

LEAD Asia Environmental Guidelines and Best Practices¹

Prepared by David S. Price², LEAD Asia Senior Environmental Consultant.

Objectives (addressing four different levels of change)

1. **Individual staff:** to foster an environmentally conscious mindset among all LEAD Asia personnel that spills over into all areas of their lives and work.
2. **LEAD Asia as a unit:** to increase awareness of the major environmental issues relevant to LEAD Asia and its activities (including at and through the LEAD Community of Practice), and to provide a framework towards developing a clearly articulated environmental issues policy for LEAD Asia.
3. **LEAD activities:** to improve integration of environmental considerations in LEAD projects so as to ensure that LEAD activities include well-conceived environmental sensitivity components.
4. **SIL and its partners:** to ensure that LEAD Asia is well placed to contribute to raising awareness about environmental issues, both within SIL International and its partner organizations.

Background

SIL International guidelines direct a fostering of environmental awareness and behavior in harmony with environmental sustainability principles.³

LEAD Asia staff, as part of the Body of Christ, believe that creation stewardship is an integral part of following Christ and that biblical faith is an important part of creation stewardship (see Appendix 1: Our Belief). We acknowledge that humankind has failed in our God-given mandate to be stewards of creation. We seek to repent of that failure and ask God to restore us to be good stewards as he intended.

We see that there is a strong connection between communities and the environment, both in terms of livelihoods but also in the formulation and healthy exercise of individual and collective identities. This connection is particularly strong for minority communities, with communities identifying issues such as land rights, increased unsustainable land use, changing climate, and the impact of pollution and invasive species as increasingly impacting their daily lives.⁴ We must recognise this connection and act appropriately if our interaction with communities is to continue to 'do good'.

Through the implementation of these guidelines we seek to demonstrate our repentance

¹ As mandated by PRD for LEAD Asia's Senior Environmental Consultant, 2012.

² david_price@sil.org

³ In 2011 SIL International passed an International Development Policy which states that: "SIL programs seek to foster an ecological awareness and sensitivity to the problems of land and water management, declining fuel sources, and climate change."
<https://www.ic.insitehome.org/sil/policy/sil-board-policy-manual/SILBPMAAppendixA/SILDevelopmentPolicy>

⁴ See Chapter 6 of 'Signposts to Identity-Based Community Development' for more on this topic:
<http://www.leadimpact.org/resources>.

and determination to restore those principals of creation stewardship. We seek to do this in all areas of our lives and work through God's grace and strength.⁵

Foundational statements of intent

- We will make efforts to bring Christ as Creator and his values for his creation into our daily lives and work.
- We will conduct ourselves in harmony with our status as the agents of God's redemptive plans and purposes for his creation on Earth.
- We will seek to do the least harm, and the most good, to creation and the environment. Wherever we are, be it for a matter of days or more long term, we seek to leave the environment in a better condition than when we arrived.
- We will view our efforts for environmental sustainability and creation care as an extension of our ministry of compassion to marginalised communities.
- We will endeavor to evaluate cost-saving initiatives in light of their environmental impact, recognising that there is often a negative correlation between the economic cost and environmental impact of our choices (i.e. it generally costs more to do what is right and wise).
- We affirm communities right to determine their own development trajectory and seek to empower them to protect their environment and adapt to climate change in positive ways.
- We will strive to do no harm to peoples' well-being and livelihoods for the sake of the environment. Where short and/or mid-term hardships may arise from implementation of initiatives that will bring long-term benefits, we seek to find ways to bridge such difficult transitions.
- We recognise that our position on some environmental issues may well be construed by some as politically motivated. In such cases we will not withdraw from a position that is environmentally and socially responsible and honoring to Christ, but will make it clear that we do not engage in partisan politics.⁶

Guidelines

- 1) **Legal** – LEAD Asia staff will endeavor to comply with the letter and spirit of the environmental laws and regulations of host countries, even when such regulations are not enforced.
- 2) **Travel** – LEAD Asia staff will seek to minimize our transport and travel-related energy use and emissions by eliminating non-essential travel and selecting sustainable,

⁵ See Appendix 1 for further background on our beliefs.

⁶ TEAM's Creation Care Mandate and Philosophy document puts it this way: "Caring for the environment can easily be construed into political activism. TEAM does not shy away from doing what is right and Christ honoring. There will be times when a clear and bold stand will have to be taken. However, we will not engage in partisan politics."

low-emission modes of transport where possible.

Action	Example
2a. Favour public transport over private whenever possible and safe to do so.	
2b. Reduce airline travel to a minimum.	Substitute media and digital communication methods for some travel. ⁷
2c. Choose routing on airline trips that will minimize emissions.	Use the shortest routes with the fewest connections.
2d. Contribute to a carbon offsetting scheme ⁸ . Identify possible candidates for offsetting.	
2e. Use low-emission methods of transport where possible.	Trains are energy efficient, LPG or CNG or electric powered vehicles are better than gasoline powered, bike or foot is better than all.

3) **Facilities** – LEAD Asia staff will strive to reduce the environmental impact we have through our use of facilities and buildings.

Action	Example
3a. Encourage energy saving practices	Turn off lights, computers or other appliances when not in use or overnight.
3b. Keep equipment well maintained, cleaned and serviced, so that they are running in optimal condition.	
3c. Furnish facilities with energy efficient devices. Replace incandescent lighting fixtures with more energy efficient alternatives.	Fans or energy efficiency rated air conditioners, refrigerators, cooking appliances, etc. LED, fluorescent or CFC are possible alternatives.
3d. Consider installation of renewable energy technologies to power facility or provide supplemental power.	Solar water heating, PVT panels, wind turbine, etc.

⁷ Although the value of relationship building and importance to “community” conferred by face-to-face meetings should always be taken into consideration.

⁸ Early draft is in progress:

<https://docs.google.com/a/sil.org/document/d/1xnQpy3LPE4bH2TSj5oOqDiuYhTpySuusqF1PISr5knc/edit#>

3e. Consider renovation of existing buildings ahead of new construction.	
3f. If new buildings are required, favour locale-appropriate green, energy-saving technologies.	Natural lighting features, materials that insulate well, appropriate windows and ventilation.
3g. If possible enhance facilities with natural features where possible.	Trees or other native plants, or by environmental restoration of grounds, creating natural habitats.

- 4) **Goods** – LEAD Asia staff will seek to use non-polluting, sustainably produced consumables in the course of our work. As well as cost considerations we will be proactive in favouring suppliers and companies which have demonstrated a commitment to sustainability and good environmental practice.

Action	Example
4a. Choose products, supplies and services that originate locally over those non-local, especially international.	
4b. Choose products and supplies from companies that have their own environmental policy and adhere to it, and from those which have good reputations in communities for environmental practices.	
4c. Choose products and supplies (such as cleaning supplies) that have high recycled content, are biodegradable or contribute little to pollution and reduce amount of noxious chemicals used (e.g. chlorine).	With a print job we may approach sustainability by using a print shop which uses recycled papers, non-toxic (possibly organic) inks and resource-efficient methods.

- 5) **Waste Issues** – LEAD Asia staff will reduce waste by re-using and recycling wherever possible. We will favour materials that are biodegradable or which can be easily recycled, and minimize our use of plastics.

Action	Example
5a. Reduce usage - use all materials sparingly.	
5b. Re-use wherever possible. Replace equipment only when absolutely necessary or when it confers significant environmental benefits.	Re-use paper printed only on one side, print double-sided, etc.

5c. Recycle wherever possible.	
5d. Be mindful of water wastage and seek to reduce or reuse it.	
5e. Ensure solid waste is disposed of appropriately within communities.	
5f. Ensure that sewage and grey water are disposed of legally and appropriately.	In some tropical situations this can be best done sustainably on site.

6) **Continual education** – LEAD Asia staff will endeavor to be knowledgeable about a wide range of local and global environmental issues, encouraging a culture of personal and corporate environmental responsibility through all LEAD activities.

Action	Example
6a. Develop a body of practical resources that will be accessible to all involved with LEAD activities.	Point staff to online resources such as at www.coursera.com .
6b. Provide tools, opportunities and incentives for practitioners to evaluate and reduce their family’s ecological footprint.	
6c. Encourage active involvement in environmental events and initiatives.	Plugging-in to local activities to celebrate Earth Day or being involved in native tree plantings, cleanup days, local environmental or ecological restoration initiatives, community school events, etc.

7) **Partnerships** – LEAD Asia staff seek high levels of environmental accountability in current and prospective partners. We will partner and network with organisations who share our values on environmental issues for furthering mutual goals. We will actively encourage partner organisations towards environmental sustainability.

Action	Example
7a. Identify local, regional and global NGOs and agencies where partnerships might be mutually advantageous and contribute to our goals toward good environmental practice.	
7b. Generate opportunities to network with people from organisations already actively engaging with such issues.	Attend relevant conferences or other events.

- 8) **Communities** – LEAD Asia staff affirm the fundamental value of communities’ knowledge of the environment and environmental management, often termed Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), alongside the necessity of rigorous science. We seek to learn from that knowledge, to raise awareness of it and provide ways for it to be shared more widely, and to increase the level of education regarding environmental issues (both local and global) among the communities we work with.

Action	Example
8a. Identify the major environmental issues facing LEAD activities and the communities in which they are taking place.	Like those explored in chapter 6 of ‘Signposts to Identity-Based Community Development’.
8b. Learn from communities which have long established traditions of wise resource management, use and conservation (TEK).	
8c. Encourage the preservation and documentation of such knowledge and practices where appropriate.	
8d. Encourage communities who are already implementing sustainable environmental management or restoration projects, offering expertise where we have it.	
8e. Raise awareness in community members regarding local, regional and global environmental issues, and provide external expertise where it can enrich and support local knowledge and practices.	

- 9) **Projects** – LEAD Asia staff commit to working with partners to assess the environmental impacts, costs and benefits of new and existing projects and to seek to minimize negative impacts wherever possible. We will value the monitoring of environmental conditions and environmental impacts during the course of projects and the results will inform project management decisions.

Action	Example
9a. Comprehensive environmental assessments should be carried out by skilled personnel (if necessary from outside of our organisation) for all new projects, and results should significantly inform the implementation and ongoing management of the project.	
9b. A suite of ecological indicators and tools should be developed for each project and these should be used for	

regular monitoring throughout the project's life.	
9c. Environmental assessments should be encouraged in all existing projects where they have not already taken place, with support provided through the CoP and other appropriate channels.	
9d. Project personnel and managers should be informed by a good knowledge of issues such as ecosystem services, biodiversity values, sustainable agricultural and land use practices, invasive species threats, etc.	
9e. Where appropriate, reports on the environmental impact of projects should be put into the public domain and given to key stakeholders.	
9f. Encourage environmental responsibility within local communities and improved ownership of projects, especially those with significant community-based ecological restoration components or goals.	

10) **Monitoring** – LEAD Asia staff will develop tools that will facilitate the implementation of these guidelines, and eventually, appropriate audit procedures to evaluate progress. Where appropriate, LEAD Asia staff's experience and knowledge on environmental issues will be disseminated to the international community through appropriate media.

Action	Example
Under consideration	

Acknowledgements

This draft has drawn heavily on materials from other individuals and organisations, most notably SIL Bangladesh, who have the impressive distinction of creating the first formal *Environmental Policy* within the Wycliffe and SIL families of organisations. Mike Wiggins of TEARFund helped with expertise and materials in the planning stages and TEARFund's *ROOTS-13* publication on environmental sustainability provided guidance and ideas. I also consulted TEAM's *Creation Care Mandate and Philosophy* (thanks to Steve Dresselhaus providing an early draft), Eden Vigil's materials (thanks to Lowell Bliss), A Rocha's 2006 *Climate Change Policy Statement*, and TEARFund's 2010 *Environmental Policy*. If parts of this document contains similarities with parts of those, it reflects my high opinion of those efforts and my reluctance to reinvent impressively good existing wheels. I benefited from policy discussions with David Gould of OMF. I also drew upon a wide range of documents and publications, including many governmental and NGO environmental policies as available on the world wide web. Materials in the post-graduate Environmental Management curriculum from Massey University, New Zealand were also of great help.

References and other reading

Bliss, Lowell. 2013. *Environmental Missions: Planting churches and trees*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Earthcare. 2008. *Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation and The Sandy Cove Covenant*. Chattanooga, TN: Earthcare Inc.

Smith, P. & Wisbey, M. 2013. *Signposts to Identity-Based Community Development (IBCD)*. Bangkok, Thailand: LEAD Asia.

The Lausanne Movement. 2011. *The Cape Town Commitment*. Available online: <http://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment-2> [accessed 7th October 2014]

The Lausanne Movement. 2012. *Jamaica Creation Care Call to Action*. Available online: <http://creationcare.org/media.php?what=21> [accessed 7th October 2014]

Van Dyke, Fred et al. 1996. *Redeeming Creation: The Biblical Basis for Environmental Stewardship*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Appendix 1: Our belief

The Earth is the Lord's and all in it. Creation belongs to God and its primary role is to glorify him. God is passionate about his creation and takes great joy over it. He has provided for its good and loving care by his commands that it thrive (Genesis 1:22) and providing it able stewards. Further, he has provided for its redemption and reconciliation in Christ.

God has ordained that the Earth sustain us and our needs, and that we thrive therein. Our well-being on all levels is ultimately affected by creation's health and our physical well-being is almost entirely dependent upon it. We and our societies are fundamentally dependent upon a healthy environment, globally, regionally and locally, one which provides all the ecosystem services that we need.

Christians have a strong and biblical mandate to care for God's creation as good stewards, indeed, it was his first instructive to humankind. Throughout history God has chosen us as his near-obligatory tools for accomplishing his will—in general, he does not miraculously do what he has commanded and enabled us to do. Just as the Holy Spirit uses us as his primary tools in Christ's restoration of people to God, we believe he also uses us as his primary tools in the reconciliation of creation.

There are a great many corollaries between creation care and environmental sustainability and the great themes of the Christian faith—temperance (conservation), restoration, redemption, reconciliation, justice, etc.