

Development and the Environment

1. Policy Description

The policy of Mukti Australia Inc. (hereafter MA) on Development and the Environment outlines our response to linking environment and development and the implications for the programs and projects of our partner organisations in India, Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission (hereafter PRMM) and in Sri Lanka, Wings of Hope, (hereafter WoH) which we fund.

2. The Context

Environmental degradation impacts all members of society, yet it can be the poor who bear the greatest burden from environmental destruction. The world's poor tend to depend more greatly upon natural environment, the fertility of the soil, clean water, healthy forests, etc, for their survival, well-being and livelihoods.¹

According to the UN Millennium Project, "Environmental sustainability is essential to achieving all of the other Millennium Development Goals ... because environmental degradation is inextricably and causally linked to problems of poverty, hunger, gender inequality, and health".² This makes environmental sustainability and the protection of the environment a key concern of effective and lasting development efforts.

3. Mukti Australia's Response

MA believes that the natural environment has been entrusted to us and that proper care and use of environmental resources is the responsibility of every individual. MA affirms our commitment to sound environmental practice and environmental stewardship. We also affirm our commitment to partnership with stakeholders in seeking to facilitate the strengthening of their rights and assets, including access to resources and decision making processes in resource use. Whilst many of the projects funded by MA do not have a major environmental impact potential, we remain committed to good stewardship of the earth and acknowledge the need for commitment to sound environmental practices within our own organisation and our own activities.

4. Implications for Practice

¹ Property-Environment Partnership, 2005. *Sustaining the Environment to Fight Poverty and Achieve the MDGS – The economic case and priorities for action*, United Nations Poverty-Environment Initiative, pp.4-5, <http://www.unpei.org/PDF/SustainingEnvironmentFightPoverty.pdf>, retrieved 17 May 2010

² UN Millennium Project, 2005. *Environment and human well-being: a practical strategy*, UN Millennium Project Task Force on Environmental Sustainability, p.2, retrieved 17 May 2010, http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/EnvironSust_summary.pdf

MA seeks to ensure that:

- MA staff will be part of developing an understanding of environmental impacts with our partners in India and Sri Lanka, focusing on the impacts of the projects themselves.
- Proposals for projects with potential for negative environmental impact (eg, pollution, soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, etc) must include reasonable mitigation plans, and must specify how those plans will be implemented. Specifically, the impacts of any building construction, including wells and latrines, and micro-enterprise activities, should specifically consider environmental impact and necessary mitigation procedures.
- The potential for positive environmental impact will be recognised and promoted through encouraging possible activities and projects with positive impact or little or no negative impact on the environment, such as farming practises which contribute to environmental stability.
- We encourage our partners in India and Sri Lanka to involve community stakeholders, and in particular the poor, in decision making processes relating to projects within their community or where projects will directly impact upon them.
- Projects which seek to break the cycle of poverty resulting from environmental degradation will be encouraged.