

# **The Global Compass**

**The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation's  
strategy for global development cooperation, 2012-2015**

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## **1. Introduction**

When the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) was founded over a century ago, its primary concern was the protection of Sweden's natural environment. However, as environmental problems have become ever-more global, our focus has widened; so for the past 20 years or more, the SSNC has been engaged in collaboration projects with NGOs in the global South in addition to its European activities.

To make our environmental efforts more effective, we must work to an even greater extent across international boundaries. As a consequence, our partnerships with environmental organisations – be they locally based or global networks – in Africa, Asia, Latin America and eastern Europe have grown in recent years. Some of them operate on a broad front, from the local level to top-level political advocacy; others work on a smaller scale, with peasant farmers, for example, or as think tanks. Together we forge ideas and strategies for how we can reduce poverty and improve the global environment with the maximum speed and efficiency.

The SSNC presents here an overall view of its global activities and its accompanying strategy, which has been developed in dialogue with our partners as a basis for the work we are to do together. This document explains the SSNC's position on a number of key issues within the framework of our global activities, thus enhancing clarity and building a solid platform for a long-term approach and effective development cooperation.

This strategy document touches only briefly upon the SSNC's principal fields of operation – agriculture and food security, climate, marine ecosystems and fisheries, chemicals and forest in the global North and South. More detailed accounts are provided in separate policies for each area.

## **2. The SSNC's values**

The SSNC is a not-for-profit, politically unaffiliated environmental organisation. It was founded in May 1909 by a group of concerned and dedicated individuals, and remains Sweden's largest environmental organisation. The society, which after only a year had grown to a few hundred people, is now – over a century later – a broad-based social movement with 190,000 members nationwide. The SSNC works to protect the natural environment and human health, and to strengthen global solidarity. We identify environmental threats and devise solutions that we communicate to the public, to the market and to decision-makers, nationally and internationally. The bigger we are, the more power we have to effect change.

The SSNC is a democratic organisation with 24 regional federations and 270 local branches as well as five national networks. The highest decision-making body is the National Assembly, which takes place every other year. The Assembly appoints a Board to lead the work of the national society with the aid of a secretariat with offices in Stockholm and Gothenburg.

Our work has always been, and will continue to be based on a love for nature, a dedication to a healthy living environment and an absolute conviction that society can be changed. We put pressure on decision makers, and provide public information and consumer advice through our own magazines, books and reports as well as seminars, debates and conferences.

Many of the problems we address, such as climate change and the spread of toxic chemicals, are global and will ultimately require transnational solutions. We can therefore not merely concentrate our efforts to the local arena or even confine them to the EU but must bring a global perspective to the work we do. The SSNC holds an active civil society to be a central driving force for public participation and change and so partners widely with a large number of similar-minded organisations in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The following strategy describes the goals and guiding principles of this work.

### **3. The global programme: general goals and policies**

#### **3.1 Our vision and overall objective**

The SSNC takes a holistic approach to the issue of the environment and the universal human right to a decent life. Our work is therefore multi-faceted and aimed at different objectives depending on the operational field in which it is done. More detailed position statements are given in separate policies for each operational field: agriculture, climate, marine ecosystems, chemicals and tropical forest.

The SSNC's vision for its global activities is:

*“Environmentally sustainable development based on the active recognition of human rights in a democratic society in which poverty has been eradicated.”*

This vision highlights the mutual dependency and interaction that exists between nature and humankind. Our official position on strengthened global solidarity is based on the ability of the global civil society to unite in order to meet challenges and opportunities, with a particular focus on environmental problems and on reinforcing the rights of marginalised people and people living in poverty. Poverty disempowers people, undermining their ability to affect their situation and leaving them exceptionally vulnerable to the environmental degradation and destruction to which other countries, including those in the North, contribute.

Our vision is consistent with the international efforts being made to achieve the UN's Millennium Development Goals. Of particular importance is goal seven, which combines environmentally sustainable development with poverty reduction. Also of cardinal importance to our work is goal eight, which recognises the responsibilities of rich countries towards poverty reduction.

Our global activities also integrate the endeavours to bring to fruition the content of the international environment conventions, such as those on biodiversity and climate change, with measures designed to reduce poverty and promote the rights of marginalised people and their participation in the democratisation process.

The SSNC is engaged in international development cooperation in Africa, Asia, Latin America and eastern Europe. Global activities comprise a range of operational areas, all of which aim to:

*Ensure that civil society organisations and networks in the global South and eastern Europe significantly strengthen their voices and their capacity to advocate for sustainable development of particular benefit to the poor.*

The SSNC operates in a selection of developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin American and within our five operational areas: agriculture and food security, climate, marine ecosystems and fisheries, chemicals and tropical forests.

The SSNC works together with civil society organisations in the global South that share our vision and operates in line with our overarching objectives. We partner primarily with environmental organisations at local, national and international level so that we may together mobilise towards change on all levels.

## **3.2 Our five operational areas**

The SSNC's global programmes, like its work in Sweden and the EU, are based on its five operational areas, as defined and described in separate policy documents. What follows is only an introduction to the focus concerns of each sub-programme for the 2012-2015 strategy period.

### **3.2.1. Agriculture**

The challenge in this field is to ensure global food security for all people without compromising the resource base for production. In our activities, the SSNC wants to demonstrate the feasibility of sustainable agriculture based on local renewable resources, nutrient circulation, ecosystem services (including biodiversity) and the possibility of phasing out the agricultural use of fossil fuels and other finite resources. It is essential that we work to develop robust production systems with the capacity to spread risk and to provide a buffer for and adapt to on-going and future climate change.

Agriculture must also be socially sustainable. The development of markets and the promotion of equality, democratic structures and profitability are examples of the issues that are important to the work done in this area. Engaging women and young people is particularly vital. Agriculture is constantly placed in the perspective of rural development that integrates such aspects as local business development, and integration of sustainable, often small scale, environmental technology.

Networking, information dissemination, and knowledge and capacity development are important tools. The work in this area is done primarily with organisations in the global South that have good networks and contacts at all levels of society and that cooperate with locally based organisations. Policy issues are pursued locally, regionally and globally by both the organisations in the South and by the SSNC. Reports, articles, conferences, campaigns and the like are produced either individually or in collaboration according to needs. In Sweden and the EU, the SSNC works for a sustainable agriculture policy that does not counteract progress in the South.

### **3.2.2. Climate**

Activities in the climate area will focus very much during the period on our partners' work with the UN's climate and biodiversity conventions. Under the UNFCCC (UN Framework

Convention on Climate Change), the SSNC will work for ambitious emissions reductions and financial support for the introduction of renewable energy in the global South and for greater investment in adaptation and alignment. Under the CBD (the Convention on Biological Diversity), the SSNC and our partners will be pursuing the issue of how safeguarding ecosystem services will improve opportunities for emissions reductions and enhancing ecosystem resilience to climate change. This also entails protecting biodiversity and creating the necessary conditions for successful poverty reduction.

The key strategic concerns that must be given priority during the period are to participate in strategically important decision-making processes (such as the CBD and UNFCCC) and secure optimal alliances with European and global civil society organisations and other relevant actors; to promote the role of ecosystem services in carbon sequestration, adaptation, and poverty reduction; to promote the development of a REDD mechanism that benefits biodiversity and the livelihoods of local communities; to promote sustainable energy and adaptation solutions in the global South (for example by “feed-in tariffs”); and to critically review offsets and other inefficient solutions to the climate crisis..

### **3.2.3. Chemicals**

The SSNC works with global chemical issues under the auspices of two programmes: the Sida-funded programme for civil society and the SONGO programme, financed by the Swedish Chemicals Agency. The priorities can be summed up as follows: chemicals in goods; sustainable chemical management and chemicals policy; and consumerism, environmental labelling and trade.

The work being done by the SSNC in relation to chemicals in goods coincides with the long-term priority that the Swedish Chemicals Agency gives to this issue, which is also a priority theme within SAICM (Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management). SAICM is a global agreement on reducing the health and environmental hazards posed by certain chemicals and electronic waste. Chemicals in scrapped products is one aspect of the SSNC’s work in this field that was decided upon by the Assembly in 2010 and that is expected to grow in the coming years. The issue of hormone-disrupting substances is set to be prioritised by the SAICM signatories and will become increasingly important for the SSNC.

The theme of sustainable consumerism focuses on consumer-orientated activities such as campaigns and public education with the aim of promoting and reinforcing sustainable behavioural change in consumers by providing greater access to information, dialogue and policy work.

### **3.2.4. Marine ecosystems and fisheries**

The challenge to restore and maintain robust marine and coastal ecosystems is enormous. The vision of this sub-programme is the sustainable use of all marine ecosystem services. One of our main objectives is to create opportunities for sustainable fishing. By actively



collaborating with communities in coastal zones while pursuing related activities at a national, regional and international level, we promote sustainable use through information dissemination, political advocacy, transparency, co-stewardship, mobilisation and consumer campaigns. Drawing attention to the role of women in fishing is another important issue addressed by the sub-programme, as is tackling the exploitation of particularly valuable and threatened ecosystems, such as mangrove forests. In Sweden and the EU, we promote sustainable fishery policies that do not impinge on development in the global South. Climate change is a growing concern for fishing, as it is damaging and altering some of the world's most important and diverse marine ecosystems, which impacts directly on subsistence opportunities for coastal communities. The issue will therefore also be addressed by the marine sub-programme.

### **3.2.5. Tropical forest**

The rate of tropical deforestation continues unabated, driven by for example the demand for pasture, plantations, mining and infrastructure. The legislation of exploiting of forest resources has led to positive figures in terms of reduction of illegal logging, but negative figures for the remaining areal of forest. The protection and stewardship of biodiversity and the remedying of environmental problems require the involvement of the communities that are dependent on forest resources. If the biodiversity in the landscape is to be safeguarded, forest resources, regardless of size, must be utilised and managed sustainably. Creating opportunities for people to develop a responsible approach and feel involved in decisions on forest management has proved to be essential to achieving these ends. Respect for human rights and for the particular rights of indigenous people is key to successful environmental management. Strengthened tenure rights for local and indigenous communities also entail an explicit obligation to utilise resources in a sustainable manner.

It is important to draw more attention to the problem of replacing natural forest with plantations. The role of the forest in the climate debate is central, but monoculture plantations cannot replace the biological value of natural forest or deliver the ecosystem services that are valuable at all levels, including globally. The underlying causes of deforestation, such as poverty, ineffective legislation and poor compliance with the law, the absence of democratic structures and the lack of human rights, must be addressed. Key issues in this field include the protection of forest ecosystem services, including their biodiversity, and the resulting reduction in poverty. Climate measures must optimise the value of the forests and develop new, effective means of protection that benefit biodiversity and people living in the greatest poverty, and that hold the major emitters in the North to account. The role of ecosystem services in maintaining biodiversity and reducing deforestation, as well as the role of the relationship between forest and arable land in sustainable rural development are important aspects of our continuing efforts in this field. Campaigns targeted at companies and consumers are also critical to influencing demand for

forest and plantation raw materials. Decision-making processes under the UNFCCC, REDD (within and outside the UN) and CBD are of strategic importance.

### **3.3 Specific focus**

To achieve the best possible results in our global activities, the SSNC operates in a small number of countries and sub-regions in Africa, Asia, Latin America and eastern Europe. With a thematic focus on clearly defined geographical areas and a selection of effective environmental organisations, we aim to achieve consistent, programme-orientated, development cooperation. Several of our areas of operation, partners and methodologies are to be represented in each sub-region and country where we work. This helps to build cost-effectiveness and possible synergies in our partnerships.

Five criteria guide our choice of sub-regions and countries of operation (see appendix 1). These criteria help us to make strategic choices, keep the focus within our operations, and enable clear communication. The first two criteria are superordinate, as they require the SSNC to be active on all continents – with a particular focus on Africa – while the remaining three guide decisions on a case-by-case basis. The appendix also includes a sixth criterion about effectiveness.

Our engagement in cooperation in the three main continents in the global South (criterion 1) gives us a global perspective on environmentally sustainable development and climate policy. Each of the three continents contains vital ecosystems that need protecting and reinforcing. Experiences from Africa, Asia and Latin America enhance the SSNC's own knowledge base, legitimacy and advocacy capacity while promoting South-South cooperation, which helps our partner organisations to develop their own capacity.

Africa is given priority from a poverty perspective (criterion 2). Many African countries are amongst the least developed countries (LDCs) in the world and often lack policies for the sustainable management of the environment and natural resources. The unbridled exploitation of natural resources is severely detrimental to sensitive ecosystems and perpetuates poverty. There is also a great need in LDCs to strengthen the organisation of people living in poverty with the aim of developing a robust and pluralistic civil society, without which democracy and decent political governance cannot thrive.

Based on our five operational areas and the acute threats facing particularly vulnerable ecosystems, we strive to maintain a certain orientation towards countries and sub-regions containing the world's most valuable ecosystems (criterion 3). The protection of vital ecosystems also entails the protection, promotion and fulfilment of human rights, as the poorest are often those who are the most dependent on ecosystem services for their subsistence.

Our capacity and success as regards influencing environmental agreements and climate summits requires collaboration with a range of international networks. Criterion 4 allows us

to build partnerships in countries and regions where there are organisations and networks with the capacity to participate in international summits as representatives of civil society. Some demographically and territorially large states also play a significant part in political global environmental efforts, which can justify having a presence in these countries and providing support to their environmental and nature conservation organisations.

An increasingly important target group for global environmental work is the consumers, particularly in Sweden and the rest of the EU. All our five operational areas are linked to the consumer aspect, where knowledge, attitudes and behaviour are key resources in our work. Criterion 5 is about engaging in partnerships in countries where there are, primarily, Swedish investments or import interests, and, secondly, investments from other EU countries that affect the environment and natural resources. Such partnerships allow us to expose the relationship between, for example, the impact of Swedish companies on people and environments in the global South and the goods and services consumed in Sweden.

All partnerships should strive to comply as fully as possible with the above five criteria.

### **3.4 Priority target groups**

The SSNC has several target groups. At a programme level, the immediate target groups (i.e. politically and commercially unaffiliated, not-for-profit voluntary organisations) constitute the partner organisations. At the next level, our target groups are those of each of our partner organisations. In this strategy we have decided to define the specific target groups that exist for the five areas of operation and the goals of each sub-programme. Clearly defined target groups help to enhance the quality of planning, monitoring, evaluation, and result reporting.

The objective of all Swedish development cooperation is to help create the conditions required for people living in poverty to improve the quality of their lives. It follows from this that they and other marginalised people must be the primary target group for all global activities.

Women are often the most discriminated and vulnerable group in all societies. Given that sexual discrimination is structural in nature and requires action at many different levels, the SSNC's gender policy gives special priority to women, particularly those living in poverty. Moreover, integrating equality issues and empowering women in all our projects and programmes is necessary for achieving the goals of stronger democracy, respect for human rights, reduced poverty and environmental protection.

In the Agriculture and food security operational area the primary target group comprises peasant farmers and smallholders. In some regions they are relatively well-organised, but are nonetheless the poorest people in many countries. The rural poor often lack an effective presence on the market, assuming, that is, that they even have access to it. They are in need of the means to develop their enterprises (environmentally and socially) and their contacts

with the market in order to generate income; and of support from local, regional and global organisations and other actors able to provide competence development, advocacy and policy development. Trade and agricultural policies have a major impact on poverty in the global South. Other important target groups are therefore influential people and groups, such as politicians, decision-makers, researchers and journalists as well as representatives of commercial interests.

The common target groups of the Climate operational area are the local communities and groups living in poverty in disadvantaged urban and rural environments that are the most vulnerable to climate change in the short term, and that need support to enhance ecological resilience. As regards reducing carbon emissions, key actors are politicians and higher state officials, such as MPs in Sweden, MEPs, EU commissioners and delegates of global environmental summits. We also inform and communicate with researchers, entrepreneurs and international networks.

Marine ecosystems and fisheries also have closely linked target groups in the global North and South. The work with the sustainable use of mangrove ecosystems and other coastal wetlands includes people living in poverty, who subsist on the ecosystem services that the coastal areas offer. Many of these areas have been destroyed by shrimp farming, a major export industry supplying an international market, especially in the North. Importers, traders and consumers in Sweden are therefore important groups to influence, as are our own members. Current fishing policies, including the EU's, allow the ruthless exploitation of marine resources. We lobby politicians and other Swedish and EU officials able to influence these policies as well as managers of fishery resources in Africa. Other target groups are artisanal fishers and post-harvest workers and poor coastal communities. Here too it is important to keep our own members and the Swedish public informed and to urge them to make active choices and demand accountability of their retailers.

Our activities in the operational area chemicals in physical and natural environments are slightly different and so, therefore, are their target groups. In the global South there are fewer social movements or large NGOs working with toxic chemicals than in other areas. This is unfortunate as many people, not least of all peasant farmers and industrial and agricultural labourers, commonly suffer disease and permanent disability as a consequence of widespread chemical use. Accordingly, this sub-programme gives initial priority to focusing on and developing organisations in the global South and their capacity in this respect. Many hazardous chemicals that are prohibited by Swedish and EU law are manufactured and distributed by companies from the North. In this respect, the SSNC's members in Sweden are important, as are importers and producers in Sweden who use chemical-based products from the South.

In the Tropical forest operational area, the priority target groups are local communities and indigenous peoples. The latter have specific recognised rights specially enshrined in several

conventions and declarations. The UNDRIP (the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) is especially important. Indigenous peoples are given particular focus by the SSNC, because they are usually poor, discriminated and closely linked to the forests. Both local communities and indigenous peoples are heavily dependent on a sustainable use of the forests and on their biodiversity. A lack of recognition of tenure rights can often severely undermine these groups' stewardship opportunities. The term "user rights" also includes the obligations contained within "tenure right systems", which have been developed for the local stewardship of natural resources. Key target groups also include politicians and other decision-makers, and representatives of commercial interests who affect the utilisation of the forest land as a strategically important resource, both globally and nationally, such as purchasers, wood and furniture traders and consumers.

## 4. Perspectives on development

The SSNC's global activities derive from a number of guiding perspectives on development.

### 4.1 Ecosystem protection

The protection of vital ecosystems is a central pillar of the SSNC's development cooperation. This means that all of our projects and programmes must contribute consciously and consistently to the protection of the environment and human health, the efficient management of natural resources, and the promotion of measures to remedy regional or global environmental problems.

An important dimension of ecosystem protection is based on the application of a number of fundamental environmental principles that have gradually grown to gain recognition in international conventions and accords and that are taking on ever greater significance in international bodies such as the EU, UN and OECD. For example:

- *The precautionary principle*, which in several international environmental accords means that action is to be taken on environmental threats despite the lack of definitive scientific proof of causality;
- *The principle of preventive action*, which says that it is better to act to prevent damage to the environment than to try to remedy it afterwards, and that instead of acting when and where environmental degradation occurs, it should ideally be stopped at source;
- *The "polluter pays" principle*, whereby polluters are required to pay for the environmental damage they cause; this applies not just to pollution but to other forms of environmental degradation;
- *Principles of collective decision-making*, which has been enshrined in the Rio Declaration and the Aarhus Convention; and
- *The principle that the environment and development are intimately related, especially as regards the eradication of poverty.*

The Rio conventions, the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity are also based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. To a certain extent, this important principle can be seen as an application at a global level of the polluter pays principle, in that it holds the industrial countries to account for the environmental damage that they have caused in the past. But it also embodies the acknowledgement that some countries are more able – economically, technologically and otherwise – to deal with environmental problems than others.

The SSNC works with its partners to reinforce the application of these principles. The ecosystems are the basis of sustainable development.

## **4.2 The poverty perspective**

Poverty has many dimensions. Not only does it mean a lack of access to clean water, healthcare, education, decent housing, physical security and material resources, but it also, and above all, deprives people of power and influence over their lives. This is particularly the case when their natural environment is degraded and depleted by short-sighted decisions, political and otherwise, and by the unregulated and uncontrolled exploitation of resources, all of which dispossess many poor people of the little they have, such as the ability to grow food or subsist on what the forest provides. The rural poor often lack an effective presence on the market – assuming, that is, that they even have access to it – which undermines their ability to earn a livelihood.

A reduction of poverty in the world requires the sustainable use of our natural resources. This is because all people are in some way dependent on ecosystem services, which provide for our most fundamental needs, such as the cultivation of crops for food, the cleaning of water, climate regulation, soil formation and protection from erosion. Discussions on poverty must be linked to ecosystem services. Without the protection and development of biodiversity, ecosystems and ecosystem services, it will be impossible to reduce poverty in both the short and long-term perspectives.

The poverty perspective in development cooperation requires a clear identification of, and focus on particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups, which also entails having knowledge of the actors and groups that have the greatest potential to help reduce poverty. To this end, the SSNC works with strengthening the ability of local communities, indigenous peoples and other such groups to manage their natural resources in a sustainable manner, which is fundamental to their subsistence, culture and survival. Organisation and stronger influence give people direct power over their lives.

People living in poverty must also be given the opportunity to influence others, such as decision-makers, companies, journalists and researchers. A heavy dependence on local or international institutions, such as undemocratic local power structures or transnational financiers, and highly conditional bilateral development assistance can hinder progressive legislation that promotes poverty reduction and biodiversity protection. Uneven income distribution means that large groups of people live below the poverty line in countries such as India, Malaysia, Brazil and South Africa, despite growing prosperity for the urban middle classes especially. This often leads to a severe exploitation of natural resources as the poor, deprived of any other means of livelihood and survival, are forced to use forest, savannah, water and other resources in an unsustainable manner.

### 4.3 The rights perspective

Like the solidarity perspective, the rights perspective can be described as an attitude towards development cooperation, and is an important aspect of the rights-based approach. It regards people as principal actors with human rights and not as passive recipients of aid intervention. Sweden's Policy for Global Development stipulates that all development cooperation is to be based on a rights perspective, which rests on four pillars:

***The right to participation*** affirms people as autonomous, thinking, active citizens.

Participation in democratic processes is a civil and political right that is a cornerstone of international human rights conventions. In the SSNC's development cooperation, the right to participate means that *the target groups*, not least the people living in poverty themselves, are to be given opportunities to initiate, take part in and implement the activities that affect them.

***Accountability*** All nations are obliged to do their utmost to protect, respect and apply human rights, such as the right to enjoy an adequate standard of living, which includes a secure source of food. Nations that have signed and ratified conventions on the environment and human rights, have committed themselves to their application. They are also obliged to apply their own laws. For many years, accountability has been an integral part of our, and our partners', development perspective, since environmental degradation and the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources are almost always the result of either irresponsible political decisions, or the absence of any decision altogether. Corruption, the abuse of power, nepotism and clientism are commonly a part of the problem. The lobbying and advocacy activities of our partner organisations must be aimed at demanding accountability of the power-holders and exposing and combating corruption.

***Non-discrimination*** is a value, an objective and a means in the conventions on the environment and human rights, and derives from the principle that no person shall be discriminated against or disfavoured. People living in poverty are discriminated against and disfavoured almost ubiquitously and constantly, not least in relation to the right to a secure environment. Non-discrimination is primarily about countering already existent discrimination and, naturally, not contributing to further discrimination of any kind. This includes working towards greater equality, a theme that must permeate all our operations at all times.

***The empowerment of marginalised people and people living in poverty*** is a principle based on the fact that poverty usually denies people influence and choice as regards changing their lives. This is often rooted in structural discrimination and ignorance. As far as the development work of the SSNC is concerned, this entails supporting the organisation of people living in poverty and understanding that popular mobilisation can contribute to positive social change.



In aiming to change unjust power relations, the rights perspective not only enables political focus, it demands it too. The relationship between the environment and many human rights has gained increasing acceptance in the institutions that oversee and decide on international law and its application. The UN's expert committees that monitor compliance with human rights conventions<sup>1</sup> have commented that all human beings have the right to freedom from pollution and other forms of environmental degradation. The right to health and development includes the protection and preservation of air, land, water, marine flora and fauna and other areas essential to the maintenance of biodiversity, and the right to preserve unique places for individuals and communities who live in these areas.

The rights concerning a sound, healthy environment are known as *positive rights*. This means that active and continual governmental intervention is needed to ensure that they are protected and applied. Consequently, the work that we and our partners do must be dedicated to strengthening this approach and making sure that the world's nations duly implement requirements, recommendations and proposals from the international human-rights system's departments and experts. We also monitor the implementation of the declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples that many of our partners were very proactive in bringing about, and ILO convention no. 169 on the same.

#### **4.4 Equality and the role of women in development**

Apart from being rights in themselves, gender equality and the participation and specific human rights of women are key aspects of development. Women have a fundamental part to play in poverty reduction and in the sustainable use of our natural resources. The discrimination of women and the preservation of traditional gender roles are a common major obstacle to development, especially amongst communities living in poverty.

In many developing countries, women have responsibility for the household food and water supply and for securing energy for cooking and heating. The vast proportion of locally consumed food is produced by women, even though women are largely denied tenure rights in many parts of the world. Women also lack the kind of access men have to agricultural input goods, credit, advice and education. Drought, desertification, sudden deluges and similar effects of climate change also mean that women have to work exceedingly hard to secure subsistence resources, which leaves them less time and energy to work outside the home to provide for their families or educate themselves and engage in the public sphere.

Many women are subjected to physical and mental violence perpetrated by men. The violence is alarming in extent and violates women's sexual and reproductive rights (i.e. their right to their own bodies), especially in countries where there is little respect for human rights. The SSNC's policy is to consistently oppose violence of all kinds.

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<sup>1</sup> These "Treaty bodies" are an essential part of the international human rights system.

Women working on family smallholdings and in the home can rarely empower themselves unaided. The SSNC and its partners always therefore undertake to analyse how women and men are affected by development projects and aim specifically to strengthen the knowledge, abilities and methods that help ensure that women in particular are respected and empowered, and that they gain self-esteem and self-respect. The SSNC sees women as an important resource in all development cooperation projects, which are policy-bound to take account of the particular vulnerability that women can experience in order to identify opportunities for change.

#### **4.5 Children and young people**

Children and young people are an especially vulnerable group, particularly those living in poverty. They often suffer more than adults from the consequences of poverty, since childhood undernourishment, lack of education and disease have a profound and permanent impact. Uneducated, undernourished and poor children are likely to become tomorrow's uneducated, undernourished and poor adults, and so poverty reduction efforts must be targeted at children today if they are to have any lasting effect. If we are to work with development projects that address the causes of child poverty and mitigate its negative consequences, it is imperative that we understand and analyse the phenomenon and all its implications.

## 5. Implementation strategies

### 5.1 Operational guidelines

The priorities of the SSNC are set by the annual Assembly in the form of multi-year operational guidelines. These guidelines also specify the strategies that govern our efforts to steer society towards sustainability. The SSNC has three general strategies to effect the popular mobilisation that we wish to see. These strategies were first assembled at the national conference in Helsingborg in 2003, and have been accepted through later Assembly decisions as applicable to the entire society, including its global activities.

The first strategy deals with *an appreciation of nature*. Encouraging positive feelings towards the natural world has been a cornerstone of the SSNC's work since inception. This strategy is equally applicable in the international context. The people we work with should also have respect for the nature that we are struggling to protect.

The second strategy deals with *advocacy* vis-à-vis decision-makers and power-holders. New legislation and regulations are needed if we are to help bring about lasting structural change. It is the SSNC's policy to join with our partners to become a constructive, proactive force towards tightening legislation and ensuring compliance with laws and rules in the operational fields within which we operate.

The third strategy is about popular mobilisation via *promoting green consumerism*. By presenting solutions and showing the effects of the overconsumption and exploitation of natural resources, the SSNC can raise awareness of environmental problems and the importance of sustainable solutions. In a development context, the main focus must be on handling the consequences of consumerism in the global North, such as by actively opposing unsustainable fishing or the soil-depleting cultivation of soya for the export market.

These three strategies are intimately related and are conceived as a general signpost for our development cooperation.

### 5.2 Civil society as a change agent

Democracy and a pro-poor welfare system that goes hand in hand with ecosystem protection are central dimensions in poverty reduction. Democracy gives people influence and enhances the security offered by society. It contributes to transparency, openness and predictability and helps ensure that people living in poverty can also hold their power-holders to account. Democracy is also necessary for countries to develop and sustain effective and functional institutions, without which there can be no socially and environmentally sustainable development. A fairer distribution of society's resources is of critical importance to the ability of large groups of people living in poverty to improve their

lives. Sustainability in the use of a society's resources can only be achieved if it does not cause the devastation of the natural environment.

A fundamental building block of a functional democracy is an active civil society. Civil society organisations are key players in the promotion of sustainable development, and they channel the visions and engagement of citizens towards achieving change. In countries with weak democratic institutions, representative and autonomous organisations constitute a counterweight to undemocratic structures. They also commonly have the important role of supplying society with expertise and service that the government is unable or unwilling to guarantee.

Our contribution to empowering people living in poverty is to support their organisation, knowledge acquisition and exchange of experiences, and to help them develop methods for participation and advocacy in political processes that concern development at a local, national, regional or international level.

The SSNC has extensive experience of advocacy that has brought about positive change to the protection of the natural environment in Sweden and abroad. We work with analyses of political decisions concerning how the government and private interests handle particularly significant resources (e.g. forest, water, fish stocks and arable land) and ecosystem services (e.g. climate stability), and how they impact different groups and communities in society. This often includes analyses of power relations within and between different stakeholders and of the incentives, or lack thereof, that spur the use and exploitation of natural resources and the spread of pollution.

Our global partnerships are based on the notion that change is driven by commitment, conviction, knowledge and persistence, and that people must unite and organise to generate the necessary force for change. Our participation in the global environmental movement derives from a belief in global solidarity and in providing active support to the organisational efforts of people living in poverty and under oppression, and their legitimate demands for human rights, democracy, good governance, and freedom from corruption. We support innovative alliances and coalitions in civil society that strive to bring about solutions and change in favour of the sustainable stewardship and utilisation of natural resources in many developing countries.

If we are to partner with environmental movements in the global South that share the SSNC's values, we must understand the significant political, cultural and historical circumstances and phenomena that shape their present situation. This involves having an overall grasp of the context at play in these countries and its connection with any regional and global processes that exist. In countries where human rights are not respected and that have weak or non-existent democratic structures and civil societies that are denied full action latitude, the SSNC's participation is a statement of support for the poor and

oppressed and for the democratisation of society. The SSNC believes that a neutral attitude is tantamount to a defence of the prevailing conditions.

We demand that the methods we promote and apply are based on democratic principles and the peaceful mobilisation of marginalised groups and communities living in poverty. This, along with our engagement in advocacy towards decision-makers and power-holders at a national, regional and international level, mean that we help to ensure that regulatory systems and popular participation actively promote sustainable development of benefit to the popular majority and the environment.

### **5.3 Criteria for choice of partner organisation**

There are several reasons for having criteria govern the choice of actors to partner with. Criteria are necessary for the strategic management of our operations and to make them relevant, focused and effective. Criteria also enhance the quality assurance of our work and, in particular, are prerequisite to obtaining the necessary funding for the projects.

At the same time, the criteria must not be a straitjacket that stifles creativity and quashes new opportunities that might arise in any given situation. The SSNC therefore chooses partners on the basis of several criteria. One fundamental criterion and requirement is that the organisations we work with are juridical persons (i.e. have legal status in the countries in which they are domiciled) operating on a not-for-profit basis. Two other criteria are about *values* and *policies*. We seek to work with organisations that share the SSNC's fundamental values and that work in a way that is consistent with our three overarching strategies: an appreciation of nature, green consumerism and political advocacy. They should have a sufficiently similar view of the causes of poverty and of what is required to reorientate the world towards environmentally and socially sustainable development. We also choose partnerships on a systematic assessment of the organisations' policies and knowledge within our five operational areas.

Another criterion concerns the type of organisation with which we wish to collaborate. They must be not-for-profit actors that promote democracy and inclusion within civil society, that build bridges between people and that help to create diversity and trust within the societies in which they operate. This means that they should have democratic structures with clearly worded rules and regulations for elected representatives and personnel. The SSNC is aware that respect must be paid to the political space and the cultural traditions that exist in specific contexts; nevertheless, there must never be any doubt that the organisations strive towards effective internal democracy and a solid base within their target groups, both of which determine their legitimacy in society.

Our partner organisations are also selected on the basis of ability, methods and willingness to try new approaches to their work. It is important to the SSNC to strike a balance between advocacy towards decision-makers and responsibility-holders and the mobilisation of

people, often within their local communities. Our partner organisations must be able to cooperate and network at a local, national, regional and international level, and not just with similar-minded organisations but with other actors, such as academic institutions, government bodies and companies. It is imperative that their methods are based on the principles of non-violence, democracy and peaceful mobilisation, and that they give particularly strong encouragement to marginalised and poor groups and communities in order to actively promote a sustainable development of majority benefit. Our partner organisations are also required to encourage competence development and accountability amongst their staff and workers, both women and men; to share their experiences; and to understand the strategic value of communicating with internal and external stakeholders. Empowering women and strengthening their involvement is a specific criterion in our choice of partner organisations. More details about the criteria we apply can be found in appendix 1.

#### **5.4 Partnership as a form of collaboration**

The SSNC works for global solidarity and every project it collaborates on with other organisations in the South is required to take the form of a partnership. Partnership is a term used in the development cooperation context to define the relationship between two or more actors as a joint venture built upon community of interest rather than as merely a business agreement. Partnership signals an equal, long-term and deeper form of collaboration in which both or all parties share responsibilities and obligations.

However, there is also a relationship of dependence in a collaboration that involves the transfer of financial resources from a “donor” to a “recipient”, one that acquires an extra dimension when the former is in the North and the latter in the South. In this situation it is even more important to define the guiding principles for the partnership in order to highlight and subsequently deal with the inevitable power imbalance.

The SSNC’s partnerships are based on the following four principles:

- **A long-term perspective:** a partnership takes a long time to build up, as the parties have to develop a relationship of mutual understanding and trust as well as the knowledge and skills needed to create a functioning collaboration. The SSNC shall therefore always strive to take a long-term approach to its partnerships, which means establishing multi-year collaborations with the organisations we decide to support. This involves capacity development, regular monitoring and follow-up, evaluations to strengthen learning, and exit strategies that we develop in mutual consultation when the time is right.
- **Shared values:** The organisations with which we partner should share our basic vision of an environmentally sustainable world that is free from poverty and based on the principles of democracy and human rights. Similarly, the SSNC must be able to stand

by the principles on which our partner organisations rest. We should also have a shared purpose and set of goals.

- **Equality, openness and shared responsibility:** Collaborations are rarely friction free. There will always be disagreement over certain issues, but being in a partnership means that we have respect for the differences that exist and that there is an open, democratic dialogue on all beliefs, opinions and disagreements. Any departures from the contractual plans that we have drawn up together must always be reported and there must always be mutual responsibility for finding solutions.
- **Local ownership:** Development cooperation is a complex policy issue comprising a wide range of goals and interests on several levels. The SSNC contributes to the emergence of a strong environmental movement in the global South, in which free, autonomous civil society organisations can grow and cooperate to effect change. The SSNC will always strive to be an active partner that brings constructive ideas and complementary knowledge to the table. At the same time, our partnerships must always aim to strengthen those with whom we collaborate on the basis of their own free choices and circumstances. It is our partner organisations and the often poor and marginalised people and groups they represent who decide the priorities, not us.

## 5.5 Our view of development effectiveness

The question of aid effectiveness has come under increasing scrutiny in bilateral development cooperation over the past few years. In 2005, representatives of the donor and partner countries agreed on five guiding principles and goals for development effectiveness as framed by the Paris Declaration. These principles aim to strengthen national ownership of aid; to align aid better with the recipients' own plans, priorities and systems; to coordinate and simplify the donors' procedures and routines; to promote better management and financial control with regard to development goals; and to strengthen mutual accountability.

The goals and strategies set forth in the Paris Declaration were refined in 2008 in the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA). The AAA stresses that national ownership of development processes must not be subject to narrow interpretation but must be rooted in broad and democratic processes that incorporate not only governments and public authorities but also parliaments, civil society and a free media. The Accra forum also made a formal acknowledgement of the role of civil society organisations as important and independent development actors. Importantly, the participating governments affirmed the fact that civil society development cooperation operates under somewhat different conditions to bilateral development cooperation, and that civil society organisations must therefore be given the latitude to draw up their own principles and guidelines.

Throughout this dialogue, civil society has argued that while the focus on aid effectiveness is important, it is far too narrow. This applies in particular to civil society itself, where aid-financed activities are often just one aspect of the organisations' work, alongside their roles as organisers of services and collective voices for poor and marginalised people; as active participants in democratic processes; as partners in dialogue with public authorities and institutions; and as forums for holding politicians and other public decision-makers to account on behalf of the citizens from whom their mandate and power derive.

The Istanbul Principles, which international civil society has developed in a global, autonomous process called Open Forum, focus instead on development effectiveness as a wider concept. Open Forum contains a framework for civil society's development effectiveness and recommendations for how governments can offer more favourable conditions for civil society and its development activities. The Istanbul Principles reflect to some degree those of the Paris Declaration, but ascribe considerable weight to the respect of human rights (including women's rights), environmental sustainability, opportunities for public participation, experience exchange and mutual learning. The Swedish consultation in Open Forum also agreed on three additional principles that Swedish organisations are to apply as donors: adaptation and coordination based on the recipient organisations' own circumstances; the aim to offer long-term financing, including budget support; and transparency and mutual accountability.

It is SSNC policy to apply the Istanbul Principles and the three Swedish donor principles to its global development cooperation activities.



## **6. Results Based Management**

### **6.1 Our view of results based management**

Measuring development is not an uncomplicated process. Change takes time, can rarely be related to a particular project and evaluations consume considerable resources that might not even be available. Development is also contextual, and just because something works in one place does not necessarily mean that it will work in another.

At the same time, we know that proper, well-anchored planning, systematic follow-up and continuous reflection and learning related to progress and setbacks are necessary for achieving the desired results. Clearly defined goals and expected results are, and will always be, a central part of how the SSNC is run. Without them, we cannot know if we are contributing to change.

The SSNC applies the principles of results based management (RBM) in accordance with accepted methods and conceptual frameworks. However, it is also important that the methods and RBM principles that we use are adapted to the needs of our partners and ourselves; no one benefits from having unrealistic goals or imposed planning methods.

The SSNC cannot dictate the specific methods for project planning and RBM that its partner organisations should use, but within the partnerships we should strive to achieve unity of vision as regards how to promote successful development cooperation. In turn, this requires close cooperation with our partners, in terms of both the development issues themselves and the management and quality assurance systems used.

Within this framework, all those who are to implement and participate in the activities must be given a voice in their planning. Active and meaningful participation in the forming of goals, target groups, indications and concrete activities go a long way to determining the effectiveness of our operations.

Applications to the SSNC must specify how ownership in the planning processes has been guaranteed, and provide details regarding the above. In reports to the SSNC, the results should be reported in relation to stated objectives and indicators, although not limited to expected outputs, outcome and impact. Some results can be planned; others can emerge as a side-effect beyond the organisation's control. Results can also be negative as well as positive, and we must always endeavour to mitigate the effects of any adverse development.

### **6.2 Evaluations for learning**

Evaluations are a way of deepening the knowledge that we and our partners possess about the activities on which we are collaborating, and must emphasise learning in the interests of organisational and operational development. An evaluation is a systematic, often extensive

and impartial assessment of an ongoing or concluded activity, or of the systems and tools that shape it.

Evaluations can be made of entire programmes or individual projects. They must be based on social scientific methods of inquiry and focus on such areas as planning, execution, goals and results, methods and organisational development, or cross-cutting issues like gender equality.

Evaluations can be conducted by an organisation's own personnel, but are usually done by external consultants contracted for the purpose. All evaluations should have a well-defined Terms of Reference, the contents of which the partner organisation has been able to influence. They should be carried out in close association with the SSNC and, especially, the organisation being evaluated. Active participation is always fundamental to greater responsibility and learning.

In order to ensure continuous, sustained learning, the SSNC will endeavour to conduct at least one evaluation in each operational area per year for the 2012-2015 strategy period.

### **6.3. Sustainability in development cooperation**

The SSNC works to achieve long-term, sustainable solutions in its development cooperation activities. This means that the temporary support it provides for its partner organisations in the global South must be so constructed as to effect change that lasts beyond the actual term of the project.

A key component of the work we do towards sustainability is the focus we take in our development cooperation on capacity and organisational development. Strengthening both the individuals working for the organisations and the organisational structures themselves must always form part of a collaborative partnership. One way of achieving this is to contribute to more effective administrative systems, better internal democracy, stronger capacity for strategic planning and communication, and so forth.

In recent years, the SSNC has been providing core support for the partner organisations that meet certain criteria. Core support is an important means by which we can help to strengthen the organisation's own systems and priorities, which in the long run contribute to improved sustainability. At the same time, this form of cooperation brings its own challenges as regards performance management and quality assurance, and will consequently be subject to review at the end of the strategy period.

## **7. Sources of financing**

Our collaboration with Sida (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) is the financial basis of much of the SSNC's development cooperation. Sida, on its part, is dependent on the Swedish government, which through its budget proposals and annual appropriation directions decides the financial parameters and general policies of Swedish development cooperation.

The status of the SSNC vis-à-vis Sida is as a "framework organisation". We apply for financing for programmes in support of civil society organisations in our partner countries in order to promote, in accordance with government guidelines, a vibrant and pluralistic civil society that helps the ability of people living in poverty to improve their lives, something that the SSNC also deems to be of the utmost importance.

The SSNC has a strong position as a Sida partner by virtue of the knowledge we possess of many issues of critical relevance to sustainable development and our capacity to pursue effective development cooperation.

However, we need to diversify our sources of financing not only to reduce our dependency on one single appropriation item in the Sida budget but also to extend our international partnerships so that we can become an even stronger and more effective force for change. There are many avenues we can take. For a start, we can apply for funds from other appropriation items within Sida, such as those relating to long-term development cooperation with countries in the global South, for conflict and post-conflict cooperation, and for research cooperation. A small portion of the support provided by Sweden to the multilateral development actors, especially the various specialised agencies of the UN, is also channelled through NGOs. Receiving money from this quarter requires knowledge about development cooperation specific to each country.

The EU is another major development cooperation actor and one that is open to financing environmental organisations. One method that Swedish organisations have used with success is to apply for funds from both country and theme-orientated budget items within the EU in association with their partner organisations. For this strategy period, the SSNC will therefore be working more actively to explore opportunities for broadening the financing of its global activities.

## **8. Our work in relation to Swedish development cooperation**

The overarching goal of Sweden's Policy for Global Development (PGD) is to contribute to creating conditions for people living in poverty to improve their lives. Development policy shall therefore be characterised by a *rights perspective* and by *the perspective of poor people on development*.

The PGD was conceived as a coherence policy for Sweden's development policy. All policy areas must have knowledge of and take account of the consequences that political decisions have for people in developing countries. Political decisions on climate change, trade, agriculture, etc. may not counteract each other.

The SSNC has been taking such a harmonising approach to its work and objectives since long before the PGD, and endeavouring to ensure that political decisions taken by Sweden or the EU do not have a negative impact on developing countries. This is the very point of departure for our efforts to protect the natural environment and to devise solutions for the sustainable use of natural resources.

The aims and intentions of the PGD are therefore consistent with the global policy of the SSNC, in which, for instance, the priority area of climate change is a challenge that is superordinate to all other priority areas.

A majority of the SSNC's development cooperation is financed by Sida's support to civil society in developing countries. Our multi-year framework agreements mean that our work is guided by the government's policy for Swedish support to civil society, the goal of which – a vibrant, pluralistic civil society in developing countries that, in taking a rights-based approach, contributes effectively to reducing poverty in all its dimensions – is also well within the parameters of the SSNC's global activities. We stress the importance of strengthening the voice and organisation of our partners.

We must also, however, stress that the operational areas to which we and our partners give priority are influenced and often controlled by regional and international regulations. Consequently, the focus of our activities is commonly not just on the local level, but on the conventions, policies and regulations that govern the conditions under which environmental activities are carried out. The SSNC also sees itself in this context as an important advocate and development actor, and so stresses cooperation as a key aspect of the capacity development of our partners. It is only by having our collective voice heard in global solidarity that we can demonstrate the feasibility of an alternative world.

## APPENDIX 1: Criteria that guide the choices and priorities we make in development cooperation

CRITERIA THAT GUIDE THE CHOICES AND PRIORITIES THAT THE SWEDISH SOCIETY FOR NATURE CONSERVATION MAKES IN ITS DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION ACTIVITIES			
Geographical criteria	Criteria for choice of partner	Criteria for the partner organisations' organisational principles	Criteria for the partner organisations' operational focus
WHERE do we operate?	WHAT KIND of organisations and groups do we cooperate with?	HOW are our partners to operate internally and in relation to other development cooperation actors?	WHAT should our partners work with?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperation takes place in parallel on three continents in the global South: Africa, Asia and Latin America</li> <li>• Partnerships in Africa of special priority owing to many LDC countries</li> <li>• Partnerships in poor countries and regions with particularly valuable ecosystems</li> <li>• Partnerships in sub-regions with networks of CSOs with the capacity to influence international summits on environment and climate change (within the SSNC's five thematic areas)</li> <li>• Partnerships in countries where there are, primarily, Swedish investments and import interests and, secondly, investments from other EU countries that affect the environment and natural resources</li> <li>• The following basic criteria for achieving synergy effects are observed from an effectiveness point of view (e.g. with respect to follow-up costs):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There should be multiple cooperation projects covering several of our operational areas in one and the same country</li> <li>- Priority is given to groups of neighbouring countries and countries with similar problems.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil society organisations (i.e. legally recognised non-governmental, not-for-profit organisations)</li> <li>• Ideally with membership-based organisations or organisations with strong anchorage and legitimacy amongst the target group</li> <li>• We must seek to strike a balance in each operational area between broader, more local organisations and those working with advocacy (e.g. think tanks)</li> </ul>	<p>Partner organisations shall – with respect to local NGO traditions and political latitude – endeavour to strengthen and develop the following organisational principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be receptive and accountable towards, and have a clear “mandate” from the groups the organisation represents (members, local communities, indigenous peoples)</li> <li>• To embody the concepts of transparency, democracy and equality in all decision-making and in the organisation's status</li> <li>• To be transparent in its financial management and reporting and to act with responsibility on existing corruption risks</li> <li>• To encourage competence development, responsibility amongst all employees and staff, regardless of sex, and the sharing and spreading of information and experience</li> <li>• To actively seek to influence opinions, decisions and processes beyond the scope of the project</li> <li>• To show integrity and independence in the formulation of goals and strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our partners' principal operations are in line with the goals and focus of the North/South programme</li> <li>• Organisations whose activities link, or can be linked, to the SSNC's other partners and networks working with the same issues</li> <li>• We partner primarily with organisations and activities that:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in being <u>innovative</u> in approach and method can make a positive contribution to the common causes of the NGOs</li> <li>- fill key strategic or knowledge gaps in prioritised issues</li> <li>- explicitly seek to promote equality and strengthen marginalised groups</li> <li>- contribute actively to democratisation and good governance</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

