

Swedish Mission Council’s climate and environment policy

Content

1. Background	2
2. Purpose	2
3. SMC's View of Climate and Environment Issues.....	2
3.1 International Agreements, Human Rights, and Global Goals.....	4
3.2 Climate, Environment, and Sustainable Development	4
3.2.1 Disaster Risk Reduction.....	5
3.2.2 Resilience	5
4. SMC's Theory of Change for the Sustainable Use of Ecosystems and Natural Resources	6
4.1 Society	6
4.2 Organisation.....	7
4.3 Individual	8
5. Assessment of Climate and Environment Aspects in Organisations and Interventions	9
5.1 Organisational Assessments	9
5.2 Assessment of Interventions (Programs and Individual Projects).....	9
5.2.1 Environmental Assessment and Disaster Risk Assessment	10
5.2.2 Cooperation with Organisations and Authorities.....	10
5.2.3 Specific Operations for Disaster Risk Reduction	11
6. Appendix 1: Tools and References	11
6.1 Tools, etc.	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
Environmental Assessments.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
The Environmental Lens.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
CEDRA.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
Minimum Standards for Climate-smart Disaster Risk Reduction.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
Index for Risk Management	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
The Pressure and Release Model	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.
6.2 References.....	Fel! Bokmärket är inte definierat.

1. Background

This policy was adopted by the Swedish Mission Council's (SMC) board on April 28, 2016, and applies until further notice. It is a revision of the Swedish Mission Council's "Policy for the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment", adopted on June 17, 2004. The policy has been broadened to a climate and environment policy which also includes perspectives of disaster risk reduction and increased ability to cope with shocks and disasters (resilience). It has been prepared together with SMC's secretariat and a consultative group consisting primarily of member organisations. The policy is based on insights gained from studies of climate and environment issues along with experiences from international development cooperation and humanitarian cooperation.

The policy has been adopted by SMC's board and applies until further notice. It will be monitored and evaluated by SMC's management team.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe SMC's perspective on climate and environment issues. The policy provides direction for assessing all interventions within both development cooperation and humanitarian action. It should be a support for SMC's member organisations and their partner organisations (from this point referred to collectively as "SMC supported organisations") in their activities with sustainable use of natural resources, as well as their work aimed at reducing climate impact, improving disaster risk reduction, and increasing resilience in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their interventions.

The policy also serves as a guide for the environmental work within SMC's secretariat. This work means that the perspectives of good stewardship of natural resources and that of reduced climate impact shall influence SMC's working methods. These environmental considerations are specified in a separate plan of action adopted by SMC's management team.

3. SMC's View of Climate and Environment Issues

SMC's view of climate and environment issues is founded on God as the creator of the world and humanity. Each person is created in the image of God, and our mission is to look after God's creation together, taking responsibility for each other and the world we live in.

Through our mission we are part of God's mission (*missio Dei*), God's work in the world.

Our basis is the vision that God's kingdom should be realised in the world, bringing about a world where peace and harmony exist between God and humanity, between people and with creation.

All of creation is part of the same fabric of life, and humanity is called upon to cultivate and nurture it with love and care. To live in God's mission means to strengthen and affirm, in words and actions, the forces for good in life, working together for a world free from poverty and oppressive structures, a world where people can influence their own situation, a world where God's creation is tended responsibly for future generations.

Achieving harmony in creation requires socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable development in which human rights are respected, protected, and observed. It also requires the knowledge that these rights entail a responsibility for the world we live upon and which provides for us. We want to move away from a narrow, anthropocentric view of creation, recognising instead the mutual dependence between all that is created and all of creation's dependence on God. As a consequence of our Christian faith and identity we want to counter overconsumption and greed and work for a just division of resources and a righteous way of life.

SMC believes it is possible to transform the negative development we see in the field of climate and environment, and that we as human beings have both the responsibility and the ability to create a sustainable society and tend it for future generations.

SMC will integrate a climate and environment perspective for the sustainable use of natural resources in all its development cooperation with SMC supported organisations. SMC wants to develop its work in disaster risk reduction and increase the resilience of local communities for sustainable development. The human rights perspective¹ and its principles (non-discrimination, participation, accountability and transparency) guide all of SMC's development cooperation and its climate and environment work.

The climate change is not only one of the most pressing sustainability issues of our time, but also one of the greatest justice issues. Those who are harmed the most by the degradation of the environment and climate changes are those who, from a global perspective, have contributed the least to its causes. From a climate justice perspective it is clear that emissions need to decrease most rapidly in the Global North while the need for support is most acute in the Global South. For our climate and environment work to have credibility internationally and in partner countries it is important that we also maintain an active and self-critical attitude towards our own use of natural resources. This is why SMC strives to include a climate and environment perspective in all of its work in Sweden, and it encourages its member organisations to do the same.

1 See [The SMC's Policy for a Human Rights Perspective](#).

3.1 International Agreements, Human Rights, and Global Goals

Sweden has signed about forty international environmental agreements which protect our common environment and conserve nature's resources. The issue of environment and sustainable development is also implicitly included in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights.² Article 3, for example, can be interpreted to have environmental implications – the right to life, liberty, and security of a person includes, from SMC's perspective, the right to live in a healthy environment.

In 2015, Sweden, and the majority of other countries around the world, adopted new global sustainability and development goals – Agenda 2030³ – which encompass how the integration of economic, social, and environmental aspects of sustainable development will lead to the reduction of poverty.

A new framework for disaster risk reduction was also established the same year at the UN World Conference in Sendai.⁴ The framework includes both preventive measures and preparedness for mitigating the consequences of hazards, with climate changes and other risks as its starting point.

By signing the climate agreement⁵ at the UN's Climate Change Conference in Paris at the end of 2015, an agreement which comes into effect in 2020 at the latest, the world's countries have committed to decreasing emissions and adapting their societies and systems so they can handle the changes that cannot be avoided.

SMC believes that these agreements constitute an important foundation for long-term common global engagement for climate and environment to which actors on all levels must contribute – public, private as well as non-governmental in the civil society. Churches and Christian organisations in Sweden do conduct an active work with civic education and advocacy.⁶

3.2 Climate, Environment, and Sustainable Development

SMC views that combating poverty, advocacy for human rights, and democratic development are closely tied to climate and environment issues. Sustainable development requires that we stay within sustainable boundaries that allow our world to continue developing for the benefit of everyone. Climate and environment issues must be considered part of humanity's dual challenge – to mitigate climate change while giving billions of people the opportunity to enjoy social, economic, and environmentally sustainable development free from

2 <http://www.manskligarattigheter.se/en/who-does-what/united-nations/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

3 http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

4 http://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf

5 http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/paris_nov_2015/application/pdf/paris_agreement_english.pdf

6 Active climate and environment work is conducted within, among other organizations, the Christian Council of Sweden and the church coalition ACT Alliance.

poverty and oppression. The climate issue is both scientifically complex and highly political, but for SMC it also poses ethical and spiritual challenges. In order to tackle negative climate impact and climate change, politics, science, industry, culture, and religion, everything that is an expression of our ability to create, have to work together.

Degradation of the environment and climate change magnify many of the unequal relationships that have existed for a long time; those between countries and regions, those between groups of people in the same country, and those between men and women. Women affect the climate less than men do but are often affected more severely by the consequences of climate change. A gender equality perspective is therefore important in our choice of interventions, for example in disaster risk reduction or protective measures during humanitarian crises.⁷ Similarly, disasters also affect children, elderly, sick and people with disabilities harder than other groups. Intersectional perspectives should therefore be incorporated into our work or programmes so that these various aspects are analysed simultaneously, highlighting how power structures work together and sometimes reinforce each other.

3.2.1 Disaster Risk Reduction

A significant amount of development effort risks going to waste in vulnerable areas due to recurring natural disasters caused by or made worse by climate change and other human activities. For this reason, the use of preventive measures for disaster risk reduction is essential.

A disaster is often described as a result of a combination of high exposure to hazards, high vulnerability, and insufficient capacity or inadequate measures to reduce or handle the potentially negative consequences of a disaster.⁸ Disaster risk reduction aims to reduce the risk of crises and reduce vulnerability while increasing capacity on both a local level and on higher levels.⁹ During the planning of developmental and humanitarian interventions it is important to analyse needs and possibilities of reducing vulnerability and increasing the capacity to handle crises, creating conditions for sustainable development.

3.2.2 Resilience

Resilience is the capacity of an individual, a community, or a country, to cope with and have the ability to handle negative changes, shocks, and uncertainty

⁷ See the [Swedish Mission Council's Gender Equality Policy](#), 2016.

⁸ <http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/terminology#letter-d>

⁹ [SMC takes its definition of Disaster Risk Reduction from the one that has been formulated by UNISDR: “The concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events”](#) (<http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/terminology#letter-d>)

while continuing to develop.¹⁰ The term *resilience* is thus broader and more general than the term *disaster risk reduction*.

When planning and implementing programs and projects, it is therefore important to include improvement of capacity in a wider perspective so that households and local communities can handle situations which are not categorised as direct disasters but which lead to an impoverishment of a household's possibility to provide for itself and its access to public services and development in general.

4. SMC's Theory of Change for the Sustainable Use of Ecosystems and Natural Resources

As one of the largest Swedish civil society organisations in terms of international development cooperation and humanitarian work, SMC must contribute to ensuring that international climate goals are reached, and apply a human rights perspective to issues of environment, climate, disaster risk reduction, and resilience in all its development cooperation and humanitarian work. As a Christian umbrella organisation with a wide network, supporting many projects within civil society, SMC has an important role to play.

SMC's theory of change is founded on the concept of *society, organisation, and the individual* as three spheres that influence each other. The purpose of this section is to highlight how SMC believes that climate and environment issues can be engaged with in these three spheres.

4.1 Society

Climate change is primarily caused by the emission of greenhouse gases, mainly carbon dioxide from energy production, transport systems, food production, and industry. In addition, deforestation and land-use change constitute a fifth of climate impact factors.¹¹ The main strategy for preventing climate change is first and foremost to reduce society's direct emissions. This is largely a political issue which requires the creation of laws and system solutions which support individuals and increase their knowledge about how to make sustainable choices in everyday life. Each state is responsible for fulfilling the commitments set in the climate agreement signed in Paris in 2015.

Climate and environment actions connected to the state and society level should therefore focus on influencing decision-makers to proactively work towards sustainable development and the achievement of the goals set at Agenda 2030.

¹⁰ SMC departs from the Stockholm Resilience Centre's definition of *resilience* in "[What Is Resilience??](#)" (undated).

¹¹ <http://www.un-redd.org/about/what-is-redd-plus.html>

In Sweden, this is done for example by SMC with other organisations actively involved in the debate on development cooperation and humanitarian action, and organisations advocating for Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to take action for sustainable development.

In many of the countries where SMC supports development cooperation and humanitarian work, those in power are faced with enormous challenges as they deal with the effects of climate change and work towards sustainable development. The SMC supported organisations play an important role in raising awareness, mobilising people, and supporting their efforts to influence decision-makers, while also changing negative attitudes and behaviour in society which lead to an increased toll on climate and environment. Working towards greater trust and better interaction between different groups in society can also be included in this.

4.2 Organisation

Organisations that work with development cooperation and humanitarian interventions have a very important role in the dual challenge of eradicating poverty while supporting adaptation to sustainable development.

SMC sees significant value in supporting the organising and strengthening of groups within local communities so that vulnerable people can work together for the sustainable use of ecosystems and natural resources. Positive changes in the local environment create opportunities for positive development on other levels. Organising in local communities is also instrumental in reducing risk and building resilience.

Climate and environment issues are complex demanding clear cooperation between organisations and authorities on different levels. SMC wants to emphasise the importance of supporting increased cooperation between non-governmental organisations in the civil society, and/or between them and other actors, particularly on climate and environment issues. SMC supported organisations have a greater chance of success if they cooperate on issues of sustainable development, climate adaptation, and disaster prevention within the different national networks that exist today.¹²

Religious and cultural leaders often have authority and legitimacy on a local level. This gives them great potential to act as role models in society. They are also important agents of change with the opportunity to positively influence both attitudes and behaviour. Interventions can therefore include encouraging religious leaders to actively work, under the guidance of religious values, towards a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable local environment.

¹² Each country is encouraged to establish national institutions that work with managing disaster risk. For more information, see <http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/national-platforms>. A list of these national platforms is available at <http://www.unisdr.org/partners/countries>.

Finally, all SMC supported organisations have the opportunity to act as good examples of how climate- and environment awareness can be integrated in their own practices. As role models and actors they can contribute to increasingly sustainable social development.

4.3 Individual

People who live in poverty are particularly exposed and vulnerable to climate impact and environmental degradation. Moreover, women and men are affected in different ways. Globally, agriculture is the most important source of livelihood. The majority of small farmers are women, producing roughly 70% of all food in poor countries; in Africa, this figure is 80%. Despite this, women own less than 2% of all land in developing countries. As a result, it is difficult for them to get loans, because they often lack the proof of ownership of their land and because of discriminating laws. Women and girls who live in poverty also suffer from lack of nutrition more than men and boys do. In slums, marginalised women and men have to deal with problems such as lack of clean water, clean energy, and appropriate living quarters. It is not only a question of having minimal access to resources; it is to a greater extent a question of limited power and influence over one's life, society, and environment.

The human rights perspective emphasises that while people can be constrained by oppressive structures, they still have influence over their own lives. People have tremendous power to change their own situations and the societies they live in.

Working with climate and environment issues on an individual level can involve strengthening vulnerable women and men's capacity for increased influence, and strengthening their opportunities to positively influence their community and take long-term responsibility for the environment, contributing to an improvement of their own and shared living conditions. This can involve, for instance, land reform efforts which give women greater responsibility over the land they cultivate. It can also involve creating possibilities for sustainable use of local natural resources in order to reduce the impact on climate and environment. The development cooperation and humanitarian action that SMC supports should have the intention to support those who are most vulnerable, guided by a human rights perspective and the view of the individual as an agent of change. Interventions seeking to contribute to improved living conditions for vulnerable people must not have any negative impact on climate and environment; interventions must be planned and realised in a way that makes the support sustainable.

Climate change and environmental problems also generate great concern among many people in the Global North who are not directly affected by them and are living in relative safety and security. Therefore an important task for SMC is to highlight positive examples that give hope for the future, motivate people to take actions and inspire them to live in a sustainable way.

5. Assessment of Climate and Environment Aspects in Organisations and Interventions

SMC will enhance the attention given to climate and environment within its international development cooperation and humanitarian action. This means that these perspectives will be integrated into all cooperation with SMC supported organisations that receive support through SMC's distribution of external funds. In organisational assessments, SMC pay attention to member organisations integrating climate and environment issues into their work. When reviewing individual programs and projects, assessments of their impact on climate and environment are made and SMC also encourages SMC supported organisations to integrate disaster risk reduction and resilience perspectives. Appendix 1 includes suggestions for a number of tools and reference materials which can be used in the practical engagement with these issues.

5.1 Organisational Assessments

SMC supported organisations work with climate- and environment-related issues in different ways. Although the organisations' conditions differ and not all interventions focus directly on these issues, there are always indirect links to climate and environment issues. SMC is of the opinion that all organisations should take this perspective into account in their policy work and overall priorities. SMC supported organisations are also encouraged to make comprehensive context analyses to identify risks, vulnerability, and capacities in their regional and/or country specific strategic planning.

When assessing an organisation, SMC notes the organisation's capacity, will, and ability to learn, develop and change towards sustainable development, as well as their ability to recognise and prevent disaster risk in partner countries.

5.2 Assessment of Interventions (Programs and Individual Projects)

All interventions (programs and individual projects) should integrate issues of environment, climate, disaster risk reduction, and resilience. How and to what degree this is done differs from case to case depending on context and type of intervention. The basic principle is that all interventions, to the greatest possible extent, should be carried out in balance with the local environment to avoid the risk of harming living conditions for current and future generations. All interventions should support sustainable use of ecosystems and contribute to an improved local environment.

Partner organisations are not only expected to work according to the do-no-harm principle when planning and implementing projects/programs, they are also expected to actively **work against** environmental degradation and/or work towards improvement when possible. Since these issues also intersect with issues

of gender equality and distribution of power, these perspectives need to be considered collectively.

Climate and environment issues dealing with sustainable development are global concerns that demand cooperation on and between different levels. SMC supported organisations are therefore expected to cooperate on issues of sustainable development and disaster risk reduction.

5.2.1 Environmental Assessment and Disaster Risk Assessment

In the planning of each project the potential consequences for the environment should be assessed along with the possibilities of contributing to environmentally sustainable development through the intervention. For instance, many interventions involve education which opens many opportunities to include environmental perspectives, making the most of the possibilities of individual projects to contribute to an improved local environment. If the intervention is deemed to potentially lead to a negative impact on climate and environment, or if it reduces a local community's resilience, a proper Environmental Assessment should be done. If the conclusion is that the intervention involves actions which are believed to damage the environment, the precautionary principle should be used. The principle states that sweeping actions with long-term consequences which cannot be foreseen should be avoided. Instead, alternative actions and procedures should be carefully examined.

A disaster risk assessment should also be done when it is considered relevant in order to bring attention to local disaster risks as well as vulnerability risks. If the disaster risk assessment reveals threats and vulnerabilities, the intervention should include plans to reduce the risks and improve the local community's capacity to handle the crises and disasters that can afflict it. The majority of the damage caused by natural disasters globally—in terms of damage on agricultural land, property, etc.—is caused by local disasters that rarely get any attention in statistics and mass media.

Risk analysis should include analysis of factors which could counteract people's adaptation to alternative patterns of behaviour which are safe from a climate and environment perspective. If such factors are neglected, they risk undermining the development work.

In cases where issues of environment, climate, disaster risks, and resilience arise, these issues should be included in the entire project cycle (analysis, activities, goals, indicators, and follow-up).

5.2.2 Cooperation with Organisations and Authorities

SMC supported organisations should deepen their cooperation with other organisations and authorities on issues of sustainable development, climate adaptation, and disaster risk reduction. When planning and implementing interventions involving sustainable use of natural resources and disaster risk

reduction, partner organisations should connect their work to authorities on different levels.

On a local level, partner organisations and local actors are expected to cooperate in influencing decision-makers and creating sustainable development in the local community.

According to the UN's strategy for climate change adaptation each country should form institutions and develop strategies for climate change adaptation. Similarly, in accordance with the Sendai Framework countries should create institutions and national platforms for disaster risk reduction, in most cases a civil defence authority. In countries with high disaster risks the SMC supported organisations should cooperate with these institutions, working together towards sustainable development.

5.2.3 Specific Operations for Disaster Risk Reduction

In areas which are particularly vulnerable to frequent natural disasters or in contexts which are clearly affected by climate change and the risk of future disasters, it is relevant to work with focused interventions for disaster risk reduction. In special cases SMC can consent to large material investments and capital goods for disaster risk reduction. A relevancy assessment should be done in each situation, explaining how this funding is aligned with the goals of the grant support to civil society or the grant support to humanitarian action.

6. Appendix 1: Tools and References

Read more about our methods and tools regarding climate and environmental issues under the Learning Center at our website:

<https://www.missioncouncil.se/en/larcenter/miljo-och-klimat/>