

Five Talents: Sustainability Statement

Five Talents acknowledges the connection between the climate and other environmental crises and the increased threat of disease, food and water shortages and poverty for millions of people around the world, as well as the major damage being caused to our natural ecosystems. We are very aware from our own experience working in sub-Saharan Africa that the world's poorest communities are most affected by climate change; we see its impacts regularly in flooding, droughts and crop failures in the communities which we visit.

We therefore recognise our responsibility to reduce our carbon and environmental footprint in the UK, as well as proactively seeking to build climate resilience and reduce negative environmental impacts in the communities in which we work.

To take this forward, we commit to the following actions:

Programmatic actions:

1. By their very nature, **our programmes encourage resilience to climate change;**
 - a. First, by building members' savings so that they have a safety net in case crops fail due to drought or flooding;
 - b. Secondly by giving members business skills training so that they can diversify away from agriculture. For example, a woman who earns a living by growing and selling bananas might also begin buying and selling cloth or cooking utensils, which of course are not dependent on a good harvest;
2. The **training that Five Talents gives encourages environmental responsibility** or, as we might call it in the Christian context, stewardship or care of creation.
 - a. Our approach to adult literacy is issues-based; the community selects an issue affecting them and then discusses the causes and consequences of that issue, and undertakes literacy and numeracy exercises based on that issue. For example, during a literacy class, a group may talk about drought as an issue, and identify deforestation as a cause and tree-planting as a solution.
 - b. Five Talents does not typically deliver agricultural training but, recognising that many of our members do earn some of their income from farming, we do partner with other NGOs who are specialists in agri-training. We encourage any such training to focus on environmental sustainability in farming - for example, organic farming without the use of artificial fertilisers or pesticides, planting crops which require minimum water, preserving nutrients in the soil etc.
 - c. Thirdly, some members use their savings to invest in environmentally friendly assets - for example, rainwater harvest tanks, solar panels for electricity generation, smokeless cooking stoves. These benefit both the members and the environment.
3. We also see a **climate justice** aspect to climate change; the impacts of climate change hit the poorest hardest whilst they themselves have tiny carbon footprints compared with the average

person in a developed country. The members with whom we work do not own cars or washing machines, they never fly, they rarely have running water and so naturally conserve it, if they have electricity, it is often solar generated. There is an argument that as members slowly increase their income through our programmes, they might increase their carbon footprint (e.g. by buying a motorbike or smartphone). However, these would be very small increases; we feel the onus is on the developed world to make much larger reductions in our carbon footprint to redress the balance. There is therefore an **educational component to Five Talents' work in the UK**; by sharing our first-hand testimonies of the impact of poverty and climate change on real people in the communities where we work, we hope to encourage others in the UK to become more aware of social, economic and climate injustice and to take steps to address them.

UK office actions

4. The nature of our work means that we have to fly to eastern Africa to visit our projects, both for programmatic reasons (project planning, monitoring, evaluation, training) and fundraising reasons (taking donors and potential donors to see the impacts). As we work in remote regions, we also need to take internal flights within countries on occasion, balancing the needs of staff safety on poor roads and the time it can take to travel by road. We take the following steps in order to **minimise the number of flights we take**:
 - a. Visit at least two projects per monitoring trip, thus at least reducing the number of UK - Africa flights we have to take.
 - b. Deploy partners from Five Talents Kenya and other programmes already located in eastern Africa to carry out monitoring, training etc where possible so that staff from the UK do not have to fly there (recognising, however, that our accountability to donors in the UK and the importance of building relationships with partners face to face means there will always be a requirement for some UK flights).
 - c. Take direct flights where available (e.g. to Nairobi) and where this does not prohibitively increase the cost; we seek to balance financial cost against carbon cost.
 - d. We also fly for international Board meetings once per year. Just one member of staff attends these, to minimise carbon and financial costs, and we are exploring reducing the frequency of these meetings / meeting through conference calls more often.
 - e. We will track and report on our website the number of flights we take each year
5. We recognise the controversy around the concept of **carbon offsetting**, but Five Talents feels it is right to take some action to offset the impact of the flights we do have to take, recognising that the effects of climate change are felt most by communities such as those we seek to serve through our work. Recognising also that many of the carbon offsetting platforms are hard to verify, we have chosen instead to **make an annual donation to an appropriate environment charity, worth £35 per long haul international flight by a staff member, £9 for every short haul (intra-continental) flight**. This is likely to cost the charity up to £1000 per annum, and would be covered from Gift Aid income rather than from individual donor gifts. Our regularly updated Carbon Offsetting spreadsheet is [here](#).

6. Within the UK office and at our events, we **recycle** all paper, plastic, glass etc. Wherever possible, we avoid disposables e.g. single-use plastic and non-recyclable materials for events and activities.
7. Apart from donor thank you letters, we **print very little** in the office; almost all of our document storage is electronic and we keep mailings to our supporters to a maximum of four per year (Impact Report, Christmas card, two event invitations). **Where possible, we print on recycled or sustainably sourced paper.**
8. We encourage **sustainable transport within the UK**, for example by supporting the Cycle to Work scheme. All members of staff take public transport or cycle / run / walk to work, and when we have meetings outside London, we travel by train.
9. We work out of one room in a larger, listed community centre in central London, and as such do not have control over the level of insulation in the building, the source of electricity etc. However, the one room we occupy is small and thus our **use of electricity for heat, light etc** is low and cost-effective per person.
10. We seek to encourage **sustainable food practices in the office**; for example, many of the team bring their lunch in reusable containers, we seek to buy seasonal food, we buy Fairtrade coffee, tea and sugar and regularly use re-usable, rather than disposable, takeaway coffee cups.

We will report annually on our environmental impact in the Trustees' Annual Report.

This environmental policy shall be reviewed annually, or more frequently as required.

Date of adoption: 11 Feb 2020

Updated: October 2023