

Division:	Operations	Ref. No.	POL-3144
Department:	RACS Global Health		
Title:	Environmental Protection and Waste Management		

1. PURPOSE

This policy makes clear the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' (RACS) commitment to avoiding environmental harm and to support environmentally sustainable development in pursuit of RACS Global Health activities.

RACS Global Health understands that the environment is central to the economic prosperity of all countries and communities. It also recognises that negative impacts on the environment resulting from Global Health Programs can harm the people that the program is intended to support, and undermine development outcomes.

RACS commitment to protecting the environment and being environmentally responsible is part of its 'do no harm approach' to sustainable development and its accountability to local partners and communities that it works with, and supports.

2. SCOPE

All people that contribute to the RACS Global Program have a responsibility to protect the environment and ensure responsible waste management in Global Health programs and initiatives.

This policy applies to all **people** who contribute to RACS Global Health programs and activities, including:

- Council Members;
- staff;
- volunteers;
- consultants; and
- program partners.

3. DEFINITIONS

Localisation:

RACS Global Health will work with community and government stakeholders to strengthen community and government structures and their capacity to strengthen the management of the natural environment.

Environmental Degradation:

RACS recognises the inextricable link between the health of human communities and their environments. General environmental degradation, including climate change, often has a disproportionate effect on the poor and marginalised, affecting not only their homes and livelihoods but also their health.¹ Environmental damage may therefore undermine the efforts of RACS Global Health. As a result, RACS Global Health aims to minimise the footprint of its operations on the environment and to encourage environmentally sound practices in the delivery of activities.

¹ United Nations Development Program, *2011 Human Development Report*, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2011/download/en/>

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Waste Management:

It is recognised that waste management laws and procedures may be non-existent or be very basic in some developing countries served by RACS Global Health. Volunteers and staff participating in overseas programs/projects are asked to follow environmentally sound practices in their waste disposal, in particular of medical waste, to the best of their abilities.

4. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK AND STANDARDS

RACS is committed to the following international and Australian standards, and legislation, in relation to its Global Health Program:

- (a) The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct, and specifically Commitment 3.3: We promote environmental stewardship and sustainability;
- (b) The Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade *'Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy for the Aid Program, updated March 2019'*;
- (c) The Australian Government's main legislative framework for the environment, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act);

5. POLICY COMMITMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND WASTE MANAGEMENT IN RACS GLOBAL HEALTH PROGRAM

RACS Global Health will foster a culture of environmental responsibility by:

- (a) working to international standards of medical waste management in partnership with in-country partners, where possible;
- (b) conducting an environment impact assessment if it is clear that an initiative will have a negative impact on the natural environment;
- (c) developing an environment management plan if the assessment identifies that significant negative impact on the natural environment is likely and monitor the implementation of the plan with in-country partners;
- (d) working to reduce consumption of electricity, water, paper and other resources; reusing and recycling resources, where possible, to minimise waste-to-landfill;
- (e) avoiding unnecessary travel by using electronic communication (e.g. teleconferencing, video-conferencing) whenever possible;
- (f) using electronic systems to decrease printing and paper use; and
- (g) encouraging sound environmental practices and sustainability initiatives in the developing countries in which it works in order to support the overall aim of improving health in the Asia-Pacific region.

4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Complaints Handling Policy
Partnership Engagement Policy
RACS Workforce Conduct Policy
Whistleblower Policy

Approver International Engagement Committee
Authoriser Council

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