

This document (the Strategy) describes the direction of the work of SMC - Faith in Development during the period of 2022 - 2026. The Strategy is developed by the SMC secretariat in cooperation with the SMC board and member organizations in a consultative process that took place between April 2020 and April 2021. The Strategy was endorsed by the member organizations at the SMC annual meeting on May 19, 2021.

The document is written in the first-person plural form “we”, emphasising the common ownership that members of the SMC organization have for this Strategy. The SMC board, the secretariat, and the member organizations all have different roles to play in this common “we”. The Strategy guides the Operational Plans and applications that we develop between 2022 and 2026.

The Strategy consists of four parts. Part 1 describes our mission and main areas where we want to contribute to change. Part 2 describes the strategic roles of the organization and the shifts we are aiming for during the period. Part 3 describes three thematic areas that we will be prioritizing in our work during the period. Part 4 describes how we integrate monitoring and learning during the period.

1. Our basic principles

Our vision

Our vision is for the Kingdom of God to be manifested on earth. This means a world free of poverty and oppressive structures, where people are empowered and where God’s creation is cared for responsibly, for the benefit of future generations.

Our motto is “Faith in development”. This expresses our belief that God has a plan for our world and that we are included in God’s mission for restoration and unification of mankind and of the Earth. God’s love is the driving force in our work for a just, peaceful and sustainable world where human rights are respected. This gives us hope that a better world is within reach – that every one of us, together, can contribute to the change and the development we want to see in the world.

Our identity and our mission

For over 100 years SMC has been a leading ecumenical forum *to clarify God’s mission in the world through testimony, service and fellowship based on a holistic view in a global perspective*¹. This comprehensive view of the Mission² entails serving people in words and deeds beyond ethnic, cultural and confessional boundaries. We do this through international, human rights-based development cooperation and humanitarian

¹ SMC Statutes

² This is sometimes referred to as *holistic mission*

interventions, through advocacy and theological reflection, through evangelism and congregational development as well as mutual learning and global relationships.³

In Swedish civil society today, SMC is a broad platform for churches as well as missionary and development organizations based on the Christian faith⁴ to engage in collaboration and dialogue concerning this holistic mission. We have an extensive network consisting of 31 member organizations and their cooperating partners in over 50 countries. Through this we play an important role as a meeting place for a multitude of actors that want to share experiences and learn from each other.

Our identity and our mission are also linked to our status as a faith-based organization. Therefore, we have two specific tasks: to contribute to increased knowledge on the role of religion in society, and to protect the freedom of religion or belief for all.

Our view on change and development in a complex world

We see many trends that affect the fulfilment of our mission, on a global scale as well as in specific countries or local contexts. Currently there are many crisis situations and other factors on systemic and structural levels that obstruct social, financial, and ecologically sustainable development and keep people trapped in poverty.⁵ At the same time there are trends that bring hope that the world we want to see is obtainable.

Eight trends in the world around us

In a forward-looking context analysis, we identify eight important trends that we believe will have an impact on our work and our goals during the strategy period 2022 – 2026⁶.

1. The Covid-19 pandemic and the short as well as long term effects on the fulfilment of the goals in Agenda 2030
2. The climate and environmental crisis, including the threat to biodiversity.
3. Deteriorating conditions for the civil society following shrinking democratic space in the world and violation of human rights.
4. Changing conditions for Swedish and International development aid as fundamental principles of development aid are disputed.
5. Decreasing multilateralism and global solidarity, increasing polarization and geopolitical power shifts.
6. The emergence and mobilisation of new social movements, such as youth movements.

³ SMC Value Foundation (2015)

⁴ Our Christian foundation is based on the faith and conviction that we share with Christians throughout history about Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, about a triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and about the world as God's creation. Our mission is to proclaim and embody the good news of God's kingdom. Read the Statutes of the Swedish Mission Council, Section 1, for further details."

⁵ In this strategy, we use the widely accepted definition of sustainable development, which includes three dimensions: social, economic, and ecological sustainability. It also forms the basis for Agenda 2030.

⁶ The environmental analysis was developed by a project group at the office between June and September 2020 and has been validated by the board and member organisations through a consultation process. Given the tumultuous situation during 2020 and 2021, there is significant uncertainty regarding how current developments will impact our operations from 2022 to 2026. However, even though we cannot answer how, we believe that these trends will affect us, our network, and the activities we aim to support for many years to come. The complete report is an important reference document for our work and can be sent out for further reading.

7. A religious and ecumenical landscape in constant transformation; where theology and new collaborations develop at the same time as religion and politics interact in positive as well as negative ways.
8. Increased digitalisation with both positive and negative effects.

Religious literacy is key

As a faith-based actor we maintain that belief is a central factor to understand and explain how changes come about. Religion, values, and norms matter to all that are involved in international work, regardless of background, faith or belief. The concept of religious literacy is broad, and we believe it is a skill that is required of us all to navigate in different social, cultural economic and political contexts.

Religious literacy helps us to work efficiently in an ever-changing world. We claim that it is especially important in relation to the current trends in society that we have identified in our context analysis. Religious literacy is crucial in our work to *leave no one behind* – which is the motto that summarises the goals for sustainable development outlined in Agenda 2030.

Change happens through a pluralistic society

In our view, a strong and pluralistic civil society is the main entry point to working for change. We are ourselves a platform for civil society and regard collaboration between different actors as a prerequisite for societal change. The change agents that we support through our member organizations are active in society in many ways, on local, national, regional and global levels. They are youth movements, children's rights organizations, women's networks, churches and faith groups, organizations working for the environment, for peace and for human rights. They are actors working with humanitarian aid, as well as long term development. They are Bible study groups, interreligious networks, social movements, academic actors and many more. We believe that it is through this multitude of actors that democratic and sustainable societies can develop.

We support actors in the civil society, as they are catalysts for change both for individual rights-holders and on systemic and structural level. When people come together and get organized, they can speak with one common voice. This strengthens them in claiming their rights from those that have moral and legal obligation to guarantee these rights – whether they be states, corporations, or other actors. Collaborations, networking, and broad platforms for cooperation with other actors are also important tools for empowerment. In summary, mobilisation and organization are key in efficient rights-based work.⁷

A Strategy adaptable to changing conditions

The current trends that we have identified have both positive and negative effects on the conditions under which change agents within the civil society operate. Therefore, we will continuously analyse the context, including risks and opportunities, that could influence

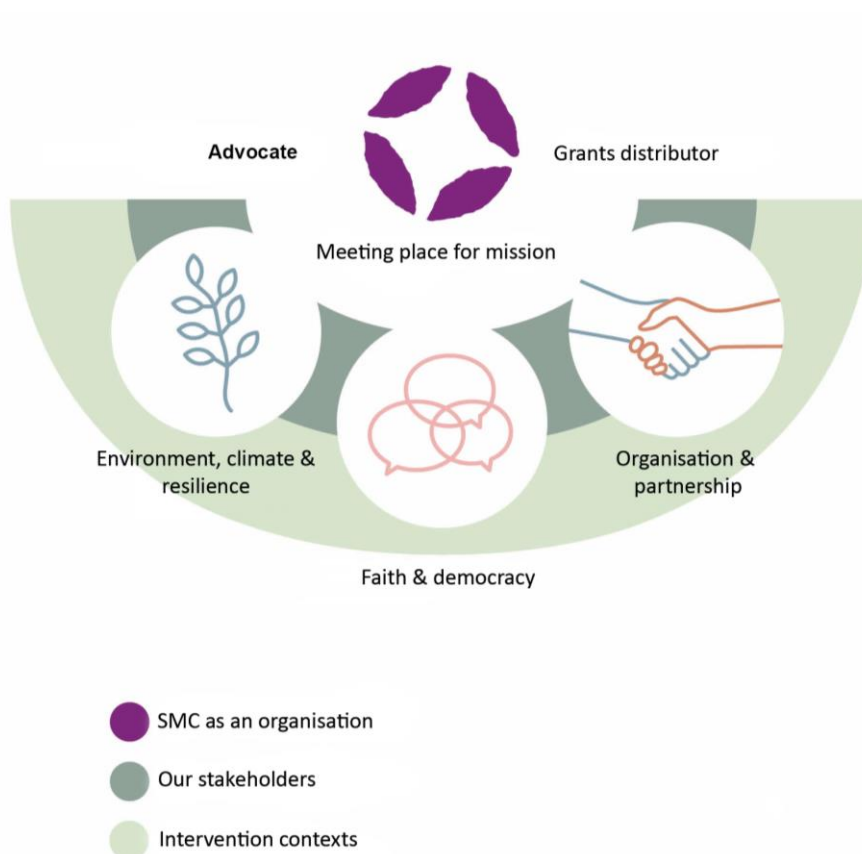
⁷ SMC:s policy för Human Rights Perspective (2014)

the implementation of this Strategy. In this way, we can continue to be relevant and efficient in our operations and in our working methods, even though conditions will certainly change during the period.

Three roles and three thematic areas

Below we will present the changes we want to see based on our vision, our identity, our mission, and the world around us. We will also introduce the strategic choices we make and how we will use the Strategy in our practical work.

We have chosen to elucidate this through applying three strategic roles and prioritized thematic areas. They are described in the following illustration:



The roles describe the organizational added value of SMC and the progress we as an organization want to see during the period. The thematic areas are based on three broad themes that are especially relevant during the period and where we can clearly see that we have added value in relation to our main stakeholders: member organizations, cooperating partners, decision makers and civil servants. The roles amplify the changes that we want to see through implementation of the thematic areas. The roles and the thematic areas need to interact with each other to reach synergies, engagement and goals

on all levels. Activities carried out within the three roles do not necessarily relate to any of the thematic areas, as the roles have a broader scope.

A foundation for the roles as well as the thematic areas is that SMC as an organization is sustainable, promotes learning and has financial stability. In addition, the SMC Secretariat needs to be an attractive workplace with efficient work routines and sufficient resources and skills required to implement the Strategy.

2. Our strategic roles 2022 - 2026

During the period 2022 – 2026 our work is performed within the framework of three strategic roles:

1. Meeting place for mission in a holistic perspective
2. Development cooperation and humanitarian assistance
3. Advocacy for strategic issues of common interest

Each role is introduced with an overall organizational goal that summarises how we want SMC as an organization to work, act, and be perceived during the period 2022-2026

Meeting place for mission from a holistic perspective

Organizational goal for the role Meeting place 2022-2026

During the period SMC is a vibrant meeting place where issues such as mission, human rights and sustainable development can be discussed in an open and secure environment. The different member organizations' needs and experiences are utilized and can enrich each other's work, thereby strengthening the common commitment of being part of God's mission.

Diversity and holistic approach

SMC as a meeting place accommodates a broad ecumenical scope and a diversity of organizations. This is an added value that we want to develop during 2022 – 2026. Through this diversity we unite around a common holistic view that mission is about serving others in word and deed⁸ – this is what we sometimes call holistic mission. At the same time, among us there is a multitude of perspectives on the nature of mission and how it can be lived and carried out in practice. Therefore, we want to raise our level of ambition in our role as meeting place for dialogue and mutual learning on the meaning of holistic mission, including its connection to Human Rights and Agenda 2030.

New forms for dialogue and collaboration

We want to utilize and appreciate all member organizations' needs and experiences. By developing new forms for meetings, share experiences and strengthen communication

⁸ Collaboration aims to clarify Gods mission in the world through testimony, service and togetherness based on a holistic view in a global perspective SMC's statutes §1.

within the network, we can support each other in our common mission regarding issues such as organizational development, leadership, and faith.

We also want to see an increased involvement from our member organizations in developing the potential of our network, for example by initiating or participating in working groups on issues of common interest. These working groups or communities of practice can highlight topics such as seconded staff, child and youth, the practice of mission or focus on different geographical contexts.

Strengthened bilingualism between God's mission and Agenda 2030

We want to continue developing our work and our communication based on the motto: Faith in development. This means that belief is a force in and for mission, human rights, and sustainable development.

We particularly want to promote a bilingual approach to God's Mission and Agenda 2030 and show how theological or belief-based discourse relates to development terminology. This we want to do both internally within our network and among actors outside our network.

Bilingualism also entails preparedness to manage tensions that arise between these different languages. We strive to be a meeting place where, through trusting conversations, we can share important issues that may be challenging, preferably employing the methods of receptive ecumenism.

Deeper collaboration and openness

To continue being a leading ecumenical forum with a mission focus, we want to deepen our collaboration with the Christian Council of Sweden and other relevant ecumenical networks in Sweden and internationally.⁹ We need to learn from each other and engage in theological reflection on issues related to mission, human rights, and sustainable development from a global perspective. We also embrace openness to collaboration with different types of partners around the world, such as organizations with a different religious identity. Our expertise in religious literacy and freedom of religion or belief is an important asset in these collaborations.

Grants distributor to international development cooperation and humanitarian aid¹⁰

Organizational goal for the role as Grants distributor 2022 - 2026

During this period, SMC serves as a relevant and efficient intermediary for grants to international development cooperation and humanitarian efforts. SMC acts transparently and responsibly in relation to its commitments.

⁹ Important networks on a global level include the World council of churches, the World Evangelical Alliance and Micah Global

¹⁰ SMC's role as a Humanitarian actor is being reevaluated as this funding from Sida ceased in December 2022.

The network of our member organizations and their partners is crucial in realising our vision of God's kingdom being manifested in the world. Through rights-based, long-term development cooperation, communication, internships, and humanitarian interventions, we also contribute to achieving the global goals of Agenda 2030. In line with our core values, we channel grants with the aim to save lives, alleviate suffering, and contribute to the development of a sustainable, just, peaceful, gender-equal, and democratic society where human rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled.

Effective and dynamic administration of grants

As an intermediary for funding, our role includes facilitating, quality assuring, capacity building, providing meeting places for collaboration and learning, encouraging advocacy efforts, and providing financial support. All of this is important for our intermediation to be effective and relevant.

Our support should be efficient and effective for development cooperation and humanitarian aid. This means striving for our development work to be as sustainable as possible, in a transparent and efficient manner. For us, this entails strong local ownership and a focus on building resilience based on human rights. Support to our member organizations should be dialog-oriented, long-term, predictable, flexible, and promote innovation. In this way, we aim to facilitate compliance with the requirements of respective funding sources for all actors involved.

Targeted thematic initiatives

To promote local ownership, we aim to create the best possible conditions for our member organizations and their partners to themselves define the focus of their interventions. We strive to minimize control of the grants to what is required by donors. However, we will make targeted efforts to strengthen the incentives for our member organizations and their partners to develop their work in three areas. These areas are closely related to our three thematic areas for the period (see part 3):

- More effective forms of financial support, including core funding.
- Strengthened environmental and climate perspectives in interventions.
- Improved integration of religious literacy and freedom of religion or belief in interventions.

We will follow up on the progress of our overall portfolio of interventions in two ways by monitoring: a) how the interventions contribute to the goals of each grant, and b) how they contribute to the goals we have set for our thematic areas.

Increased focus on capacity development and learning.

Improving learning and developing capacity is something we have been working actively with for a long time. During this period, the secretariat will continue to develop this work together with the member organizations to contribute to more effective development cooperation and strengthened civil society organizations within the network. An important part of this is our system for organizational assessments, including capacity development plans. Another important part is the secretariat's ongoing dialogue with the member organizations that SMC channels funds to. We also aim to continue developing

innovative digital methods and approaches to contribute to quality assurance and capacity development, where our member organizations, their partners, and our secretariat can learn together.

During this period, we will explore alternatives to seek broader collaboration and funding for development efforts, humanitarian aid, and initiatives that strengthen the coherence and complementarity of the nexus between humanitarian aid, development, and peace.

Advocate for strategic issues of common interest

Organizational goal for the role of advocate 2022 to 2026

During this period SMC is a respected and sought-after advocate, contributing to the role of faith-based and religious actors being considered in Swedish and international development policy.

Over time we have developed a particular expertise in the areas of religious literacy and freedom of religion or belief. Together with our member organizations, we have also played an important role in the Swedish aid debate, where we along with other organizations and networks monitor Sweden's development policy with a particular focus on Agenda 2030, the Swedish framework for development cooperation, and civil society's democratic space.¹¹

Advocacy based on expertise

We now want to take the next step as an advocate of strengthening religious literacy and the integration of freedom of religion or belief in the development sector. The expertise within our network and our resources in freedom of religion or belief are of interest at Swedish, European, and international levels. We have the potential to bridge locked positions in the polarized field around issues of religious freedom, human rights, and democracy.

During this period, we want to use our expertise to advocate primarily within the thematic areas of *Faith and democracy*, and *Environment, climate, and resilience* (see part 3). The aim is to integrate these issues into current political processes related to development and foreign policy.

Links between capacity development and advocacy

Our advocacy work should be transparent and results oriented. We want to build on local ownership that embraces a rights-based approach and perspectives on development held by people living in poverty. Advocacy work based on local experiences is called rooted advocacy. This requires good coordination between our secretariat, our member organizations, and their partners. It is particularly important in the thematic areas where

¹¹ In this role CONCORD Sweden and the Network of managing directors are the most important networks during the period.

we want to see stronger links between capacity development and advocacy. During this period, we want to strengthen the advocacy work of our member organizations and their partners, through both development and communication efforts. We see good opportunities to collaborate on joint training and advocacy initiatives during partner visits and on platforms such as Almedalen and the Human rights days (MR-dagarna).

Collaboration in relevant networks

In relation to decision-makers, officials, and political representatives from both the government and opposition, we want to be a credible dialogue partner, both on our own and in networks. Working in and through networks is an important method for us. During the period, we will actively participate in various networks at both national and international levels, not least to contribute to the goals in the thematic areas.¹²

As advocacy work is needed at all levels, we will use the opportunity to express ourselves on domestic and European developments related to our thematic profile issues. The Swedish Christian Council is an important ally in this context.

Depending on additional funding, we, as advocates, will work for systemic changes at the regional and global level in the EU and UN through new collaborations with actors such as secular human rights and democracy organizations, NORFORB, and the networks of our member organizations.

3. Our strategic areas 2022-2026

During the upcoming strategy period 2022-2026, we want to work more focused on three thematic areas. These areas are based on, and relate to, our three roles – as described in Part 2. The thematic areas indicate a direction at the same time as they connect our capacity development, quality assurance, and advocacy work within each respective area. The thematic areas are also supported by our other thematic perspectives and approaches that are mainstreamed in our work: gender equality, rights perspective, conflict sensitivity, and religious literacy.¹³ We believe that the thematic areas will help us to strategically collaborate in both planning, implementation, and monitoring of our activities. We also believe that it will help us strengthen the links between the interventions supported in partner countries through dissemination and the operational work that our office is responsible for. Each thematic area has an overall goal that describes the change we want to see within each respective area. We have also formulated several actor goals that describe how actors in the civil society, as well as rights holders and duty bearers, can contribute to the goal during the period.

¹² Strategic networks in Sweden are: Kunskapsforum för religion och utveckling; Swedish network for Humanitarian Actors (SNHA) and the Resilience network. Important international networks are: GNDR (Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction), <http://www.gndr.org>; PaRD (International Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development) and NORFORB (Nordic Ecumenical Network on Freedom of Religion or Belief) with the shared [FORB Learning Platform](#)

¹³ See each policy respectively.

Thematic area: Faith and democracy

Goal

A vibrant and resilient civil society actively working to secure democratic participation, religious and belief freedom for all, where the important role of religious actors in achieving Agenda 2030 and human rights is considered by relevant actors.

Partner goals

Member organizations and partners

Member organizations and their partners work strategically and inclusively, together and in networks with others on advocacy and mobilization to ensure democratic participation, human rights, and the fulfilment of Agenda 2030. Freedom of religion or belief and religious literacy form an important basis for this work.

Decision-makers and Civil servants in Sweden

Decision-makers in the government and parliament as well as officials in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Sida increasingly consider issues related to freedom of religion or belief, the role of religious actors, and civil society diversity in shaping Sweden's development and foreign policy. They contribute to strengthening civil society's space and opportunities to in their own right work for democracy and human rights.

Democracy actors in Sweden and internationally

Swedish and international democracy actors such as democracy institutes, academic institutions, ecumenical networks, and civil society platforms take freedom of religion or belief into account in their defense of democratic space and human rights.

Decision-makers and officials internationally

The EU, UN, and other international actors increase their understanding of how faith, religious actors, and freedom of religion or belief contribute to democracy and human rights in international development policy.

Respect for human rights is a prerequisite for a democratic society. Based on our Christian values, we believe that every person is created in the image of God and has inherent and equal worth, with the right to live their life in freedom. Therefore, we strive to ensure that all individuals can enjoy their rights. This rights-based perspective, along with our specific expertise in the right to freedom of religion or belief, forms the foundation of our program, *Faith and Democracy*.

We aim to counter the polarization of human rights

In a world where human rights are being questioned, there is a need for forces that counter polarization. Drawing on our own and our network's religious literacy and bilingualism, we can see the connections between faith and human rights. With this expertise, we seek to bridge divides and break through entrenched positions.

It is unfortunate that an increasing number of decision-makers and opinion leaders, both in Sweden and internationally, are questioning the human rights system. We are concerned when national interests are prioritized over international commitments or when human rights are pitted against each other. We observe that freedom of religion or

belief is unfortunately used in this polarization, for example, when it is pitted against women's rights or the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals. We aim to contribute knowledge about human rights in their entirety and foster understanding of how conflicts of rights can be addressed.

We seek to strengthen democracy through civil society

The international civil society is a key in building a better world after the pandemic. Within civil society, there is a diversity of actors at various levels who have a particular ability to contribute to a just and equal world where human rights are respected. Through our broad international network, we aim to strengthen the contributions of faith-based actors to a sustainable, fair, peaceful, gender-equal, and democratic society. By supporting local organization and promoting networking at different levels, we seek to enhance the vitality, diversity, and resilience of the international civil society.

In a strong civil society, all rights holders, regardless of their identity (such as gender, age, or religious affiliation), can assert their rights and manage conflicts. This promotes a pluralistic and inclusive democracy. Our network in Sweden and around the world has much to contribute to the work of expanding democratic space and ensuring freedom of religion or belief for all.

We want to enhance our international advocacy work

With religious literacy, we can both conduct effective advocacy and provide important perspectives on sustainable and rights-based development cooperation.

Within this program, advocacy is a crucial component in combating unjust power structures. Based on our expertise, we have long worked to influence Swedish development and foreign policies. However, our expertise is also sought after by international democracy actors and decision-makers, such as those within the EU and the UN. We want to explore the possibility of meeting this demand within the thematic focus areas of the program, including working to expand our funding.

An important network for our advocacy work is the Nordic Freedom of Religion or Belief Network (NORFORB), in which several of our member organizations are also involved. During this period, we aim to work more strategically within NORFORB and collaborate with the network to contribute to achieving the goals of the program.

We also recognize that religious literacy and freedom of religion or belief are necessary to achieve the goals of Agenda 2030. We emphasize the role that faith and freedom of religion or belief play in safeguarding the democratic space of civil society and building a sustainable society. Therefore, the program focuses on contributing to Goal 16, promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, and Goal 17, strengthening global partnerships.¹⁴

¹⁴ The program also relates to goals concerning social and economic sustainability: Goal 1 to eradicate poverty; Goal 3 to promote good health and well-being for all people; Goal 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all; Goal 5 to achieve gender equality; and Goal 10 to reduce inequalities within and among countries.

Thematic area: Environment, Climate and Resilience

Goal

A vital and resilient civil society that actively contributes to the green transition, securing sustainable communities for future generations, in line with international commitments and our mission as stewards of God's creation.

Actor goals

Member organizations and partners

As active advocacy and development actors, our member organizations and their partners contribute to sustainable societal and livelihood systems. Through green transition efforts, they also contribute to improved environment, reduced climate impact, increased biodiversity, and resilient communities.

Decision-makers and Civil servants in Sweden

Decision-makers in the government and parliament, as well as civil servants in the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (UD) and Sida, consider the policy recommendations we put forth in collaboration with various civil society actors and networks. Our aim is to contribute to a green transition with sustainable societal and livelihood systems that safeguard the environment, climate and biodiversity, and enhance the resilience of local communities.

Decision-makers and officials internationally

Decision-makers and civil servants at the international level consider the policy recommendations we put forth in collaboration with various civil society actors and networks. Our aim is to contribute to a green transition with sustainable societal and livelihood systems that safeguard the environment, climate, biodiversity, and enhance the resilience of local communities.

The thematic area of *Environment, Climate, and Resilience* revolves around our responsibility as stewards of God's creation for future generations. Through a holistic perspective on humankind and the environment, and with a rights-based approach, we aim to contribute to a green transition towards socially and ecologically sustainable societies. Additionally, we seek to utilize religious literacy to learn more about the positive and sometimes negative impact of religion on efforts for a green transition worldwide.

Civil society can accelerate a green transition

We operate in an ever-changing world where the impact of climate change is increasingly evident, while we humans continue to exploit natural resources in an unsustainable and unequal manner. Several of our partners work in areas where livelihoods such as agriculture are becoming increasingly challenging, and access to water is diminishing as biodiversity is threatened.

Many states have made global commitments for climate and biodiversity, but they are not being fully implemented. World leaders (and thus duty-bearers) have not made sufficient efforts to achieve a green transition in the post-Covid-19 pandemic recovery.

A green transition would entail respecting the limitations of nature's resources and prioritizing resilient systems. Civil society has an important role to play in decision-making, policy, and planning processes for a green transition. Through our international network, which encompasses a diversity of civil society actors, we have a unique opportunity to contribute to this societal change (read more about this in the program for *Faith and Democracy*). One way is to mobilize rights-holders and hold duty-bearers accountable for establishing sustainable systems for livelihoods and natural resource management.

Religious literacy, resilience, and localization

We know that religion, belief systems, and other convictions are important factors that influence people's attitudes, values, and motivations. Within our network, there is a diversity of faith-based actors who, through their bilingualism, can contribute to normative dialogues. In doing so, we are strengthening global environmental, climate, and resilience efforts.

Within the priority area, we aim to continue our work to strengthen resilience and complementarity between humanitarian, development, and peace efforts. This involves linking efforts in the nexus between humanitarian work, development cooperation, and peace operations to save lives, reduce suffering, and contribute to resilient and sustainable local communities. Our focus is to enable local partners of our member organizations to take action during crises and disasters. This requires us to work towards strengthening and operationalizing the localization agenda in policies and guidelines from donors.

We want to join forces to hold others accountable

We see advocacy towards local, national, and international authorities and decision-makers as crucial to achieving the program's goals. Our primary method for this is collaboration in networks. Specifically, we want decision-makers to implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction¹⁵ and the Paris Agreement for climate adaptation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The program also aligns clearly with Agenda 2030, primarily with Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation for all, Goal 13 on climate change, and Goal 15 on ecosystems and biodiversity. However, Goal 2 on hunger and Goal 17 on partnerships are also important for contributing to sustainable livelihood systems.

¹⁵ In particular goal 5. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>

Thematic area: Organization and partnership

Goal

We strengthen our member organizations and their partners so that together they can effectively work towards a sustainable, fair, peaceful, gender-equal, and democratic society where people can influence their living conditions and where human rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled.

Actor goals

Member organizations and partners

Our member organizations and their partners are strong and sustainable actors for societal change, both internationally and nationally, individually, and collectively as a network. They are learning and adaptive actors who, based on their identity and mission, contribute to sustainable development and human rights in a development and aid-effective manner.

Decision-makers and Civil servants in Sweden

Decision-makers in the government and parliament, as well as civil servants at Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, act in a development and aid-effective manner in their decisions and guidelines. They have an increased understanding that development and aid effectiveness can take various forms among the actors within our network and provide favourable conditions for these civil society actors to develop.

The thematic area of *Organization and Partnership* aims to strengthen the capacity of our member organizations and partners, both as civil society actors and in their ability to collaborate in partnerships to contribute to a better world. Through this area, we also aim to increase the effectiveness of development and aid in our role as intermediaries, which is also connected to our programs on *Faith and Democracy*, as well as *Environment, Climate, and Resilience*. However, the area of *Organization and Partnership* is also important for our role as an advocate and as a meeting place for mission in a holistic perspective. Our extensive experience in organizational development is an added value in this work.

Organizations and organising in transformation

In our theory of change, we describe how collaboration with different actors in civil society is a natural entry point in processes of change. A vibrant and resilient civil society with strong organizations is a key catalyst for democracy and sustainable development. This is particularly important in countering the shrinking democratic space worldwide.

Swedish actors, us included as well as Sida, need to have increased understanding and preparedness to develop forms of collaboration at the same pace as new social movements mobilize. During this period, we therefore aim to work towards developing more relevant forms of support, innovation, and partnerships in our intermediary role,

including an increased proportion of core support to the partners of our member organizations.

Capacity development and learning are needed to achieve our goals

Our organizational assessment system with accompanying capacity development plans is important for implementing and monitoring this area. These plans should be tailored to the different roles, conditions, and needs of our member organizations.

To achieve the goals, we will work on organizational learning, capacity development, and evaluation. We will focus on quality and accountability, particularly in areas such as finance and anti-corruption.¹⁶ During this period, we also aim to work on increased accessibility through digitalization, including the use of the digital learning platform Fabo.

Through our focus on religious literacy, we have expertise in how faith-based organizations can contribute to sustainable development and how faith relates to leadership and organizational development. This is something we want to further build upon within the framework of this thematic area.

The work within this area also relates to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Agenda 2030. Specifically, it relates to Goal 16, which is about effective and transparent institutions with accountability at all levels, and Goal 17, which is about partnerships. In the long run, this area contributes to strengthening the achievement of all the SDGs that our member organizations work towards.

4. Follow-up and Learning

In accordance with our policy for learning and evaluation, we aim to continuously learn from what we do and the changes we observe around us.¹⁷ We need to be adaptive to remain relevant in relation to changes both within our network and in the world around us. Therefore, a strategy spanning a period of five years, from 2022 to 2026, must necessarily be reviewed and adjusted as needed.

One way to accomplish this is by establishing a framework for learning that involves systematising and prioritising space for learning and adjustments during this period. It also involves identifying several learning priorities that we want to focus on during this time, particularly issues related to our strategic roles or thematic areas. For these issues, we need to gather evidence (which we refer to as signs of change), take time for regular reflection, and periodically evaluate our work.

The working groups and communities of practice that we encourage within the framework of the Strategy are also important forums for knowledge exchange and

¹⁶ These areas provide important quality standards such as the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.

¹⁷ SMC's policy for learning and evaluation (2019).

learning between our member organizations, their partners, our secretariat, and other relevant actors, such as other civil society organizations, consultants, or academia.

Follow-up, adjustments, and learning related to ongoing work take place within the scope of the annual operational planning process, including reporting and evaluation. This work also includes regular environmental scanning and analysis of risks and opportunities. Through this process, the SMC board can assess on an annual basis whether there is a need for adjustments or updates to the Strategy at an overall level. In the case of significant strategic changes, all member organizations are involved in connection with the annual or council meeting. With a focus on results and learnings from the first three years of the Strategy, the board and secretariat will provide formal feedback to all member organizations during the annual meeting in 2025.