

ACFID Climate Action Framework Analysis and Planning Part 2 Mitigation Case Studies

AUGUST 2023



AUSTRALIAN
COUNCIL
FOR
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT



Institute for
Sustainable
Futures

Summary

The intended audience of this document are ACFID members, with the purpose to provide grounded and practical examples of best practice for climate action. This document is part of a series of outputs produced by ACFID and the University of Technology, Institute for Sustainable Futures, exploring examples of climate action best practice across the development sector.

Output 1 is called ‘Integrating climate change action across the Australian international development sector: Setting the scene for ANGOs’, providing an overview of climate action integration in the Australian NGO sector.

Output 2 is called Integrating climate change action across the Australian international development sector: Enablers of best practice and included five case studies highlighting examples of best practice across the adaptation and environmental restoration pillars of ACFID’s Climate Action Framework.

This report is the third output of the series and provides three case studies which are linked to the climate change mitigation pillar of ACFID’s Climate Action Framework. Case studies demonstrate the various approaches some organisations have taken to address the cause of climate change through their operations, programs and policy and advocacy efforts.

Case examples demonstrating climate change mitigation aspects of ACFID’s Climate Action Framework:

CASE STUDY 1:
DECARBONISING AUSTRALIAN
VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL

CASE STUDY 2:
LORU FOREST CARBON PROJECT

CASE STUDY 3:
OXFAM’S ADVOCACY ON A JUST TRANSITION

Table 1 provides a summary of the lessons learned from the case studies. Lessons describe practical and evidence-based guidance to NGOs on how to consider climate change mitigation action through decarbonising programs and operations, promoting low carbon development and advocating for global emission reduction.

TABLE ONE: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE THREE CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1: DECARBONISING AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL	CASE STUDY 2: LORU FOREST CARBON PROJECT	CASE STUDY 3: OXFAM’S ADVOCACY ON A JUST TRANSITION
Supportive senior management and staff engagement are key for implementing organisational change towards low-carbon approaches. Top-down leadership, policy, and governance, and bottom-up staff participation allow staff to meaningfully engage in sustainability activities.	There is a clear role for NGO’s community development skills, expertise and experience in low carbon development projects. As demand for innovative climate action in development grows, NGOs will have an important role to ensure human rights are protected, community perspectives are included, and equitable benefits reach all parts of communities.	Linking advocacy efforts to organisational policies and programs creates a coordinated and coherent approach to advocacy. Doing so creates a coordinated and coherent approach to advocacy, with examples and successes from communities able to be a key part of the advocacy story being told.
Clear entry points for climate action support tangible change. AVI’s Environmental Sustainability Policy helps senior management make informed decisions on investments for low-carbon activities.	Local knowledge brokers are key to the success of the project. Working through local partners and valuing their role as knowledge brokers is critical for effective climate action in low carbon development.	Create an approach to advocacy that aligns with organisational strengths. NGOs have strengths in their program work that they can bring to an advocacy perspective and find their niche on which to focus advocacy efforts.
Having a clear plan helps to document realistic ambition. Developing a plan that includes achievable activities with genuine low-carbon outcomes and influences long-term behaviour change.	Partnerships are foundational to success. Building trust and mutual cross-cultural understanding take time. Ongoing investments in relationships and partnerships is a worthy use of time and resources.	Working in alliances and networks helps to amplify key messages and build momentum towards a just transition. Joint advocacy approaches can amplify messages about of the urgency of the changes that are needed – and the solutions that are available now.
Maximising the multiple benefits of low carbon programming enables progress in different areas. AVI explores new approaches to reduce its carbon footprint, empowering partner organisations and supporting partner countries’ localisation agenda.	There are multiple and intersecting benefits of low carbon development that can be leveraged. Taking a systems-thinking approach when supporting low carbon development projects helps to consider the multiple and diverse outcomes relevant to the community.	Utilise parliamentary and government processes to support advocacy efforts. By understanding and utilising these processes and leveraging available tools, NGOs can more effectively advocate for their cause.
	Look to existing skills in environmental and social safeguarding as the foundation to build on. While small and medium NGOs might not have technical capacity in low carbon development, their experience with environmental and social safeguarding can provide a foundation to build further skills.	

1. Introduction

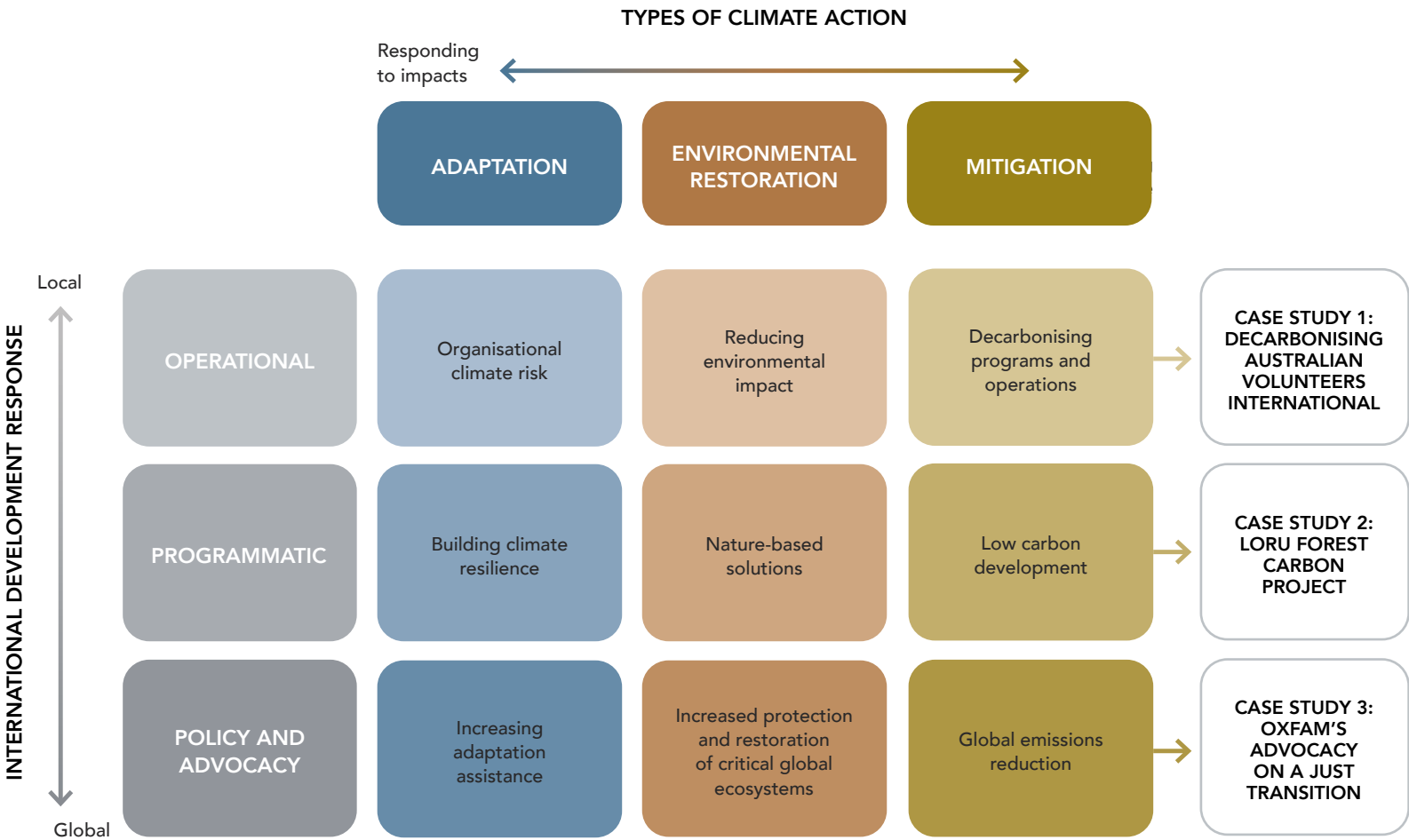
1.1 CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

Climate change poses major risks to sustainable development by causing substantial damage, unrecoverable losses and widespread impacts on ecosystems, human lives, infrastructure, and societies. Communities experiencing poverty and marginalised people are affected first and worst by any climate change-related events due to pre-existing vulnerabilities. Addressing climate change is therefore a critical issue for the international development sector because of the interlinkages between climate change, poverty, injustice and inequality. The system in which development sector actors operate for integrating climate change considerations in their programming needs to change. System transformation of the development sector is needed to ensure climate change does not reverse development progress. All ACFID members have a role to play in this system transformation, which includes integration of climate action within aid and development programs.

1.2 ACFID’S CLIMATE ACTION FRAMEWORK

Given the clear need for climate action within the international development sector, ACFID set out to better understand members’ needs and priorities for integrating climate risk across policy, programs and practice. ACFID identified that NGOs working in the international development sector recognise the need to integrate climate change considerations more effectively across their programs. In 2021, ACFID introduced its Climate Action Framework (Figure 1) to support Australian international development NGOs increase their engagement and action in climate change. The Framework classifies types of climate change action, highlighting a diversity of approaches and the relationship between them. This resource builds on the Framework to provide more detailed guidance for ACFID members to integrate climate change effectively.

FIGURE 1: ACFID CLIMATE ACTION FRAMEWORK



BOX 1: APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This document has been prepared by the University of Technology, Institute for Sustainable Futures (UTS-ISF). UTS-ISF, in partnership with the ACFID DPC Climate Action Group and ACFID Climate Policy and Practice Committee (CPPC) identified three NGOs who are progressing climate change mitigation at different levels in their work. Evidence and findings presented in this case example are drawn from two-step data collection.

Primary data collection: Researchers reached out to the nominated NGO focal persons and organised interviews with key staff from each of the NGOs. The interviewee responded to open-ended questions regarding the specific case study in which they were engaged.

Secondary data collection: UTS-ISF conducted a document review using available literature to identify relevant information on climate change mitigation approaches of the NGO.

Data analysis was conducted to develop the case studies and link the findings with ‘Enablers of best practice’ and the ACFID Climate Action Framework.

UTS-ISF and ACFID DPC CAG maintained ongoing collaboration to ensure the Case Studies are presented in a way that is fit-for-purpose for the ANGO sector and ACFID members.

1.3 PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The intended audience of this document are ACFID members, with the purpose to provide grounded and practical examples of best practice for climate action – with a focus on climate change mitigation.

In 2022, ACFID’s Development Practice Committee (DPC) Climate Action Group (CAG) partnered with researchers at the University of Technology, Institute for Sustainable Futures (UTS-ISF) to support the operationalisation of the ACFID Climate Action Framework.

Two research outputs were produced:

Output 1: Integrating climate change action across the Australian international development sector: Setting the scene for ANGOs

Output 2: Integrating climate change action across the Australian international development sector: Enablers of best practice.

The research identified six enablers of best practice (see Section 1.4), drawing from experiences of climate change experts and sector leaders working in the international development sector.

This document presents further findings and the third output from the research, providing three case studies which are linked to the climate change mitigation pillar of ACFID’s Climate Action Framework.

1.4 ENABLERS OF BEST PRACTICE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE INTEGRATION

Six enablers for effective climate change integration identified in the Enablers of best practice document are described below. While enablers 1 and 2 may be considered as foundational, supporting the practical implementation of the remaining four, all enablers have been developed to be accessible and may be used as entry points for action to support climate change integration across the breadth of NGO’s work.



ENABLER 1: MULTI-YEAR, CORE FUNDING AND FLEXIBLE FUNDING OPTIONS

Donor support through multi-year and core-funding and funding with flexible outcome options provide NGOs with adequate time to build relationships, better understand context, define outcomes with local actors, witness project outcomes, and make changes to more effectively integrate climate change considerations into the program.

EXAMPLE OF ENABLER:

The Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) is a ten year (2017 – 2027) multi-country, multi-partner approach to support disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and resilience building. Over the ten year timeframe, project managers and partners are able to observe how project activities are reducing disaster impacts, and modify approaches to adapt to changing conditions.

ENABLER 2: PARTNERSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS, AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FOR TRANSFORMATIVE AND INNOVATIVE CLIMATE ACTION

Long-term partnerships, ongoing engagement and knowledge exchange between ANGOs and local partners promote new ways of working, including innovative approaches to climate change integration.

EXAMPLE OF ENABLER:

Under the Shifting the Power Coalition program, ActionAid Australia partnered with a diverse set of women-led Pacific civil society organisations already working across the Pacific on disaster resilience and humanitarian response. ActionAid recognised the existing knowledge and capacity of the coalition members and developed genuine partnerships through ongoing relationships and knowledge sharing activities. This helped Pacific partners to present their collective and amplified voice at regional platforms.

ENABLER 3: ONGOING AND HOLISTIC APPROACH RECOGNISING THE DYNAMICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

An ongoing approach is needed because of the dynamic and often unpredictable nature of climate change impacts, which require responses to be constantly recalibrating and reassessing levels of risk. A holistic understanding of communities' strengths and priorities should also be reflected in the integration approach.

EXAMPLE OF ENABLER:

Community-led Adaptation Pathways in Solomon Islands Project took a holistic approach and considered climate change as one of a number of risks a community is facing, with a systems thinking lens. This enabled a more holistic consideration of community priorities and opportunities and think about the bigger picture linking climate change with other issues.

ENABLER 4: PRIORITISING CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION WITHIN ORGANISATIONS

Strategic and practical prioritisation of climate action are both important to ensure NGOs strategic prioritisation of climate change action is operationalised through practical planning and activities.

EXAMPLE OF ENABLER:

The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) 'Mangoro Market Meri Project' in Papua New Guinea is essentially a livelihood project. However, because of TNC's strong organisational policy on climate change integration, project staff were directed to consider climate risks in the project activities and enabled the project to enhance sustainable livelihood through a focus on conservation and restoration of mangrove environments.

ENABLER 5: STRENGTH-BASED APPROACHES THAT RECOGNISE AND CHAMPION TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, LOCAL PRIORITIES AND DIVERSE CLIMATE LEADERSHIP

Valuing and prioritising traditional and local knowledge alongside Western science-based knowledge (e.g., climate change projections) facilitates effective mutual learning between communities, local partners and ANGOs. Additionally, engaging local leaders and knowledge brokers within communities and government has greater potential to meaningfully engage the community and enable successful climate action.

EXAMPLE OF ENABLER:

ActionAid Vanuatu's Women's Wetem Weta (Women's Weather Watch) program enables local women to study and interpret technical weather information and disseminate early warning information within their communities in accessible local language. The program recognises women's capability to effectively communicate with community members and supports women to champion Vanuatu's disaster preparedness agenda through strengthening women's climate knowledge and leadership skills.

ENABLER 6: RECOGNISING THE IMPORTANCE OF BOTH 'WHAT' AND 'HOW' OF CLIMATE CHANGE INTEGRATION

Consideration of both the 'what' and 'how' of climate change and disaster resilience integration is critical progress climate change resilience into NGOs' development programming. The 'what' of climate action refers to the content focus of integration, for example, the latest climate science, impacts and projections, risk assessments and integration of climate change into sectors. The 'how' of climate action refers to the process of integration and needs to consider power dynamics between external and local actors.

EXAMPLE OF ENABLER:

AHP's Disaster READY Program provides Pacific communities with climate and disaster knowledge to strengthen community resilience. One of the program partners developed guidance on climate change adaptation and disaster resilience awareness messaging from a theological perspective, supported by biblical texts. The guide was made for climate change adaptation messaging for faith-engaged communities (what) through culturally appropriate channels of Church leadership (how), which brought about positive behavioural change within the target communities.

Photo: Eddy Maliliu (left), Shefa Provincial Disaster and Climate Change Officer, and community member Phelina Cyrus discuss a project to plant vetiver grass on the shoreline of her island - part of an effort to slow the erosion of the beaches that has accompanied sea-level rise. Photo: Elizabeth Stevens/Oxfam America

2. Case Studies

This section illustrates three case studies of how Australian NGOs and their partners are leading in climate change mitigation across operations, programming and advocacy efforts. Case studies were selected by UTS-ISF researchers and ACFID Development Practice Committee to demonstrate best practice examples of climate change mitigation and low carbon development.

The case studies are linked with ACFID's Climate Action Framework – specifically the mitigation pillar - to provide examples of how NGOs might start considering mitigation and low carbon development in their work. Multiple enablers of best practice are also present within each case study, and these are highlighted to illustrate how these enablers support the success of the project.

CASE STUDY 1:

Decarbonising Australian Volunteers International

Australian Volunteers International (AVI) supports effective and sustainable development outcomes through partnership and connecting people, organisations and communities within and beyond Australia. This case study demonstrates AVI’s approaches to decarbonise its programs and operations and provides lessons for other organisations looking to integrate low-carbon actions.

LOCATION:

AVI partners with local organisations in 27 countries in Asia, the Pacific, Africa and Middle East: Bhutan; Cambodia; eSwatini; Federated States of Micronesia; Fiji; Indonesia; Kiribati; Laos; Lesotho; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; Palau; Philippines; PNG; Republic of the Marshall Islands; Samoa; Solomon Islands; South Africa; Sri Lanka; Tanzania; Kenya; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Tuvalu; Vanuatu; Vietnam.

ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVE:

AVI aims to reduce poverty, promote human rights and gender equality, increase access to health and education services and protect the environment through ethical volunteering and partnering programs¹.
AVI supports partner organisations in achieving their own development goals by recruiting skilled volunteers from Australia through the Australian Volunteers Program and fostering strong reciprocal relationships between Australia and global communities².

LINKS TO ACFID CLIMATE ACTION FRAMEWORK:

- OPERATIONAL
- Decarbonising programs and operations

DEMONSTRATION OF ENABLERS:

- 1: Multi-year, core funding and flexible funding options
- 2: Partnerships, relationships, and knowledge exchange
- 3: Ongoing and holistic approach
- 4: Prioritising climate change action within organisations
- 5: Strength-based approaches, recognising traditional and local knowledge
- 6: Recognising the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of climate change integration

CLIMATE CHANGE INTEGRATION APPROACH:

This case study provides an example of an organisation taking intentional steps to decarbonise its programs and operations, whilst also taking a holistic approach environmental and social sustainability. Five key highlights of AVI’s organisational climate change mitigation approach are provided below.

STRONG ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The importance of environmental sustainability – including the importance of decarbonising its operations – is demonstrated by its senior leadership, and visible through its governance structures. AVI has in place an Environmental Sustainability Policy, Action Plan and Committee to maintain progress, accountability and focus on tangible outcomes that result in mitigating its carbon emissions - these are described below.



Photo: Australian Volunteers Program providing remote volunteering support. Photo credit: Harjono Djoyobisono, Australian Volunteers Program.

Environmental Sustainability Policy: AVI developed an Environmental Sustainability Policy to incorporate climate action into business strategy and operations (Enabler 4). The Environmental Policy informs the senior management to take strategic decisions on climate change integration activities. AVI recognises its budget limitations, and the policy reflects realistic ambitions of the organisation on where it can invest. The Environmental Sustainability Policy is updated every two years to identify new areas where AVI may invest and take informed practical decisions (Enabler 3).

Environmental Sustainability Action Plan: AVI launched its Environmental Sustainability Action Plan 2023/2024 to make environmental sustainability an integral part of AVI-led programs at the operation level. The Action Plan provides specific actions for the organisation’s mitigation actions including waste reduction, energy efficiency, sustainable water consumption, purchasing sustainable goods and products and reducing the environmental impact associated with staff travel. While the Environmental Action Plan has been introduced for AVI’s Melbourne office, AVI’s offices in the countries in which it operates are also developing and implementing their own Actions Plans.

“We have an objective to make environmental sustainability an integral part of AVI.”
Melanie Gow, AVI CEO.

Environmental Sustainability Committee: AVI established an Environmental Sustainability Committee to ensure AVI has up-to-date, innovative and effective environmentally sustainable policies, procedures and programs that reduce AVI’s environmental footprint. During 2021-22, the committee provided ongoing leadership and engaged in different activities to learn, evolve and improve environmental sustainability practices across all areas of the organisation. The AVI Chairperson’s membership on the Environmental Sustainability Committee highlights AVI’s organisational priority on climate action and sustainability. The Committee’s membership is open to all staff, which encourages staff across the organisations to participate in the conversation, share new ideas and champion climate change integration activities within the organisation (Enabler 2).

1 See AVI website
2 See AVI volunteer programs

STAFF ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

AVI recognise the importance of strong senior leadership to support organisational climate action as described above but also understands the need to encourage staff ownership to ensure AVI's policies, strategies and actions are genuinely taken up across the organisation. AVI provides staff with various options to engage on environmental sustainability issues, including through the Environmental Sustainability Committee where they are encouraged to voice concerns and suggest activities to support the organisation to reduce emissions and its environmental impacts.



Engaging your staff is a fantastic way from the start. They help set the KPIs and goals and they will buy into them because they are helping set them up."

Melanie Gow, AVI CEO.

CONCRETE ACTIONS FOR LOW-CARBON OUTCOMES

AVI took intentional and strategic mitigation decisions to embed low-carbon and emissions reduction activities within the organisation. For example, the following actions have been implemented:

- In its Melbourne office refurbishment, AVI worked closely with architects to include low-carbon aspects of office design (e.g. using recycled timber and other recycled materials in the build).
- No staff car spaces are available at AVI's Melbourne office. However, staff have access to secure and accessible bicycle parking, showers and lockers to encourage active transport.
- A focus on waste minimisation across the organisation, e.g., staff are not provided rubbish bins at their desks and are discouraged to print, which has encouraged waste minimisation.
- A focus on procurement, with environmental sustainability integrated into purchasing decisions (e.g. selecting suppliers who value and promote sustainability in products).
- Setting ambitious but realistic goals and targets to reduce water consumption.

Although the new approaches caused initial discomfort amongst some staff (e.g. reconsidering their mode of transport to work given the lack of car parking on site), over time there have been positive behavioural changes among the staff at the organisation. The AVI interviewee for this case study also noted the importance of setting baselines to enable the tracking and measuring of change. Baselines needed to be set once the main impacts of COVID-19 on AVI's operations had lessened.



Anecdotal, we see the impacts of these activities. The bike racks are full every day."

Melanie Gow, AVI CEO.

OFFSET CARBON EMISSIONS FROM FLIGHTS

AVI is demonstrating a commitment to environmental sustainability by offsetting emissions from international flights taken by the Australian Volunteer Program's volunteers and staff (Enabler 4). For example, from July 2021 to June 2022, the Program volunteers and employees took total 352 flights aggregating 369,633 miles and emitting 142 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. To offset these emissions, the organisation invested \$4,024 and purchased carbon credits from a project in Vietnam that supported the Bac Lieu Wind Farm³.

EXPLORING LOW-CARBON PROGRAMMING APPROACHES

AVI is also exploring partnership and volunteer programming modalities that have lower carbon emissions (Enabler 3). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated innovation when most volunteers were repatriated, and international flights were no longer possible. This led to the launch of a remote volunteering component of the Australian Volunteers Program and provided further impetus to initiatives that support national volunteering (which is still being explored). Although starting as an alternative option during the COVID-19 pandemic, remote volunteering has demonstrated lower-carbon modalities of volunteerism, and AVI continues to support hybrid and remote volunteering options to ensure continued low-carbon volunteering efforts. Initiatives that promote national volunteerism and capacity building of local partners also have the added benefit of empowering local volunteers, partner organisations and supporting the localisation agenda (Enabler 5).

LESSONS FOR NGOS FROM SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES OF CASE STUDY

Supportive senior management and opportunities for staff engagement are key. Organisational change supporting low-carbon approaches is enabled by top-down senior leadership, policy and governance, coupled with bottom-up staff engagement and participation. Both approaches have seen genuine change at AVI at the organisational level and allowed staff to meaningfully engage in sustainability activities.

Clear entry points for climate action support tangible change. AVI's Environmental Sustainability Policy helps the organisation's senior management make informed decisions on the investment of resources for sustainability and low-carbon activities.

Having a clear plan helps to document realistic ambition. Developing a plan that includes achievable activities with genuine low-carbon outcomes. Over time, these activities become normalised within the organisation, reflecting long-term behaviour change (e.g. riding bikes to work, reducing waste).

Maximising the multiple benefits of low carbon programming enables progress in different areas. AVI is considering and testing new and alternative modalities of partnership and volunteering to reduce AVI's carbon footprint, which is subsequently empowering partner organisations and supporting localisation agenda of partner countries.

CONCLUSION

This case study provides examples of best practice for mitigating climate change at AVI's operational level. The integration efforts taken by AVI encourage sustainable practices and support good development outcomes. AVI's integration approaches can be a good example for ACFID members and support ACFID members to identify accessible entry points for integration and to begin, continue and/or strengthen their climate change integration actions.

CASE STUDY 2:

Loru Forest Carbon Project

This case study focuses on a forest-based carbon credit project in Vanuatu supported by Live & Learn and the Nakau Programme in partnership with the local Indigenous community. The case study links to the ‘Programmatic’ level of ACFID’s Climate Action Framework and describes how forest carbon projects can mitigate climate change impacts and support Indigenous landowners at the same time.

While the case study focuses on carbon credits, it is not expected that all Australian NGOs move towards focusing on this type of project. Rather, key lessons for Australian NGOs are highlighted, showing how NGO strengths and knowledge of environmental and social safeguarding (including DFAT’s Environmental and Social Safeguards policy) can play important roles in low carbon development projects.

DONOR/FUNDING PARTNER:

The project was initially implemented by Nakau⁴ and Live & Learn Vanuatu. EU was the original donor from 2012 to 2015. The project is currently self-sustaining and receives technical support from both Nakau and Live & Learn Vanuatu.

LOCATION:

Khole village, East Santo in Vanuatu.

TIMEFRAME

Began in 2012 and has a 30 year cycle.

PARTNER NGOS AND ORGANISATIONS

Nakau	Live & Learn
Live & Learn Vanuatu	Serthiac Rangers (Community)

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of the Loru Forest Carbon Project is to protect and restore rainforest through conservation carbon credits, while also supporting people, nature, culture and contributing to climate resilience. The project has a strong livelihood focus which is achieved through generating employment and income opportunities, enhancing food resilience, and promoting sustainable markets.

The project uses an innovative financing model that prioritises Indigenous land rights and stewardship, and secures payment for ecosystem services, resulting in income generation from carbon sales through a self-sustaining approach.

LINKS TO ACFID CLIMATE ACTION FRAMEWORK:

- PROGRAMMATIC
- Low carbon development

DEMONSTRATION OF ENABLERS:

- 1: Multi-year, core funding and flexible funding options
- 2: Partnerships, relationships, and knowledge exchange
- 3: Ongoing and holistic approach
- 4: Prioritising climate change action within organisations
- 5: Strength-based approaches, recognising traditional and local knowledge
- 6: Recognising the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of climate change integration



Photo: Serthiac member harvests local greens from the food gardens in the agro-forest plots which run next to the Loru Conservation Area. Photo credit: Alex McClean/Nakau.

BOX 1: THE NAKAU METHODOLOGY

The Nakau Methodology is a set of instructions and guidelines that enable Indigenous landowners to produce Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) Units — also known as forest conservation carbon credits. These credits are sold and then reinvested by the landowners in local initiatives that support the cultural, social and environmental goals of Indigenous communities.

At the heart of the Nakau Methodology is a commitment to sustain benefits flowing to landowners — which is why all projects are owned by Indigenous communities. The Nakau methodology takes a community development partnership approach that is fair and transparent. Mutually beneficial collaborations that manage risks and optimise the conditions required for a successful PES projects ensure their work can stand the test of time. (Source: <https://www.nakau.org/methodology.html>)

CLIMATE CHANGE INTEGRATION APPROACH:

Nakau started working with the Serakar Clan in East Santo in 2012 to better protect the forest by establishing a Community Conservation Area under the Vanuatu Environment and Biodiversity Act (2010). Nakau continued to support the community by using the Nakau Methodology (see Box 1) to develop a source of income through conservation carbon credits.

Over more than a decade, the Loru Forest Carbon Project has embedded the connection between conservation and community resilience in the social fabric of the entire Khole village community. The project has contributed to the regeneration of the Loru forest and enriched biodiversity with birds, coconut crabs and other wildlife returning to the forest. A healthy forest also means the community is supported with resources because the forest area is likely to bounce back quickly after extreme weather events.

The extended Serakar family and community of around 50 people are now managing and protecting 293 hectares of kastom (customary, traditional) rainforest and reducing 3029 tonnes of CO₂ verified emissions each year. In 2019, the project won the United Nations Equator Award for local innovative climate solutions.

4 Nakau is a social purpose company wholly owned by Live & Learn Environmental Education, a not-for-profit NGO registered in Australia.

The role of all partners has been, and continues to be, instrumental in the success of the project. Five key highlights of Nakau and Live & Learn's approach to low carbon development, in partnership with local communities, are described below.

The benefits and ownership of the project are retained by the local community. The project was established to enable the Serakar Clan to lead the work in the forest under their business name, Serthiac. The carbon credits remain under Serthiac's ownership and there is equitable sharing of financial benefits, with at least 80% remaining in Vanuatu⁵. The money Serthiac receives through the carbon credit payments employs Serthiac Rangers to undertake conservation work protecting the forest. This demonstrates strong community ownership and local leadership (Enabler 5).



... Since the project started, the community has benefited. Serthiac has used the income to help build our houses, for water tanks and for school fees for the children. It is helping build the Nakamal are everyone within the community has benefitted."

Serthiac member.

See Box 2 for additional outcomes of the project, and examples of how this low carbon development project supports community resilience in a holistic way.

BOX 2: POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF THE LORU FOREST PROJECT

- Carbon sequestration
- Enriched biodiversity
- Increased food security through food gardens
- Local employment of Serthiac Rangers as well as payment to other families outside Serakar to work in the forest area clearing the invasive merremia weed
- Income from carbon credit sales funding water tanks, school fees, solar lights and set-ups costs for small businesses like shops
- Women's economic empowerment through promoting women-led small businesses
- Women's leadership through their involvement in the Serthiac Board, Finance Committee and Land Management Committee

The Loru Project is enabled through a partnership approach. Each partner has a clear role in making the project work (Enabler 2). Nakau's strong localisation strategy, emphasising local leadership and working with local partners, sets the foundation for the partnership approach. As noted above, the project is community owned, by the Serakar Clan. Live & Learn Vanuatu staff are based in Port Vila and Luganville, which is around 40 minutes from the Loru forest in Santo, and are available for responsive and ongoing visits to support actions on the ground (Enabler 3). Live & Learn Vanuatu access international support from Nakau and Live & Learn Network office in Melbourne through regular online meetings without the need for Australian staff to travel frequently to Vanuatu. This also demonstrates an organisational commitment from Nakau and Live & Learn on low carbon development through the reduced need for flights to Vanuatu (Enabler 4).

Long-term timeframes and flexibility in design are key. The Nakau Methodology recognises that time (2-3 years) and flexibility is needed to establish a forest carbon project in a cross-cultural context. At the same time, projects such as the Loru project have a 30-year cycle once established and registered (Enabler 1). Given these long timeframes, Nakau and Live & Learn Vanuatu take the time to build relationships with the Indigenous landowners, and an understanding of the local context (Enabler 2). This long-term approach has ensured mutually beneficial collaborations that manage risks and optimise the conditions required for a successful 'payment for ecosystem services' project that can stand the test of time (Enabler 3).

A strong focus on both 'what' technical support is needed and 'how' the project is implemented. Nakau has strong technical skills in forestry and ecosystem services, and are adept at navigating the carbon credit market, ensuring the traded carbon credits meet international standard for community-led payment for ecosystem services projects. These technical skills are complemented by Nakau and Live & Learn's approach to local implementation which is community driven as described above. A success of the project is the dual focus on the technical side (the 'what') and the way this translates to local implementation (the 'how') (Enabler 6).

LESSONS FOR NGOS FROM SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES OF LORU FOREST CARBON PROJECT

There is a clear role for community development skills, expertise and experience in low carbon development projects. This case study demonstrates the importance of working in partnership, cross-cultural competencies and genuine appreciation of the localisation agenda to achieve successful outcomes. As the need for innovative climate action increases across the development sector, low carbon development investment opportunities will further arise. NGOs have an important role to play to help ensure human rights are protected, community perspectives are included, and equitable benefits reach all parts of communities. For example, NGOs will have roles to play in decentralised renewable energy projects, blue carbon initiatives and forest management projects – both in terms of the technical inputs as well as the community development aspects and knowledge brokering roles, where NGO skills are already well developed.



Carbon markets are highly technical, and there is a big gap in shared understanding between carbon market actors and customary landowners in the Pacific. We spend a lot of time working with our local partners and communities, in local language building their knowledge of carbon markets, how to benefit from them and how to protect their rights while engaging with them"

Chief Operating Officer, Nakau Programme.

5 60% of financial benefits go to Serthiac, 20% to Live & Learn Vanuatu and 20% got to Nakau

Local knowledge brokers are key to the success of the project. Live & Learn Vanuatu acted as knowledge broker and intermediary between Nakau and the local Indigenous landowners and played a key role in the project. ANGOs engage in different ways with local partners in the countries in which they implement programs. This project intentionally leverages Live & Learn Vanuatu's understanding of the local cultural, political and environmental context in which the project functions. For example, Live & Learn Vanuatu played a crucial role in developing and negotiating the implementation of the Tabu system, traditionally used for natural protection, across an entire conservation area within a carbon project. This ensured that the legal protection of the project area held cultural significance and could be enforced through cultural means. Working through local partners and valuing their role as knowledge brokers is critical for effective climate action in low carbon development.

Partnerships are foundational to success. This case study has highlighted how the partnership between Nakau, Live & Learn Vanuatu and the Serakar Clan underpins the success of the project.



... Without our local partners and the relationships of trust we have with them, we would not see these values so strongly built into the fabric of the projects we run together with them..."

Chief Operating Officer, Nakau Programme.

The lesson for other NGOs looking to engage in, or strengthen their work in low carbon development, is that these partnerships take time to build trust and mutual cross-cultural understanding. Ongoing investments in relationships and partnerships is a worthy use of time and resources.

There are multiple and intersecting benefits of low carbon development that can be leveraged. The benefits of this project extend well beyond emissions reduction through carbon sequestration and income generation from the sale and trade of carbon credits. The subsequent and cascading outcomes achieved through this project (see Box 2 for examples) show how community resilience can be strengthened and reinforced in multiple ways.



The Loru Forest Carbon Project is one of our successful stories. The voluntary carbon market offers direct benefits to our people. We have managed to produce and sell carbon credits from the Loru Project. Buyers from as far as Europe have visited. It is a great story that shows how people and organisations can come together from different countries to reduce emissions, but also increase resilience to climate change in our vulnerable communities."

Project Staff, Live & Learn Vanuatu.

The lesson for NGOs is to take a systems-thinking approach when supporting low carbon development projects and consider the multiple and diverse outcomes relevant to the community. A community can become more resilient and experience improved wellbeing if a project considers income generation as well as GEDSI, governance, knowledge sharing, and strengthening local capacity – as has been achieved in the Loru Forest Carbon Project.

Look to existing skills in environmental and social safeguarding as the foundation to build on. While small and medium NGOs might not have technical capacity in low carbon development, their experience with environmental and social safeguarding can provide a foundation upon which further skills can be built.

CONCLUSION

The Loru Carbon Forest Project is a best practice example of low carbon development. The approach partners have taken demonstrates the important roles NGOs play in brokering relationships and knowledge exchange, and maintaining a clear focus on human rights, equity and local ownership. As transitions towards low carbon development and renewable energy ramp up, there will be increasing opportunities for NGOs to advocate for local communities to ensure their rights are protected and development occurs in sustainable and locally appropriate ways. This case study highlights specific ways NGOs can use their skills and expertise for effective and equitable low carbon development.



CASE STUDY 3:

Oxfam Australia’s Advocacy on a Just Transition

Oxfam Australia work towards transformational change to the systems and power structures within public, private and NGO sectors in Australia, and the countries in which it implements its programs. Oxfam Australia’s policy and advocacy initiatives discourage emissions intensive activities and promote transition to a clean energy future. This case study describes Oxfam Australia’s approach to advocacy for a ‘just energy transition’ contributing to emissions reduction and low carbon development.

LOCATION:

Australia and the countries in which Oxfam Australia works, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Indonesia, Jordan, Laos, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Syria, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, Tonga and Yemen.

ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVE:

Oxfam Australia aims to tackle inequality and injustice, which are complex and interrelated systemic problems that cause poverty. The organisation works towards the vision of creating a just and sustainable world without inequalities that contribute to poverty.

LINKS TO ACFID CLIMATE ACTION FRAMEWORK:

- POLICY AND ADVOCACY
- Global emissions reduction

DEMONSTRATION OF ENABLERS:

- 1: Multi-year, core funding and flexible funding options
- 2: Partnerships, relationships, and knowledge exchange
- 3: Ongoing and holistic approach
- 4: Prioritising climate change action within organisations
- 5: Strength-based approaches, recognising traditional and local knowledge
- 6: Recognising the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of climate change integration

CLIMATE CHANGE INTEGRATION APPROACH

Oxfam Australia’s integration of climate change has been established by embedding climate justice as one of the key components of inequality and injustice, that align with their organisational values. Oxfam Australia actively engages with media, political processes, and diverse stakeholders in Australia and in the countries where programs are implemented, advocating for changes that address climate injustice through knowledge sharing and thought leadership. Six specific areas that Oxfam Australia has focused their advocacy efforts for a ‘just transition’ (see Box 3) are provided below.

Oxfam Australia has developed a coordinated and strategic advocacy approach to a ‘just transition’. Oxfam Australia’s Climate Justice Thematic Strategy 2021 – 2025 outlines how programs are linked to policy, advocacy and campaigns. A key aspect of strategic advocacy is therefore linking advocacy efforts to programs on the ground, as well as building relationships (see below), and providing thought leadership. Oxfam Australia is currently organising forums and roundtables that they organise and facilitate, where voices from Pacific (mostly young people) and First Nations representatives are present to share their perspectives (Enabler 5). Members of Parliament (MPs), other government representatives and cross-bench members are invited to hear these voices. Experiences of community members’ impacts



Photo: Mohammud, 27, water bureau head in Ararso says, standing next to the 56-panel solar array that Oxfam installed and now powers the system. Photo credit: Petterik Wiggers / Oxfam.

of climate change are shared at roundtables, and they have the opportunity to share their vision for the solutions. This approach leaves more of an impact on the audience, as they can hear directly from communities.



Oxfam Australia recognises the strong interplay between programs and advocacy efforts... Part of what Oxfam does is bring in local stories and experiences of community on the ground to decision makers. Impacted communities know the best solutions they need.”

Oxfam Australia’s Policy and Advocacy Lead.

Advocacy through thought leadership is also offered through policy papers that bring together our program’s experiences with innovative and ethically grounded policy thinking, and through partnerships with academics on climate justice issues, e.g. a current advocacy position paper being drafted in collaboration with UNSW on Australia’s obligations to a just transition.

BOX 3: OXFAM’S DEFINITION OF A ‘JUST TRANSITION’

Just and fair transitions can best be characterised as moving from where we are today towards an environmentally sustainable economy that is no longer reliant on fossil fuel energy and contributes to decent work for all, social inclusion, and the eradication of poverty. It is a systemic and whole-of-economy approach to sustainability that aims to reduce the impact of job losses and industry phaseout on workers and communities, while producing green and decent jobs and industries, and healthy communities. This includes strategies that democratise, decentralise and diversify economic activity, while redistributing resources and power from traditional forms of energy generation, distribution and consumption. (Source: Oxfam’s Climate Justice Strategy)

Focusing on long term relationships with key individuals, such as Members of Parliament, helps keep climate change on the agenda of the government. Oxfam Australia recognises the importance of building a relationship and trust with MPs (Enabler 2). There are different objectives of these relationships. For example, Oxfam Australia prides itself as a reliable voice with accurate climate data (see below), and they can support MPs to champion climate change issues with confidence and legitimacy. Oxfam Australia also uses their reputation in using data to tackle inequality to hold MPs and the government to account, for example, on climate finance including for a Just Energy Transition. Oxfam Australia strives to find a balance between holding MPs accountable and acknowledging their strengths and accomplishments so far.



Building relationships with MPs who might become the champions for the issues you are advocating on is key. If they become passionate about an issue, they will help keep the issue on the agenda in parliament or in the government.”

Oxfam Australia’s Policy and Advocacy Lead.

Using parliamentary and government processes to influence the public discourse in Australia. Oxfam Australia recognises that there are many parliamentary tools to support advocacy efforts for a just energy transition. For example, Oxfam Australia regularly write submissions and speak at parliamentary inquiries, respond to consultations, and provide pre-budget submissions on the Federal Budget. These approaches provide a message to government that climate change remains on the public agenda, and are tools that the development sector can utilise to advocate for meaningful change around climate issues (Enabler 6).

Maintaining a focus on facts, data and clearly presented information focused on climate finance and Australia’s fair share of climate action. Oxfam Australia is renowned for compiling and presenting data to draw attention to inequalities. Data, facts and case examples help Oxfam Australia connect at a personal level and draw attention to what more is needed to reduce inequalities.



At Oxfam we put equality at the centre of our work. We analyse things from the perspective of reducing inequality and poverty, as well as justice, which leads back into the sense of responsibility. We highlight inequality in emissions and impacts, and the need to respond in an equitable way that contributes our fair share.”

Oxfam Australia’s Policy and Advocacy Lead.

Supporting affiliate countries with their approach to advocacy. Oxfam Australia recognises that some affiliate countries have limited civil society space, while others have more scope towards government advocacy. Support is offered by Oxfam International to national bodies (e.g. through our Climate Finance Shadow Reports), providing them with statistics and information at national and international level to present to their government. The data allows the affiliate country offices to advocate more effectively. In some Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Oxfam can also be an important source of information for the government to strengthen their negotiations, helping LDCs to develop their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which include adaptation and loss and damage.



We try and support national offices so they can do effective advocacy. A lot of countries don’t have the capacity to do the high level analysis themselves. So by providing national and global level data – offices can use it to advocate at their country level.”

Oxfam Australia’s Policy and Advocacy Lead.

Joint advocacy efforts are supported by strength in numbers. Oxfam Australia join with other organisations and networks for a collaborative and coordinated message on a just transition (Enabler 2). Oxfam Australia works in alliance with the Climate Action Network Australia (CANA) International Working Group as well as ActionAid, Caritas, and Edmund Rice – to name a few.



The fact that so many people are talking about a particular issue – a chorus of voices, shows that there is strong community sentiment. The more of us that speak up, the better – strength in numbers.”

Oxfam Australia’s Policy and Advocacy Lead.

LESSONS FOR NGOS FROM SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES OF OXFAM’S ADVOCACY ON ‘A JUST TRANSITION’

Link advocacy efforts to organisational policies and programs. Doing so creates a coordinated and coherent approach to advocacy, with examples and successes from communities able to be a key part of the advocacy story being told.

Create an approach to advocacy that aligns with organisational strengths. Organisations need to develop their own unique approach to advocacy, depending on their organisational context. NGOs have strengths in their program work that they

can bring to an advocacy perspective and find their niche on which to focus advocacy efforts.

Working in alliances and networks helps to amplify key messages and build momentum towards a just transition.

Many NGOs are largely ‘singing to the same song sheet’ when it comes to advocacy on climate justice, including on a just transition. Working together in joint advocacy approaches can amplify the message to government and the media of the urgency of the changes that are needed – and the solutions that are available now. ACFID’s Climate Policy and Practice Community, and CANA’s International Working Group are two examples of alliances advocating for change on a just transition.

Utilising parliamentary and government processes to support advocacy efforts. Oxfam Australia recognise the influence that parliamentary tools and government processes can have on shaping public discourse around a just transition. By understanding and utilising these processes and leveraging available tools, NGOs can more effectively advocate for their cause.

CONCLUSION

Oxfam Australia’s approach to advocacy on a just transition involves multiple coordinated entry points, that leverage successful lessons from projects at local level in the countries in which they work. Advocacy within Australia aims to influence the public discourse using data and case examples to politicians and the media, as well as through position papers presenting evidence of what Australia’s fair share of climate finance for the Just Energy Transition should be. Advocacy in affiliate countries supports Oxfam country offices, as well as partner governments, with accurate data to strengthen negotiation efforts at international forums. NGOs in the sector can learn from Oxfam Australia’s tailored advocacy approach, and build their own approach based on the unique organisational focus and strengths.

Photo: Melbourne, Australia: Oxfam staff participate in the schools climate strike at Treasury Gardens. The crowds were estimated between 100,000-150,000 people and labelled as Melbourne's biggest ever rally. Photo: Keith Parsons / OxfamAUS.



3. Conclusion

This document provides ACFID members with evidence-based examples of best practice for integrating climate change mitigation into NGO development operations, programming and advocacy efforts. The case studies draw from empirical research conducted by UTS-ISF and ACFID, capturing how NGOs (some without any direct focus on climate change in their programs) are effectively considering climate change into their work. Links to ACFID's Climate Action Framework are provided to demonstrate ways the Framework can be operationalised.

Enablers of best practice are provided as accessible entry points for ACFID members to begin, continue or progress their actions to integrate climate action. While all enablers contain aspects of 'good development practice', implementing the enablers will support ACFID members to progress and grow their engagement in action on climate change.



AUSTRALIAN
COUNCIL
FOR
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT



UTS

Institute for
Sustainable
Futures



Cover photo: Serthiac members of the Loru Forest Project site, East Santo Vanuatu.
Photo: Diana Wrangham/PlanVivo.

Acknowledgements: This document has been prepared by Anna Gero and Tazrina Chowdhury at the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney. Members of ACFID's Development Practice Committee are acknowledged for their contributions: Anne Fitzpatrick, Elsa Carnaby, Dan Skehan and Belinda Lauria. Australian NGO participants are also gratefully acknowledged for contributing to the report.

Citation: Gero, A. and Chowdhury, T. (2023) ACFID Climate Action Framework Analysis and Planning Part 2: Mitigation Case Studies. Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney, prepared for the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID).

Published: August 2023