

UMN Environment & Climate Change Policy

August 2012

1.0 Rationale

1.1 People and Environment in Nepal

Nepal's people are both reliant on the environment and vulnerable to environmental hazards. 66%¹ of the employed population is engaged in primary industry (agriculture, fishing, or forestry) and many others are indirectly dependent on these primary industries for their livelihoods. Most farmers are dependent on rain-fed agriculture, with irrigated land in 2000 representing less than 50% of the total cultivated land in Nepal² (a proportion that varies greatly – it is less than 10% in mountainous areas). Even the irrigation systems rely on rainfall and therefore Nepal's agriculture is totally rainfall dependant.

The use of firewood for cooking fuel is a telling example of this inter-relationship of dependency and vulnerability. Most rural people (93%³) depend on forest fuel-wood for cooking, contributing to Nepal's annual deforestation rate. Data shows the land covered by forest was 38% in 1978 which reduced to 25% in 2006⁴. Increasing deforestation means many, particularly women, spend more time gathering cooking fuel, so less time is available for other productive activities. People exposed regularly to smoke from indoor cooking are also more vulnerable to health risks such as respiratory infections, cataracts, pulmonary disease and lung cancer.

People are vulnerable to many types of natural disaster in Nepal, and particularly to climate-related and environmental degradation disasters. According to official data 7,341 people lost their lives due to floods/landslides between 1983-2007⁵.

In short, close reliance on healthy ecosystems and natural resources not only guarantees livelihoods but also exposes people to serious risks to their health, their livelihoods, and to their lives. For each of these risks it is the most vulnerable - particularly women, children, the sick and people with disabilities who are the most exposed. Those with little stand to lose even what little they have.

1.2 Climate Change in Nepal

1.2.1 Current Situation

It has been established beyond reasonable doubt that large-scale emissions of greenhouse gases particularly carbon dioxide, are causing an increasing concentration of these gases in the atmosphere, and have warmed the Earth by around 0.8°C from pre-industrial levels. Further warming of around 0.7°C by mid-Century is assured regardless of any mitigation actions we take owing to the inertia in the climate system. If global greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase, then warming of 4°C or more by the end of the 21st Century is increasingly likely. Nepal contributes just 0.025% of annual global emissions, but faces disproportionate risks from climate change.

Mean annual temperatures in Nepal have increased steadily since the mid -1970s. Increases are largest in the more elevated regions in the north – highlighting the sensitivity of mountainous regions to climate changes. This has also contributed to most of Nepal's glaciers retreating at a rate faster than the world average, leading to increased risk of glacial

¹ Ministry of Agriculture May 2012

² Ministry of Agriculture May 2012

³ CBS 2011

⁴ CBS 2011

⁵ Nepal Disaster Report 2009.

lake outburst flooding.

There appears to be no overall trend in the changes in rainfall in Nepal from 1959 -1994. A great deal of anecdotal evidence points to a delay in the onset of the monsoon in recent years⁶. So, while rainfall totals have remained about the same overall, the duration of monsoon rains is reduced, leading to higher intensity precipitation. This more intense rainfall contributes to higher risk of flooding and landslide.

Therefore, the evidence shows that climate change is already being felt in Nepal, with many farmers describing its impacts, though they have little or no awareness of the causes, or even the concept, of human-induced climate change. Climate change is likely to increase the exposure of many people to environmental hazards, such as flooding and landslides. It will impact water availability as lower glacier and snow-melt leads to fewer run-offs into rivers by the end of the century. The increased likelihood of intense rainfall, flooding and landslides will accelerate the process of topsoil erosion, contributing further to food insecurity. Damage to infrastructure such as roads and bridges – already a common occurrence due to monsoon rainfall, flooding and landslides – could become more frequent, restricting access to transportation, markets, and essential services, with flow-on effects for people's health and livelihoods.

1.2.2 Projections

Projections of possible changes to temperature and rainfall in Nepal contain a fair degree of uncertainty, since we cannot know for sure how quickly or to what extent the world will respond to the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, central estimates of mean annual temperature show increases of between 2.0° and 2.9° by the 2060s and of 2.6° to 4.8° C by the 2090s. Maximum increases in mean temperature are projected to be 3.8°C and 5.8°C for the 2060s and 2090s respectively.

Rainfall projections indicate an increase for the country as a whole. Central estimates are for an increase in annual rainfall of between 1% and 17% by the 2090s. The upper end of the projections is 58%, equivalent to an additional 59 mm of rain per month. Projections of seasonal changes in rainfall are more substantial, with projections indicating increases during monsoon and post-monsoon seasons and decreases in winter rainfall. This seems to confirm a trend towards more intense rainfall during the monsoon periods, and the proportion of rain that falls in heavy events is projected to increase in the period July-November by the 2060s. There is also the possibility of more drought conditions during the winter months. It should be noted, however, that researchers are much less certain about trends in rainfall in Nepal than they are about temperature trends.

1.2.3 UMN Reflection

Nepal is richly endowed in biodiversity and natural resources. It is, as evidenced above, particularly vulnerable to many forms of environmental hazard and degradation, including climate change. All people ultimately depend on the environment for life and livelihood. However, it is the poorest people in the poorest communities who are most directly dependent on natural resources and assets that may be depleted or degraded. They are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and all forms of environmental degradation. And they are the most likely to be excluded – as a matter of policy and/or practice – from fair and sustainable access to shared environmental resources.

We believe that it is God's intention that human beings should faithfully protect and nurture the environment, making sustainable use of natural resources. We believe that though we are called to be productive stewards, there are clear limits (both given in Scripture and experienced in practice) to sustainable human use of natural resources. Biblical patterns

⁶ DFID, undated

such as having one day of rest each week and the seventh year rest indicate that growth and productivity need to be balanced in cycles of rest and renewal. Without this rest, all forms of economic activity – production, consumption, and use of natural resources – become harmful.

We also believe that it is God's intention that the gifts of Creation – the environmental "commons" of land, air and water – be shared with equity and justice. The surest sign of human sin is the presence of extreme poverty in a world where there are sufficient resources to meet everyone's basic needs (though not the unsustainable lifestyles of the global North, nor many elites in the South).

For this reason, as an organisation committed to working towards fullness of life for all in a transformed Nepali society, UMN commits to the environment and climate change policy as outlined below.

While, clearly, this policy places special emphasis on UMN's value of *care for the environment*, it relates strongly to several of our other core values as well.

Equity and social justice: Having already noted that the poorest people and communities are the most vulnerable to environmental hazards and to climate change, it is a matter of social justice to seek to reduce those risks and to act in solidarity with vulnerable communities and groups. In this way, too, we will be displaying a *special concern for the poor and marginalised*.

Love and service: "Love does no harm to a neighbour", is a strong call to take seriously a "do no harm" approach in environmental protection. If our carbon emissions, and our contribution to other environmental harms (for example the pollution of waterways or deforestation) are causing harm to our neighbours, then a genuinely loving attitude requires us to repent, to change our behaviour, and advocate for others to do likewise.

Innovation and creativity: Rather than accepting that "business as usual" is the best we can do, our commitment to environmental sustainability encourages us to experiment and innovate, to identify and develop better practice in creation care and climate change mitigation and adaption.

2.0 Related References

- Other policies of UMN
- UMN Strategic Plan 2010-15

3.0 Principles

Environmental sustainability is one of the key areas of individual and community life which, in UMN's vision, represents an aspect of "fullness of life". We strive towards helping communities to live within and nurture a healthy and resilient environment, ensuring resources are used fairly in the present and are maintained for the future. The principles of this policy are that:

- 3.1 We will seek to reduce risks for poor people which are created by environmental hazards and climate change
- 3.2 We will seek to "Do No Harm" with respect to the environment in all our work
- 3.3 We will take risks by being willing to implement innovative interventions that are considered likely to have a positive impact on creation care and climate change mitigation.
- 3.4 We will work to ensure that poor people have equitable and sustainable access to

shared environmental resources

3.5 We will be transparent in presenting our progress in implementing this policy, sharing information both within the organization and with external stakeholders

4.0 Definitions of terms used in this policy

Carbon Emissions: the release of carbon into the atmosphere. To talk about carbon emissions is simply to talk of greenhouse gas emissions; the main contributors to climate change.

Climate Change: the long-term shift in weather patterns in a specific region or globally. Unlike global warming, which refers to just one aspect of climate change - a rise in the surface temperature of the earth's surface – climate change refers to changes in a regions overall weather patterns, including rainfall, temperatures, cloud cover, and so on

Environmental degradation: The reduction of the capacity of the environment to meet social and ecological objectives, and needs

Environmental hazard: a generic term for any situation or state of events which poses a threat to the surrounding natural environment and adversely affect people's health. This term incorporates topics like pollution and natural disasters such as storms and earthquakes.

Greenhouse Gas: is a gas that absorbs and releases radiation within our atmosphere. Greenhouse gasses absorb infrared radiation and trap it in the atmosphere.

Greywater: is the recycling of 'waste' water that is generated in homes and commercial buildings through the use of water for laundry, dishes, or for bathing.

5.0 Policy

In light of UMN's goals and values, and with awareness of Nepal's context, we commit to contributing to environmental protection, conservation and restoration as well as to minimising negative environmental impacts in all of our work. This will result in:

- a) Increased awareness of climate change and environmental protection among UMN's staff, partners and supporters.
- b) Improved sustainability of energy, water, and other resource use through UMN's programs.
- c) Improved resilience of UMN's partners and target communities regarding environmental degradation and climate risk.
- d) Equitable policy development and implementation in response to UMN's advocacy.
- e) Improved health and integrity in the environment and ecosystems of UMN's target communities.

5.1 Internal

UMN will address environment and climate change issues within the organization through:

5.1.1 Education and awareness-raising:

- a) We commit to ensuring that staff are informed and regularly updated about relevant environmental trends and indicators, particularly as these affect the communities we work with;
- b) We will strive to ensure that timely and accurate information about research into climate change and other environmental issues in Nepal is presented to UMN staff;
- c) We will ensure that best practices in risk reduction, adaptation and environmental protection are shared among staff.

5.1.2 Waste reduction, recycling and reuse:

- a) We commit to ensuring that UMN makes the most sustainable use of available material resources;
- b) We will prioritise energy efficiency, and social and environmental sustainability and equity in our purchasing activities;
- c) We will strive to reduce consumption of paper, plastic and other materials and will pro-actively seek ways to recycle and/or reuse the materials we do make use of.

5.1.3 Emissions reductions:

- a) We commit to ensuring that UMN is carbon-neutral by 2015;
- b) We will audit and report on our greenhouse gas emissions by category – office use, transportation;
- c) We will promote energy efficiency in practice and will seek to minimise our greenhouse gas emissions;
- d) We also commit to offsetting unavoidable emissions through support for community forestry, community fuel-substitution programs (such as the installation of improved cooking stoves), and other initiatives;
- e) Recognising that most of Nepal's electricity comes from renewable sources – mainly hydro-electricity –we will seek to utilise other renewables, particularly solar, to deal with load-shedding, which is the result of the increasing gap between Nepal's installed supply and energy demand.

5.2 External

UMN will address environment and climate change issues within the organization through

5.2.1 Partner and community awareness raising and capacity building:

- a) We commit to ensuring that partners are informed and regularly updated about relevant environmental trends and indicators, particularly as these affect the communities we work with;
- b) We will strive to ensure that timely and accurate information about research into climate change and other environmental issues in Nepal, best practices in risk reduction, adaptation and environmental protection is presented to UMN partners.
- c) We will ensure that all partnership agreements and agreed long-term programmes incorporate environmental and climate-related risk assessments.
- d) We will pro-actively seek opportunities to incorporate environment protection and restoration goals in project design.
- e) We will build the capacity of partners to use data and participatory tools with affected communities to assess climate change impacts and explore adaptation options.

5.2.2 Advocacy:

- a) We will ensure that authorities at the local level are aware of likely climate impacts and their responsibilities and opportunities for local adaptation planning under related national policies and programmes.
- b) We will build alliances with our supporting partners to enhance international advocacy for ambitious and effective mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions, as well as provision of adequate, additional and predictable financing for adaptation in the most vulnerable countries.
- c) We will challenge our supporting partners in their advocacy, and will also support their advocacy with data, case studies, and grassroots mobilisation.

6.0 Implementation

UMN will seek to implement this policy in the following ways:

- 6.1 **Staff & partner education:** for example through in-house seminars and workshops; on-line discussions etc

- 6.2 **Waste reduction, recycling and reuse:** for example through promotion of cloth bags; rainwater harvesting; paper recycling
- 6.3 **Emissions reductions:** for example through energy efficient travel; exploring the use of renewable energy
- 6.4 **Energy Efficiency:** we will seek to become increasingly energy efficient, for example by purchasing energy efficient equipment
- 6.5 **Partner capacity building:** for example through training on participatory tools for assessing climate change risk and adaptation options; linking partners to local bodies and institutions responsible for developing local adaptation programmes of action
- 6.6 **Advocacy:** for example building alliances with supporting partners for international advocacy to secure ambitious and effective mitigation; supporting authorities, partners and communities in the development and implementation of inclusive, gender-sensitive and transparent local adaptation programmes of action

7.0 Monitoring and Reporting

PEC will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy and will receive a report annually which presents analysis of progress made. These reports should include an analysis of:

- progress in implementing each of the 5 areas above
- a summary of climate change and environment issues for each of the clusters

Since a focus on environmental resilience, adaptive capacity and risk reduction will be incorporated into all partnership agreements and project design, relevant capacity-building outcomes as well as environmental impact outcomes (both positive and negative) should be reported as part of the normal course of UMN's work.

7.0 Change History

Date	Status/Modification	Approved by
22.8.12	Environment and Climate Change Policy Approved	Leadership Team