

Environmental Policy

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DEFINITIONS¹

Environment: the natural, social and culture values that exist at a particular time and place and that influence the present and future life and development of living beings. This does not refer exclusively to the space in which life occurs, but rather encompasses all living beings, objects, water, soil, air—and the relationship between them—as well as intangible elements, such as culture.

Environmental impact: the effect that human activity has on the environment.

Mitigation: series of intervention measures aimed at minimizing or offsetting the negative environmental impacts of human activity.

Resistance (in ecology): the capacity of communities, people and ecosystems to persist through adverse situations, thus making their subsequent resilience possible.

Resilience (in ecology): the capacity of communities, people and ecosystems to respond to adverse situations with elasticity and to overcome them.

Greenhouse effect: a natural phenomenon through which certain gasses (greenhouse gasses) absorb and re-emit part of the sun's radiation, trapping it within the Earth's atmosphere and thus maintaining the temperature at levels suitable for life. Within normal ranges, this effect is both necessary and positive.

Greenhouse gasses: gasses present in the atmosphere that absorb and re-emit part of solar radiation (greenhouse effect). At normal levels, these gasses are necessary for maintaining the Earth's temperature at levels suitable for life. However, the concentration of these gasses is increasing due to emissions generated by different human activities, such as the burning of combustible fossil fuels (oil, natural gas and coal). The following six greenhouse gases are currently regulated internationally by the Kyoto Protocol: carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFC), perfluorocarbons (PFC) and sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆).

Global warming: rise in the Earth's average temperature due to an increase in the concentration of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere caused by emissions derived from human activity.

Climate change: a series of large-scale and rapid disturbances in climate patterns due to the rise in the Earth's average temperature (global warming).

Direct emissions: greenhouse gas emissions from sources that are owned or controlled by a particular entity. In the case of Educo, direct emissions are derived, for example, from owned vehicles or air-conditioning units.

Indirect emissions: greenhouse gas emissions that are the result of a particular entity's activities, but come from sources that are not owned or controlled by said entity. In the case of Educo, indirect emissions are derived, for example, from electricity consumption, work-related travel, etc.

¹ These definitions are based on reliable sources in this area, including the Oficina Catalana del Canvi Climàtic, the organization Ecologistas en Acció and the initiative www.ceroco2.org.

Carbon footprint: Indicator that makes it possible to calculate the amount of greenhouse gas emissions associated with a product, service or activity over the course of its lifecycle, from its production to its management as waste. It is expressed in kilograms or tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_{2e}).

Emissions/Carbon offsetting: a voluntary mechanism by which individuals or organizations compensate for the emission of greenhouse gases by investing in measures that remove the equivalent volume of emissions from the atmosphere (carbon sinks due to reforestation) or in projects that improve energy efficiency, that substitute combustible fuel with renewable energies, etc.

Energy efficiency: group of practices whose aim is to reduce energy consumption, thus protecting the environment and fostering sustainability, while ensuring the supply and maintenance of the same energy services without reducing the quality or comfort of life. This includes aspects such as the use of the optimal available technologies and the implementation of responsible consumption processes and habits.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is becoming increasingly apparent that environmental degradation places decades of development efforts at risk: human activity over the last one hundred and fifty years has altered ecosystems and their ability to support life, wellbeing and human development. As a result, when ecosystemic functions (provision of natural resources, natural sanitation, atmospheric regulation, protection against disease, etc.) break down, this inevitably leads to a reduction in available life options and an increase in the vulnerability of affected populations.

It likewise becomes evident that disadvantaged populations are the most affected by the quality of the natural environment in which they live, given that their subsistence often depends directly on the natural resources or assets and services that ecosystems provide. They also tend to face greater exposure to environmental threats (contaminated water, harmful chemical products, etc.); to live on more marginal and infertile land; and to be particularly vulnerable to natural disasters (floods, droughts, hurricanes, etc.), whose frequency and intensity are increasing as a result of climate change.

We should draw special attention to the differential impact that environmental degradation has on children, given that they represent an especially vulnerable group and constitute nearly half of the population in some of Educo's program countries. An estimated 640 million children grow up in unhealthy environmental conditions (in absence of potable water or food security, highly exposed to harmful contaminants, etc.), and some three million die each year due to illnesses that are directly related to these conditions.

On the other hand, we could say that children are double penalized by environmental contamination and the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, since it is they who will inherit the responsibility for caring for the planet and will have to live with both the present and future consequences. It is for this reason that the rights, interests and needs of future generations should invariably be taken into account in all current decision-making processes.

Within this framework, it is important that Educo be fully aware of the impact we have on the environment in pursuit of our mission, not only through the development of our programs and projects, but also through our day-to-day activities. It is for these reasons that it is essential to integrate—in each and every one of our activities—the necessary considerations for proper environmental management and protection, in order to give coherence, integrality and sustainability to our work.

2. RATIONALE

Based on the international context

Development organizations and other sector actors agree that efficient and equitable environmental management is essential if populations in situation of vulnerability are to achieve a sustainable improvement in their living conditions. In addition to the multiple international conventions that exist to this effect (agreements reached in the 1992, 2002 and 2012 Earth Summits; the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, etc.), this is reflected in the fact that ten of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals of the post-2015 development agenda are directly related to environmental aspects:

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (POST-2015)	
Goal 2	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
Goal 3	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
Goal 6	Ensure access to water and sanitation for all
Goal 7	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
Goal 9	Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
Goal 11	Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
Goal 12	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
Goal 13	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
Goal 14	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources
Goal 15	Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss

Based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child

In Educo's particular case, we cannot ignore that our mission is to work with children and their communities to promote just and equitable societies that guarantee their rights and wellbeing. A healthy environment is a prerequisite for the fulfillment of many Rights of the Child. And even though the 1989 international convention contains no explicit mention of the right to a healthy environment, many of its articles include significant environmental components and implications and must be interpreted from this perspective:

ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF FULFILLING CHILD RIGHTS

<p>The right to existence, survival and development— one of the four guiding principles of the convention and established in Article 6—can only be implemented in a comprehensive way through the implementation of the rest of the document’s provisions and is, as we will see below, certainly affected by the degree of fulfillment of the right to health, the right to food, the right to potable water and sanitation, the right to adequate housing, the right to education, and the right to rest and leisure (Articles 24, 27, 29 and 31).</p>	<p>Article 6</p>
<p>Children’s health depends, to great extent, on the environmental conditions that surround them. As such, Article 24—which corresponds to the right to health—expressly obligates the States to consider the threats and risks derived from environmental contamination when it comes to fighting illness and malnutrition.</p>	<p>Article 24</p>
<p>Children’s rights to potable water and environmental sanitation, as well as to adequate food and nutrition, are derived from articles such as Article 24 and Article 27. We should preserve the ecosystems’ capacity to sustainably produce food that is free of harmful substances, so that children can satisfy their growth and development needs, and to prevent water contamination. By protecting soil fertility and promoting the sustainable management of forests and fishing areas, we will contribute to ensuring long-term availability of food and potable water for future generations.</p>	<p>Articles 24 and 27</p>
<p>Article 27(3) refers to children’s right to appropriate housing. This implies living arrangements that include clean water supply, sanitary facilities, waste disposal facilities and other basic services. Nevertheless, in many of Educo’s program countries, the opposite is true, in addition to high levels of interior contamination due to the use of construction materials like asbestos or paints with high lead content. On the other hand, inside air quality also tends to be very low, due to the presence of smoke generated by open fires, heaters or defective cookers, etc., which is compounded by a lack of ventilation.</p> <p>The appropriateness of housing is also determined by its location, which should not be in polluted or contaminated areas that pose a risk to children’s health (for example, near uncontrolled waste dumps or industrial plants), or in areas at high risk of natural disasters (floods, landslides, etc.). Along these lines, it is predicted that every year for the next decade 175 million children will be affected by meteorological or climatic disasters, which will involve protective measures such as displacement or forced evacuations. Such measures, in particular, have serious consequences for children given that they represent a significant threat to the stability and livelihood of families, and to the right to education and health.</p>	<p>Article 27(3)</p>
<p>Through Article 29(1), State Parties agree that children’s education should be directed, among other things, to the development of respect for the natural environment.</p>	<p>Article 29(1)</p>
<p>Finally, it is important to consider children’s right to rest and leisure, to engage in age-appropriate play and recreational activities (Article 31), since this is only possible when healthy and secure environmental conditions so allow.</p>	<p>Article 31</p>

Given the above, environmental protection should irrefutably constitute a fundamental institutional commitment if we are to guarantee the coherence with our philosophy and with the rights-based approach we promote.

Based on the internal organizational context

Likewise, and as set forth in Educo’s 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, we cannot ignore the environmental significance of the second of our three strategic goals, Goal 2 "Protection", especially with respect to Objective 2.3 "Protection of children from natural disasters by increasing community resistance and resilience". Nor can we elude our responsibility to respect and give due importance to one of the main pillars of our work, sustainability - *all of our programs and projects are, from the onset, aimed at addressing the structural causes of vulnerability and exclusion so that their positive impact will last long into the future* - including with regards to environmental aspects.

Finally, it is important to consider the environmental implications of certain organizational commitments that we have already assumed, such as our membership in ChildFund Alliance, our full membership in the INGO Accountability Charter, and our commitment, since 2009, to the initiative Barcelona+Sustainable, which is the application of Agenda21 in the city where Educo's Head Office is located.

3. OUR COMMITMENT

This policy manifests our firm commitment to protecting the environment, both in the implementation of our programs and projects and in our everyday activities. It is based on three basic principles:

- Effective and efficient fulfillment of current environmental legislation that applies both in the countries where we work and at an international level, as well as of the other environmental commitments we have voluntarily assumed.
- Coherent integration of this policy in all decision-making processes and in all of the organization's actions, in compliance with the principles of preventing and reducing environmental impact and promoting the ongoing improvement of our management and actions in this area.
- Dissemination of this policy among our Board of Trustees, team members, partner organizations and suppliers, as well as among any other interested party and among the general public.

Furthermore, we hope that the implementation of this policy inspires our organization to constantly reflect on environmental issues and contributes to enhancing the quality and impact of our actions.

4. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- (a)** Educo's Board of Trustees
- (b)** Educo's entire human team (Executive Committee, staff, volunteers and interns) in the Head Office, the Delegations, the Country Offices and the Local Offices
- (c)** Local partner organizations, throughout the development of activities that form part of programs or projects carried out in collaboration with Educo

Additionally, other actors, such as:

- External professionals working onsite at Educo
- People who visit the programs and projects in the field (collaborators, communication media professionals, photographers, etc.)

should act in a manner that is coherent with this policy during the corresponding time.

5. GOALS AND COURSES OF ACTION

Below we present the goals of the policy, grouped by type of environmental impact and the activities from which these are derived.

These goals are accompanied by a proposed series of actions that may be adopted to achieve them; however, their application should be further developed in the specific action plans that emerge from this policy (see Section 6).

5.1 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Goal 1: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions generated by our activities, especially those derived from energy consumption and travel, in order to contribute to reducing climate change.

One of the main environmental threats we face today is climate change and the associated consequences. The main cause of climate change is the increase in greenhouse gas emissions due to human activities, leading to an increase in the earth's temperature.

In order to achieve this goal, Educo should contribute to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions; as such, **we are committed to undertaking the following courses of action:**

- **Identify, measure and monitor the greenhouse gas emissions associated with our operations and activities in the Head Office, delegations, country offices and local offices around the world.**

To do this, we will create an emissions inventory and gather data on the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the identified sources. We will then use this to calculate our annual carbon footprint using internationally recognized standards².

- **Promote measures for controlling and reducing greenhouse gas emissions**, such as:
 - Controlling use of electricity through improved energy efficiency in our offices and other premises: using low-energy lighting; shutting lights when not in use; using the most energy-efficient appliances; and reducing the number of items that remain in stand-by mode by unplugging electronic equipment not in use.
 - Optimizing air conditioning equipment: equipping offices and other premises with proper insulation and maintaining air conditioning and heating at adequate levels depending on seasonal conditions.
 - Promoting videoconferencing and other technological tools to reduce work-related travel.
 - Applying maintenance plans to organization-owned vehicles in order to ensure their optimal performance and durability; selecting energy-efficient vehicles for new acquisitions.

² The standard currently employed by the organization for this purpose is the *Greenhouse Gas Protocol* (www.ghgprotocol.org).

- Encouraging the use of public transportation and bicycles when feasible for work-related travel and commuting.
- Promoting the use of digital archives and communication media to reduce the use of paper and other materials, as well as associated transport.
- Assessing the possibility of implementing measures to offset emissions.

5.2 OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

In addition to greenhouse gas emissions, our activities also generate other environmental impacts that should be monitored and controlled.

5.2.a Environmental sustainability of the International Development and Development Education activities

Goal 2: Promote respect for the environment and environmental protection in the implementation of programs and projects.

Using a Child Rights-Based Approach—the basic institutional framework for Educo—we propose courses of actions that integrate respect for the environment and environmental protection within programs, projects and campaigns. We do this by effectively introducing actions that responsibly address the protection of ecosystems and the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity, thus contributing to guaranteeing children's right to enjoy healthy and quality environment.

To achieve this goal, we propose the following courses of action:

- Including strategies aimed at the efficient and sustainable use of natural resources in every program and project.
- Including strategies aimed at minimizing the waste produced by our actions and maximizing the separation of waste to optimize its subsequent reuse and recycling.
- Including an environmental risk assessment in every program and project, in addition to systems for preventing and mitigating their potential environmental impacts.
- In particular, encouraging good practices with respect to water use and consumption in all international development program and project activities, given that water is one of the main resources consumed in these activities.

Goal 3: Foster a positive change in attitude among the people who participate in programs and projects with respect to the conservation of the environment and natural resources.

This goal contemplates engaging in actions that help strengthen positive and meaningful environmental education among participants in programs and projects, so that they can develop personal and collective identities that favor environmental conservation and protection.

To achieve this goal, we propose the following courses of action:

- Promoting the adoption of better practices among program and projects participants, with the intention of fostering environmental preservation, rationing the use of natural resources, treating waste properly and using recycled materials.
- Raising awareness and developing a culture that is committed to the environment through the communication strategies of programs and projects.

5.2.b Environmental sustainability of office activities

Goal 4: Reduce environmental impacts derived from our office activities.

In addition to the environmental impact generated by programs and projects, it is important not to ignore the impact derived from the daily activities of the organization's different offices and premises. In order to reduce the impact of our office activities, we propose the following courses of action:

- Reducing the production of waste by avoiding the use of single-use non-biodegradable materials and unnecessary packaging.
- Reducing paper consumption.
- Reusing materials such as office paper, furniture and electronic devices.
- Separating and recycling waste, such as printer cartridges, paper and cardboard, plastic and other containers, obsolete electronic devices and other materials requiring special disposal.
- Promoting the use of direct network connections and rechargeable batteries for electronic devices.
- Reducing water consumption through measures such as the installation of faucet aerators or the improved efficiency of toilets.
- Promoting the use of recycled and eco-friendly office materials, such as recycled paper and cleaning products that are free of contaminating chemicals.
- Controlling office noise levels.

5.3 MANAGING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Goal 5: Contribute to sustainable development by fully integrating environmental protection and respect in all aspects of management.

In Educo we try to influence stakeholders so that they respect and protect the environment. To do this, we propose the following courses of action:

- Applying environmental criteria in selecting product and service providers.
- Encouraging healthy lifestyle and habits and the consumption of organic, local products among the organization's team members.
- Raising awareness on issues related to environmental protection, such as the reasonable use of water or the importance of proper waste management.
- Supporting external awareness actions and movements related to the environment, for example World Environment Day or World Water Day.
- Applying our Policy for Collaborating with Business, whose ethical code stipulates that those business with whom we collaborate must be compliant with current environmental legislation. In particular, businesses with headquarters in Spanish territory should respect the principles of

the Law of Environmental Responsibility, upholding the same standards in all geographic areas of action.

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

As this policy reflects, the ongoing improvement of Educo's environmental performance is the responsibility of the entire organization. However, certain members of the organization are key to ensuring its effectiveness. In particular:

- The Executive Committee
- The Country Directors
- All those people who are responsible for programs and projects, and thus for ensuring that this policy has been taken into account in their development.

These key persons should provide their full support and collaboration for the design of three-year action plans which will be used to guide each work center's application of this policy. These action plans will establish the activities to be carried out in any given period, as well as the allocation of the necessary resources.

Moreover, representative members from throughout the organization will form a Committee for the Implementation and Monitoring of the Environmental Policy, whose main functions will be to:

- Consolidate the three-year action plans drafted in the different work centers into a single document.
- Present the consolidated document to the Executive Committee for approval.
- Monitor the application of the action plans through the annual analysis of the corresponding indicators.
- Systematize and disseminate good practices and lessons learned.

Once approved, this policy will be shared with the Board of Trustees and the entire Educo team, and will be incorporated in the welcome and training packet for new inductions. Likewise, the team will receive updated information about updates to the policy, which will be fruit a review every five years.

The other stakeholders included in the scope of this policy (local partner organizations, external professionals working onsite at Educo, visitors to Educo projects in the field) will receive information about the Environmental Policy upon initiating a relationship or contact with Educo.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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