highlights the critical importance of safeguarding children's rights in the context of the environmental and climate crisis. It emphasizes intergenerational equity and the obligation of states to protect the environment for present and future generations.



Similarly, [the 2024 Pact for the Future: Declaration on Future Generations](#) underscores the shared global responsibility to prioritize the well-being and rights of future generations. This includes, among other things, to turbocharge the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on climate change, and to build stronger partnerships with civil society, the private sector, local and regional authorities and others.

These frameworks emphasize the urgency of empowering children as active agents in addressing climate challenges and ensure that our work supports resilience and equitable futures for children, particularly those on the frontlines of environmental crises. By aligning with these global commitments, Barnfonden strengthens its mission to protect and promote children's rights while fostering sustainable, climate-resilient communities.

¹ UN defines the green and just transition as issues that combine environmental sustainability with social justice and that strive to "leave no one behind".

Quick reference guide

This section provides a **simple, easy-to-follow guide** on what Barnfonden staff must do to comply with the Environmental Policy. These actions help us reduce our environmental impact and contribute to a sustainable future.

Action Area	What You Must Do 	What to Avoid 
Energy Use	Turn off lights, computers, and office equipment when not in use.	Leaving electronics and lights on unnecessarily.
	Use energy-efficient appliances and settings.	Using high-energy-consuming devices when alternatives exist.
Travel & Transport	Use video conferencing instead of traveling when possible.	Taking unnecessary flights or car trips.
	Choose public transport, biking, or carpooling when commuting.	Using private transport when greener alternatives exist.
Waste Reduction & Recycling	Follow office waste separation and recycling guidelines.	Throwing recyclable materials into general waste bins.
	Minimize printing and opt for digital documents.	Printing unnecessarily or using single-use plastics.
Water Conservation	Report leaks and use water efficiently.	Wasting water (e.g., leaving taps running).
Sustainable Procurement	Choose eco-friendly, Fair Trade, and locally sourced products.	Buying items with excessive packaging or unsustainable materials.
Office & Event Sustainability	Organize environmentally friendly meetings and events (e.g., use digital materials, reduce waste).	Planning events that generate unnecessary waste.

Alignment to national and international legal frameworks

Barnfonden's commitment to environmental sustainability has been developed with reference to relevant national and international environmental laws, regulations, and standards. In the execution of this policy, we recognize the importance of legal frameworks and international standards to ensure compliance and support global environmental efforts.

- We abide by Swedish environmental protection laws.
- We recognize international standards and conventions, including:
 - **The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** and the **Paris Agreement**
 - **The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**
 - **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, (**SDG 13: Climate Action** – Urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, including resilience-building and integration into policies. **SDG 14: Life Below Water** – Conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources, addressing pollution, overfishing, and acidification. **SDG 15: Life on Land** – Sustainable management of forests, combating desertification, halting biodiversity loss, and restoring ecosystems. There are also intersections with goals SDGs 6, 7, 11 and 12.
 - **The International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions** related to environmental health and safety
- ⇨ **ChildFund Alliance Environmental Standards**

Coverage & Responsibilities

This policy applies globally, with roles and responsibilities as follows:

- **The Board:** Ensures Barnfonden's policies are active and in use.
- **The CEO:** Approves the policy and is responsible for its execution.
- **Leadership Team:** Monitors, reviews/updates, and oversees policy implementation.
- **All Staff:** Uphold accountability by adhering to this policy, sustainability standards, and accompanying documents, as outlined in the Code of Conduct.
- **Partners and Contractors:** Partners and contractors are expected to have and implement environmental policies that align with Barnfonden's principles. While we

encourage and support alignment with our standards, we recognize that implementation is the responsibility of each entity.

An Environmental Point Person will oversee staff training, monitor environmental practices, and serve as the primary contact for environmental concerns and complaints.

This policy will be made available on Barnfonden's website.

Principles

The following beliefs underpin Barnfonden's Environment Policy:

Our Core Values: Championing child rights, climate justice, and ecological stewardship are non-negotiable values at the heart of Barnfonden's work. These principles guide every decision we make.

Transparency and Accountability: We are committed to transparency and accountability in our environmental impact. We set meaningful goals, track our progress using recognized methods, and share our learnings openly. Rather than rigid targets, we prioritize continuous improvement and responsible decision-making in response to evolving challenges.

Inclusive Action and Advocacy: We actively involve staff, stakeholders, communities, and children in our environmental initiatives. We amplify children's voices in dialogues with duty bearers, champion citizen mobilization, and advocate for policies that reflect the needs of all, especially future generations. We prioritize locally-led solutions, empowering communities to drive actions that address their unique environmental challenges and priorities.

Shared Responsibility: Our commitment to reducing environmental impact extends across our supply chains, partnerships, and programs. We expect all partners to meet legal and recognized environmental standards and will actively support those striving to strengthen their policies and practices, ensuring progress toward our shared vision of sustainability.

Goals and courses of action

Barnfonden commits to the following goals and courses of action.

Goal 1: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions generated by Barnfonden office activities.

- a) Minimise the environmental impact of our office activities by improving energy efficiency, reducing waste and promoting sustainable practices. Each year, Barnfonden will assess and monitor measurable activities and resources consumed in the office that contribute to carbon emissions. We will use a carbon footprint calculator for consistency (such as <https://klimatkalkylatorn.viskogen.se/>). The markers we will track will include:
 - Electricity consumption
 - Water consumption
 - Postage
 - Employee Commuting (by distance and type of transport),
 - Business/Project—related travel related to Barnfonden staff
 - Office paper
 - Printed matter
 - Laptops & mobile phones
 - Event-related emissions
- b) Reducing energy consumption: To support the reduction in consumption, we will implement a hybrid work policy, requiring staff to work from the office three days per week.; encourage the use of cycling, walking or public transport for commuting or as work transport; minimise the use of heat and cooling sources in addition to the standardised building settings; use water mindfully; prioritise video conferencing and other digital communication over physical meetings; only print when we have to; and reduce the amount of postage we generate by supporting digital communication.
- c) Minimizing plane travel: Staff must justify when and why flights are necessary. All flights must be approved by a member of the Leadership team. Decision criteria include: Is this flight essential, or could the objective be achieved effectively through virtual meetings or by combining it with other necessary travel to minimize environmental impact?
- d) Vegetarian food purchasing: Barnfonden will exclusively purchase vegetarian food due to the emissions footprint associated with animal agriculture – one of the largest contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions.
- e) Carbon Offsetting: Barnfonden is committed to mitigating our carbon footprint through responsible offsetting. We prioritize high-quality approaches, including direct investments in nature-based solutions and energy efficiency within our projects, as well as purchasing carbon credits from reputable providers where appropriate.

Goal 2: Reduce other environmental impacts derived from Barnfonden office activities.

Recognizing that our office actions can impact the environment beyond carbon emissions, Barnfonden commits to minimizing these effects through the following measures:

- a) Product purchases: We will refrain from purchasing products with harmful lifecycle impacts, such as those generating waste that contributes to pollution, and using chemicals that degrade biodiversity. We commit to sourcing sustainably produced and certified products such as those bearing Fair Trade, or equivalent labels. Where it is feasible, we will buy second hand and reconditioned office equipment, such as office furniture and phones.
- b) Water conservation: We are committed to mindful water use and will actively promote conservation practices among staff. This includes raising awareness, improving workplace efficiencies—such as optimizing dishwasher use and reconsidering standing coffee pot practices—and identifying further opportunities to reduce water waste.
- c) Waste management: We will promote the concept of reduce, reuse and recycle across all office operations. This includes responsibly recycling office supplies and e-waste; Implementing waste segregation systems in the office to ensure proper disposal of recyclables and compostable materials; reducing single-use plastics and encouraging digital workflows to minimize paper use;
- d) Biodiversity improvements: We will support biodiversity within and around our offices by, for instance, nurturing plants within the office, organising workshops on biodiversity and composting our organic waste.

Goal 3: Educate and inform on climate change mitigation and action, and environmental stewardship.

Barnfonden is committed to equipping its staff, partners, and stakeholders with the knowledge and tools necessary for meaningful climate action and environmental stewardship. We will achieve this through the following actions:

- a) Train staff and project partners on this policy and the cross-cutting issues handbook (which includes Environmental questions relevant for each department).
- b) New staff inductions: Environmental sustainability will be integrated into onboarding processes. New staff will be introduced to the **ChildFund Alliance Environmental Sustainability Standards** and **Crosscutting Issues Handbook** as a core component of their induction.
- c) Programme staff and partners will be trained in the ChildFund Alliance Programme Standards and Climate and Environment Action brief, as well as our Inform/Engage/Prepare; Pressure/State/Response, Now/Soon/Future and SAFE tools, which will ensure a climate/environment lens across all our programme/project work.

These tools provide the detailed guidance of what we should do to ensure we are ‘walking the talk’.

- d) Work collaboratively and in good faith and share knowledge of sustainability best practice that demonstrate how we minimize the risk of environmental harm occurring and take opportunities to contribute towards environmental wellbeing.

Goal 4: Advance climate change mitigation and preparedness actions and foster environmental stewardship in our programs and projects.

Barnfonden is committed to integrating climate-smart solutions and environmental sustainability into all our programs and projects. Our guiding principle is to "do no harm" and strive to "build better." To achieve this, we will: Promote the uptake of energy efficiency, climate-smart and eco-friendly practices, and environmental stewardship.

- a) Encourage circular economy actions by reducing waste, reusing resources, and recycling materials to extend the lifecycle of products and minimize environmental impact.
- b) Promote Anticipatory Action to reduce climate-related risks and Safe Schools initiative to protect children and educational facilities from climate and environmental hazards.
- c) Promote our environmental stance through our communications platforms, where we amplify child rights and the environment inspiring action
- d) Conduct environmental risk assessments in projects, assessing how our projects can be more efficient & sustainable.
- e) Raise the voices of children in our advocacy and communication, ensuring they can meaningfully contribute to decisions affecting their future.