

Introduction

The amazing world in which we live has huge variety and richness. However, humans are increasingly damaging what God has created. Our actions as a result of technological development, industrial pollution and increasing consumption are causing environmental degradation and climate change. The climate naturally changes over time, but in recent years climate change has accelerated and the world's leading scientists now agree that this is caused by human activity such as the use of fossil fuels and deforestation. Climate change is affecting weather patterns, by increasing global temperatures, causing erratic rainfall distribution, raising sea levels and intensifying cyclones.

Environmental degradation has a huge impact on the lives of poor people because they depend more directly than the wealthy on resources from the natural environment. The effects of climate change are already being felt most in poor countries, due to their geographical location and lack of capacity to cope. Excessive consumption and large unregulated industries certainly have a negative impact on the environment. However, there is also a need for development organisations to respond effectively and to ensure that their own work does not negatively impact the environment.

This book aims to raise awareness of environmental issues and equip development organisations to respond effectively. It is relevant to organisations that have no specific environmental projects as well as those that do. All the work we do has some link with the environment, regardless of the development issue we are addressing. Our projects have an environmental impact and are at risk from environmental degradation and climate change, though the size of this impact and risks faced will vary considerably. Our organisation's practices also have an impact on the environment. This book provides tools that can help organisations to become more environmentally sustainable.

There are many issues to consider if we want to ensure that our projects, organisations and lifestyles are environmentally sustainable:

- We need to understand the science and principles related to environmental issues (Section 1).
- We need biblical understanding of how God views creation and our biblical responsibilities in order to have guidance and motivation (Section 2).
- Development based on the use of fossil fuels as an energy source has made a major contribution to climate change. We therefore need to consider using other sources of energy based on sustainable and renewable resources (Section 3).
- We need to consider how our organisation can protect the environment in the non-project activities that it carries out, before we consider the impacts of our projects. Section 4 gives guidance on developing an environmental policy and carrying out an environmental audit that identifies the organisation's everyday impact on the environment. It also looks at how to encourage all staff to play a committed role to minimise the organisation's environmental impact.

- Section 5 contains an assessment tool that can be used to assess the potential impacts of a project on the environment and the potential impact of the environment on the project. This will help us to adjust our project plans so that the link between our projects and the environment is positive or neutral rather than negative.
- Advocacy work is essential to ensuring that authorities at local and national level provide long-term protection of both environmental resources and the lives of poor people. Governments also have a role to play in mitigating against the causes of climate change and helping communities to adapt. Section 6 looks at how we can carry out effective advocacy work in these areas.
- The last section helps us to assess our own lifestyles so that at work and at home we can follow God's calling to be good stewards of his creation.