

THE SWALLOWS IB ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Adopted 2010-12-16

The Swallows India Bangladesh (IB) has a long history of working with social, economic and environmental sustainability. Within the organization there is a strong belief that social justice, sustainable livelihood outcomes and environmental sustainability go hand in hand. Poor people pay the price and bear the consequences of environmental destruction and climate changes, while rich people of the world to a great extent have been responsible for the problems we have. The Swallows IB supports projects and programmes working for a sustainable development in South and North and constantly works to improve the internal environmental work. This policy is developed to be a guideline for the environmental work of The Swallows IB.

Environmental sustainability

For The Swallows IB, environmental sustainability contains of social, economical and ecological aspects. The social aspect stresses peoples' influence over their situation and everybody's right to take part of political processes. Here a gender analysis is essential since men globally have a bigger ecological footprint than women and a stronger control over natural resources. The economic aspect is defined as a fair use and division of resources. The ecological aspect of environmental sustainability stresses the importance of preservation of the eco system.

The world stands in front of enormous challenges. Climate change is already now affecting poor people in India, Bangladesh and all over the world. If profound changes do not occur in the narrow future, it might be too late. Other problems, such as water scarcity, pollution, use of agrochemicals in farming, deforestation, erosion and soil degradation etc are threatening eco systems in the world, the people depending on them and the lives of future generations.

The Swallows IB is dedicated to face the challenges and start acting to reduce the threats. By adopting the concept of environmental justice we recognize everybody's equal rights to use natural resources in a sustainable manner and everybody's responsibility not do so in a non-sustainable manner. The Swallows IB works close to the people who are worst affected by environmental destruction and climate change. Their reality is the point of departure for our work. We strongly recognize their knowledge and visions about how to live in a sustainable way. We work to exchange information and to reinforce and value these activities and ambitions.

Environmental work in South

The Swallows IB works to promote sustainable environmental work in India and Bangladesh in two ways:

- By direct support to initiatives/programmes in the forefront of an environmentally sustainable development, such as locally developed agricultural and forestry practices, as a result from strengthening the capacity of local people and local institutions.
- By adopting an environmental perspective on all projects/programmes. This is done by assessments of actual and possible outcomes/effects due to project/programme activities during both planning and evaluations.

Environmental work in Sweden

In Sweden, The Swallows IB works for a change to sustainable lifestyles, which includes means of transport, food habits, consumption, housing etc. We do so by:

- Inspiring individuals to reduce their ecological footprints and work for changes at political levels.
- Recycling work in our secondhand shop in order to show people that there are alternatives to mass consumption.
- Raising the voices of the poor. We connect people in Sweden to people in India and Bangladesh who pay the highest price for environmental destruction and climate change. We point out the links between our lives and theirs and we value and disseminate poor people’s knowledge about environmentally sustainable development.
 - Being a resource for the environmental movement, providing expertise on the “South perspective” and for the social/development movement providing an environmental perspective.

Environmental work within The Swallows IB

Environmental concern has been a central theme throughout the history of The Swallows IB. Taking these issues seriously also means having deep and long-going ambitions and demands on ourselves. Each strategic decision in the organization should consider environmental consequences. The following guidelines should be followed within the organisation:

Consumption

- When buying items for consumption, such as coffee, tea, bread, cleaning items, soap etc, those with established environmental and ethical labels should be prioritized (in Sweden for example KRAV, Bra Miljoval, Svanen, Fair Trade). As far as possible and when available, organic food should always be chosen.
- At Swallows activities organic food (vegetarian and non-vegetarian) should be prioritised.
- When buying inventories, second hand items should be prioritised, when it does not mean violating a sound and healthy working environment. If it is not possible to buy second hand inventories, those with established environmental and working environmental labels should be chosen (TCO, FSC).
- When buying computers and other electronic equipments, products with established environmental and working environment labels (TCO, Energy Star) should be prioritised.
- Certain companies should generally be avoided, due to unethical dealing with natural resources (for example Coca Cola¹) or spreading of chemicals (for example Dole²). 2010-12-16
- Products which could be suspected to contain GMO should be avoided as well as products from an unethical industry (for example chicken).
- Recycling should take place at all offices and is the responsibility of all.

Electricity

- A dialogue with the house owner should take place so that the electricity used is the most environmental friendly. Electricity with environment labels should be used in Sweden, and when possible in India and Bangladesh.
- The Swallows IB should strive to reduce the use of electricity, by installing low energy lamps when possible and not to use stand-by when we leave the work placement.
- Environmental material should be used at renovations.

¹ Coca Cola has for example established several factories in India, which has reduced the ground water level to such extent that the local population does not access clean drinking water.

² Dole is using big amounts of chemicals on their fruit plantations, harming the environment, the people working on the fields and the people living in the area.

Travels

- Staff and other representatives from The Swallows IB should travel by train or bus within the countries where we work. In India and Bangladesh car could be used, when buses and trains are not available or safe. Trains and buses should preferably be used also for travels within Europe.
- All travels by flight should be climate compensated, which is the responsibility of the accountant.

Evaluation

The environmental policy should be evaluated once a year. The different programmes in South and North as well as the internal work should be analysed from an environmental perspective. Suggestions on how to improve should be developed and spread within the organization. The board of The Swallows IB is responsible for the evaluation of the policy.