

Environment Policy



Last Updated: 8 June 2026



Registered Charity



Vanni Hope (ABN: 19614675231) is a charity registered with the ACNC.

Introduction

Vanni Hope recognises that the conservation of the natural environment is integral to our mission and to the long-term wellbeing of the communities we serve. We witness first-hand the effects of climate change and environmental degradation in the regions where we work, and we acknowledge that these impacts disproportionately affect the most vulnerable people.

The communities we support rely heavily on natural resources for their livelihoods, including access to clean water, healthy soil, and unpolluted air. Environmental degradation and climate-related events such as floods, droughts, and landslides can severely disrupt livelihoods, undermine resilience, and stall economic and social development. Ensuring the responsible and sustainable use of environmental resources is therefore essential to reducing poverty, strengthening livelihoods, and supporting communities to build resilient and thriving local economies.

Beyond its practical importance, the natural environment has inherent value, and we believe it is our ethical responsibility to support communities to protect and preserve it for present and future generations. This policy sets out Vanni Hope's commitment to minimising negative environmental impacts, enhancing positive outcomes, and integrating environmental sustainability into all aspects of our work.

Definition of Environment

The '**environment**' includes:

1. ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities
2. natural and physical resources
3. qualities and characteristics of locations, places and areas
4. heritage value of places
5. social, economic and cultural aspects of any of the above-mentioned characteristics

Scope

This Environment Policy (the **Policy**) applies to officeholders, staff, contractors, members and volunteers (each a **Representative**) of Vanni Hope involved in project, partnership, or organisational decision-making roles. The Policy also extends to those who partner with Vanni Hope.

Vanni Hope requires partner organisations to comply with the key obligations in this Policy through partnership agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) as appropriate.

A. Our Commitment and Guiding Principles

Vanni Hope is committed to environmentally responsible and sustainable development practice and to managing environmental risks in line with recognised Australian and international development standards. We seek to ensure that our activities do not cause, or contribute to, significant harm to the natural environment or to the health, safety, and livelihoods of the communities we serve. Where environmental risks are identified, we take appropriate steps to avoid, minimise, or mitigate negative impacts, and to promote positive environmental outcomes.

Vanni Hope's approach to environmental protection is guided by the following principles:

1. **Do no harm:** We aim to protect and maintain the health, diversity, and productivity of natural ecosystems. We recognise the close relationship between environmental sustainability and human wellbeing and therefore seek to protect the health, safety, livelihoods, and rights of people, particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups, including women and people with disabilities.
2. **Identify, assess, and manage environmental risks:** We systematically consider environmental risks and potential impacts during the design, approval, and implementation of all Vanni Hope activities. Where risks are identified, proportionate measures are put in place to avoid, reduce, or mitigate adverse environmental impacts, consistent with internationally recognised environmental risk management standards.
3. **Transparency and accountability:** We document environmental risk assessments and mitigation measures as part of our project governance processes. Information relating to environmental considerations is disclosed in a transparent and accountable manner and made available to stakeholders in an accessible form upon request.
4. **Meaningful consultation and feedback mechanisms:** We engage in meaningful consultation with affected communities and stakeholders, including marginalised groups, regarding environmental risks and impacts associated with our work. We maintain accessible and culturally appropriate feedback and complaints mechanisms to enable concerns or grievances to be raised and addressed safely.
5. **Partnership with local stakeholders:** We work collaboratively with local partners, communities, and authorities to strengthen environmental management practices and support compliance with applicable local environmental laws, regulations, and standards. Where appropriate, we support partners to build capacity in environmental risk identification and sustainable resource use.
6. **Promotion of environmentally sustainable outcomes:** We integrate environmental considerations into project design and delivery to reduce pollution, promote the sustainable use of natural resources, and strengthen environmental resilience. Where feasible, we seek to contribute to positive environmental outcomes that support long-term community wellbeing and sustainable development.

These guiding principles underpin Vanni Hope's environmental risk management framework and inform our broader organisational policies and procedures.

B. Our Environmental Impact

Vanni Hope recognises that our activities interact with the natural environment in multiple ways and that, without appropriate assessment and management, there is potential for unintended detrimental environmental and social outcomes. Understanding, monitoring, and managing our environmental impact is therefore essential to ensuring our work is environmentally responsible and socially sustainable.

Key areas in which Vanni Hope's work may impact the environment include:

1. **Use of natural and raw materials:** Many of the livelihoods supported through our programs depend on natural resources sourced from the local environment. While increased production can improve incomes in the short term, unsustainable use of land or other natural resources may lead to over-extraction, soil degradation, or resource depletion, undermining long-term livelihoods and environmental resilience.
2. **Water use and water quality:** As a significant proportion of our beneficiaries rely on agriculture, increased economic activity may result in higher water consumption. There is also a risk of water pollution arising from the use of inorganic fertilisers, agro-chemicals, or waste products. Water scarcity is a particular concern in parts of northern and eastern Sri Lanka that are prone to drought, making sustainable water management a critical consideration in project design and implementation.
3. **Air quality and transport-related emissions:** Vanni Hope often travel to and from project locations, which can result in transport-related emissions and contribute to local and global air pollution. In addition, activities that support increased production or improved access to domestic markets may lead to greater reliance on transportation, further increasing emissions if not managed responsibly.
4. **Impacts on people and communities:** Vanni Hope provides humanitarian and development support to communities affected by natural disasters such as flooding, droughts, and landslides. These events pose significant risks to personal safety, livelihoods, and community stability, including the risk of displacement. Environmental degradation can further reduce access to natural resources and limit socio-economic development opportunities. We recognise that marginalised groups, including women and people with disabilities, are often disproportionately affected by these environmental and climate-related impacts.

By identifying these areas of potential impact, Vanni Hope seeks to integrate environmental risk management and climate awareness into our planning, delivery, and monitoring processes, ensuring that our work supports both community wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

C. Protecting the Environment

Vanni Hope integrates environmental responsibility across all aspects of our operations and programs. We seek to avoid, minimise, and mitigate negative environmental impacts, while actively promoting positive and sustainable environmental outcomes,

- Integrating environmental considerations into project design and implementation

- Environmental sustainability is treated as a core cross-cutting issue in the design and delivery of all Vanni Hope projects. We assess environmental risks and opportunities through our environmental risk screening and project appraisal processes, which are consistent with internationally recognised environmental risk management standards.
- These processes are used to identify:
 - Potential environmental risks, including risks relating to the use of natural resources, water consumption and quality, air pollution, and impacts on people and communities. Where risks are identified, appropriate mitigation measures are developed, taking into account relevant local environmental laws, regulations, and international environmental agreements.
 - Opportunities for positive environmental impact, recognising the importance of local knowledge and community stewardship of the natural environment. Where appropriate, we design projects that aim to:
 - promote sustainable and climate-appropriate agricultural practices, including organic or low-input methods;
 - support responsible water management and water-efficient practices;
 - respect and incorporate traditional knowledge and locally appropriate environmental practices;
 - minimise energy use and transportation requirements;
 - improve soil health, ecosystem integrity, and community health and safety;
 - ensure that the use of natural resources is sustainable, responsible, and consistent with environmental best practice.
 - Identified risks, mitigation strategies, and environmental opportunities are documented in project plans and inform ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities.
- Monitoring and evaluating environmental impacts
 - Vanni Hope monitors environmental risks and impacts throughout the lifecycle of each activity. Environmental considerations are embedded as a cross-cutting issue in project monitoring and reporting, including regular progress reviews completed by partner organisations.
 - We seek feedback from communities and other stakeholders on the perceived environmental impacts of our activities through periodic program reviews. This community-level feedback is particularly important, as local communities experience the direct environmental impacts of our work. Lessons learned are discussed with staff and partners and used to inform future program design and improvement.

Reporting Environmental Incidents

Any Representative who becomes aware of an environmental incident, near-miss, or significant environmental harm arising from Vanni Hope's activities must report it to the Managing Director as soon as practicable. The Managing Director is responsible for ensuring that incidents are documented, investigated, and that appropriate remedial action is taken. Significant incidents will be reported to the Board and, where required by applicable law, to relevant regulatory authorities.

- Reducing the environmental footprint of our operations
 - Vanni Hope staff are committed to minimising the environmental impact of our day-to-day operations. This includes adopting environmentally responsible practices such as:
 - recycling and responsible waste management wherever possible; and
 - reducing energy consumption by switching off lights and equipment when not in use.
 - For travel related to project implementation and monitoring, we seek to reduce environmental impact by planning travel efficiently.



Review

This Policy will be reviewed once every two years to ensure that the policy is operating effectively.

Date	Version	Review Description	Reviewed by	Approved by
Feb 2025	1	New template created	Virosh Poologasundaram	Board of Directors
June 2026	2	Complete reformat and general update of policy	Abinaja Yogarajah	Board of Directors

