

VALUES, STRATEGIES AND PERSPECTIVES

VISION

Our vision is a just world, free from poverty, where people with power to influence their own lives live in solidarity with each other and in a long term, sustainable relationship with nature.

MISSION

Our mission is contributing to a sustainable development in South Asia in partnership with local organizations. Employing a rights-based approach, we work to improve livelihood and promote justice in South Asia. In Sweden, we focus on advocacy and promoting sustainable consumption and development.

VALUES

The Swallows India Bangladesh (The Swallows IB) is an organisation based on two fundamental values: solidarity and sustainability, which represent the cornerstones of our work.

Solidarity

For The Swallows IB solidarity means acknowledging the equal value of all people.

Sustainability

The Swallows IB fully acknowledges the Brundtland Commission's definition of sustainable development from 1987: sustainable development is a "development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

Sustainable development is a complex concept involving environmental, social, political, economic and cultural sustainability. The Swallows IB sees sustainability as a fair use of resources and as environmentally and socially just production and consumption practices. In our view, sustainability can only be achieved if special consideration is given to the social and environmental conditions under which global products are created. Therefore, sustainability is a globally shared responsibility and it links together our everyday realities with global structures and politics in both North and South.

The measure of sustainability should be the "production of human wellbeing (not necessarily material goods) per unit of extraction from or imposition upon nature" (IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature).

PERSPECTIVES

Power

Power is a controversial and intensively debated concept. The Swallows IB views power as relational, institutional and discursive. Power is continuously circulating in the most capillary places.

Knowledge and power are closely interlinked. This is why it is important to create space for other voices and knowledges to redefine development. In partnership we work to empower women and men and by that change power relations in the household, the civil society, the state and the market from the local to the global.

Social Movements

Social movement is one vehicle of social change. Historically social movements have been the drivers of revolutions and fast changes of societal structures. With globalisation, social movements have become even more important as carriers of communication, connection and identity. Globalisation is proved to have increased the deficit of democracy in the world. Social movements have a significant role to play in deepening the meaning and practice of democracy.

Poverty

Poverty is multidimensional and includes lack of capabilities, freedom, rights and political power. Poverty is a subjective state and the psychological experience and impact of poverty are of uttermost importance for the poor themselves (“Voices of the Poor” Reports, WB 1999). It is about not being able to live in dignity and to realise your aspirations. The Swallows IB is committed to fighting poverty as defined by the poor people themselves.

Poverty is closely linked to inequality and injustice which are often the root causes of poverty. The Swallows IB is committed to addressing the root causes of poverty through fighting injustice and inequality by strengthening/ empowering people to assert their rights and by challenging the unjust structures that keep people in poverty.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

For The Swallows IB as an organization:

- To be an open forum that attracts and makes use of the human resources in its surroundings.
- Increased economic independence.
- Increased visibility.
- Increased influence on political processes through collaborations and networking.

For the development cooperation in the South:

Significant improvements in the living conditions of our target groups through:

- Fighting poverty by creating livelihood opportunities, increasing awareness of human rights and increasing people’s influence over political and social processes.
- Create the preconditions for a sustainable use of resources while valorising the local knowledge as a point of departure.

For communication work in Sweden:

- To be a development cooperation actor visible to politicians, media, other organizations and the public and to be a source of information on India and Bangladesh.
- To advocate for sustainable development and create awareness among decision makers and the general public on how the global structures affect people's lives both in the North and the South and how the decisions and behaviours in the North affect the people and the environment in the South.
- To work for changes in lifestyles in Sweden that will contribute to sustainable development.

RELATION TO THE GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY

The Swallows IB agrees to the eight Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles (Istanbul 2010) listed in the box below.

1. Respect and promote human rights and social justice

CSOs (Civil Society Organisations) are effective as development actors when they ... develop and implement strategies, activities and practices that promote individual and collective human rights, including the right to development, with dignity, decent work, social justice and equity for all people.

2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girls' rights

CSOs are effective as development actors when they ... promote and practice development cooperation embodying gender equity, reflecting women's concerns and experience, while supporting women's efforts to realize their individual and collective rights, participating as fully empowered actors in the development process.

3. Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation

CSOs are effective as development actors when they ... support the empowerment and inclusive participation of people to expand their democratic ownership over policies and development initiatives that affect their lives, with an emphasis on the poor and marginalized.

4. Promote Environmental Sustainability

CSOs are effective as development actors when they ... develop and implement priorities and approaches that promote environmental sustainability for present and future generations, including urgent responses to climate crises, with specific attention to the socio-economic, cultural and indigenous conditions for ecological integrity and justice.

5. Practice transparency and accountability

CSOs are effective as development actors when they ... demonstrate a sustained organizational commitment to transparency, multiple accountability, and integrity in their internal operations.

6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity

CSOs are effective as development actors when they ... commit to transparent relationships with CSOs and other development actors, freely and as equals, based on shared development goals and values, mutual respect, trust, organizational autonomy, long-term accompaniment, solidarity and global citizenship.

7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning

CSOs are effective as development actors when they ... enhance the ways they learn from their experience, from other CSOs and development actors, integrating evidence from development practice and results, including the knowledge and wisdom of local and indigenous communities, strengthening innovation and their vision for the future they would like to see.

8. Commit to realizing positive sustainable change

CSOs are effective as development actors when they ... collaborate to realize sustainable outcomes and impacts of their development actions, focusing on results and conditions for lasting change for people, with special emphasis on poor and marginalized populations, ensuring an enduring legacy for present and future generations.

The Swallows IB would like to emphasise that we have a process oriented view on change and rather use the word transformation. The Swallows IB believes that transformation is more holistic and powerful than change.

The Swallows IB believes that promoting environmental sustainability is crucial, and should be even stronger stressed than in the principles above. The Swallows IB has an environmental perspective on all programmes we run and we believe that it is important to include environmental justice in the debate, especially between North and South.

KEY CONCEPTS

- Participative analyses of the living conditions in the process of transformation.
- People engage in our programmes in order to achieve their own goals.
- Focus on dealing with the causes of poverty.
- Political participation in order to be able to influence policies and institutions.
- Opportunities and constraints should be defined by the stakeholders in the programmes.
- Livelihood strategies and desired outcomes should be defined by the target groups.
- Sustainability of interventions and attention to assuring non-dependency.
- Strengthening people and organisations to claim their rights, involving the state as a principal duty bearer in interventions while remaining critical to it.

VIEW ON PARTNERSHIP

The Swallows IB does not directly implement programmes/projects in India and Bangladesh. We always work in partnership with local organisations which have the local knowledge and expertise, and we see our role in development cooperation as facilitators. Our partnerships are guided by:

- A long-term perspective of sustainable relationships, while at the same time making sure we are not creating dependency.
- Shared values, vision, understanding and interests.
- Dialogue.
- Respect and trust.
- Openness and transparency.
- Exchange of knowledge and experience and mutual learning.

We are aware of the power relations characterizing partnerships where one party stands for financing and support, while the other implements the interventions. Moreover, we believe that an awareness of this fundamental inequality is crucial when forming partnerships under the above criteria.

TOGETHER FOR CHANGE AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

THE SWALLOWS INDIA BANGLADESH'S STRATEGY 2013 – 2017

KEY STRATEGIES

- We cooperate and collaborate with people and people's organisations sharing our values, core principles, goals and objectives.
- We are strengthening competence and capacity through supporting projects and programmes focussing on:
 - Generation of knowledge through tailored learning processes
 - Organisational - and institutional capacity building
 - Information exchange (documentation, dissemination, media strategies)
 - Establishment of horizontal and vertical networks and linkages in societies
- We are enhancing the voice of the vulnerable and marginalised through:
 - Awareness raising activities e.g. publications, seminars and other public events
 - Networking with public, civil and private organisations at local, national and international levels
 - Policy dialogues and debate
- We have strategic partners such as:
 - Forum Syd
 - CONCORD
 - Buzan Declaration and partners
 - Action Aid
 - Sida

TARGET GROUPS (WHO?)

People living in poverty, with a focus on particularly vulnerable or marginalised groups such as various minorities, women and landless.

- Each programme should identify and analyze its specific target group in line with the above priority.
- Particularly vulnerable groups are defined on the basis of local conditions.

THE MATIC PRIORITIES (WHAT?)

All interventions will start from a rights-based perspective, with particular focus on:

- Rights to natural resources.
- Strengthening the opportunities to economic security/rights for the poor and marginalised.
- Promoting the rule of law and the development of the civil society through mobilising disadvantaged groups. If the law is discriminating, lobbying towards a more inclusive and just law.

- Enhancing gender equality and the participation of women in all spheres of society.

Application

- Each programme supported by The Swallows IB should focus on at least one of the above thematic priorities.
- The specific theme for a programme is decided in dialogue with the local partners.
- Setting the above priorities does not mean that individual actions within a programme that fall within other thematic areas are excluded.

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA (WHERE?)

Today The Swallows IB is engaged in development cooperation in two countries: India and Bangladesh located in the South Asia region. We work in these countries due to historical reasons and today the cooperation with our partners in India and Bangladesh is permeated by sound knowledge and well established relationships.

Priority

Vulnerable areas in South Asia where there is a great potential to achieve long-term sustainable improvements for the target groups within our thematic priorities.

Application

- For each programme the geographical area should be defined in dialogue with the local partners and in accordance with the above priorities.
- Entering new geographical areas and establishment of contacts with new local partners is encouraged. This should be done in dialogue with existing partners, on the basis of the identified needs in the specific programme, and should be in line with the above priorities.

METHODS (HOW?)

Partnership

We view development cooperation in terms of processes that are based on working together with local organisations that share our values and have the local knowledge and expertise. The basis of our work is long-term partnerships, while at the same time we make sure that our interventions are sustainable and do not create dependency.

Supporting networks and movements

We focus on process oriented participation, including strengthening networks at local, regional and national levels. Many of our partner organisations have their own networks of partners working towards common goals. They have joined together for a specific purpose, may it be to have a common voice in advocacy work or to build their capacity and learn from each other. We believe that supporting existing networks and movements is an effective and sustainable way of reaching our objectives and achieving our vision.

PROGRAMME FORM

A programme expresses an ambition for a long-term commitment and engagement in a development issue. Our programmes include the following:

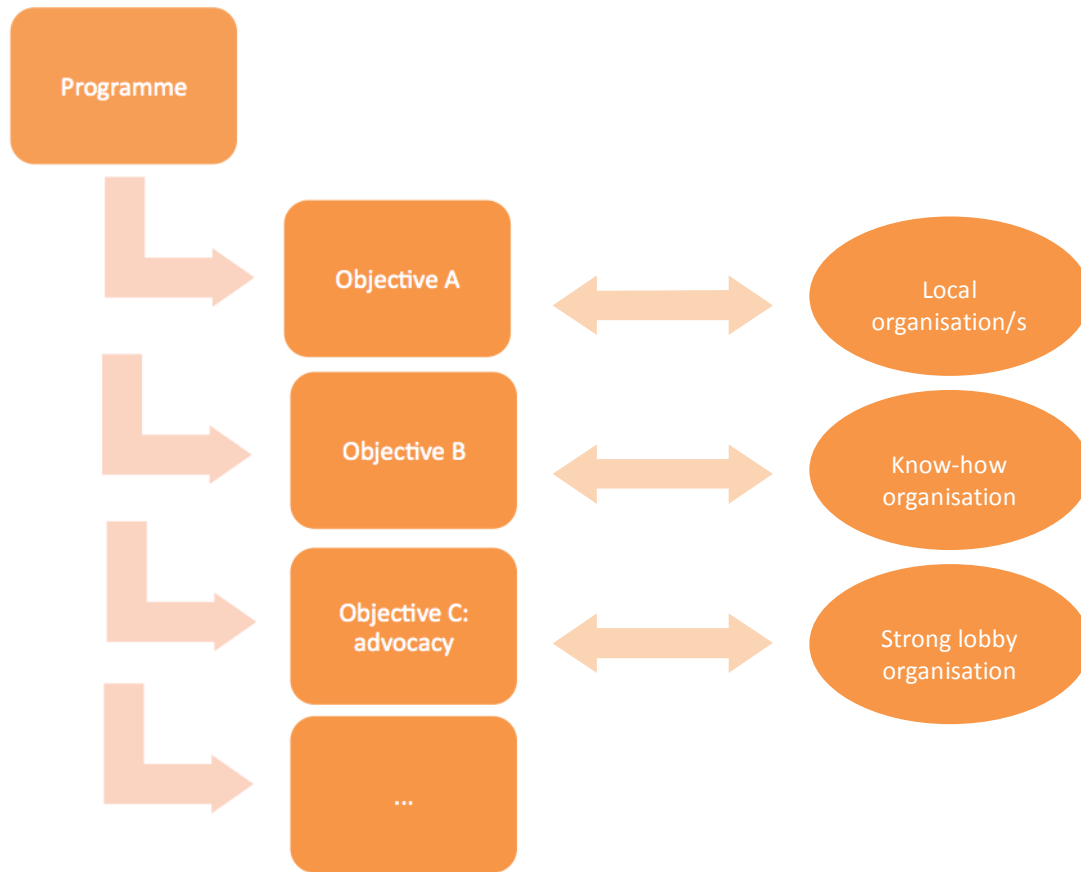
- Focus on a socially and/or geographically defined group of people, so-called target group.
- Engagement in a problem area that falls within the framework of poverty reduction and rights to the resources necessary for a dignified life.
- Cooperation with like-minded local partners engaged in similar efforts.
- Result-oriented cooperation towards measurable goals.
- Possibility to concrete actions that lead to improvements in the foreseeable future.
- Regular follow-up.

The main purpose for structuring our development efforts in programmes is to improve the quality of our work through long-term thinking and more effective planning and monitoring of results. Programme work brings together different activities and efforts within a common framework and makes goals and visions clearer. We see development as a process and programme work as providing the continuity necessary for achieving sustainable long-term impacts.

In our programmes we seek to strengthen the cooperation between local organisations. This leads to synergies that make the results of the programmes greater than the sum of the individual efforts of each organisation. Furthermore, we seek to bring together various actors in our programmes for achieving greater impact:

- Small local organisations which have the grassroots knowledge and expertise in order to make sure that our interventions start from the grassroots and benefit the grassroots in the way defined by them,
- Research organisations or organisations with expertise in methods and tools in order to ensure the quality of the intervention, and
- Organisations which are strong in advocacy and lobby work in order to achieve change at policy level.

The figure below illustrates the form a programme could take. However, in some cases one organisation could fulfil more than one function and it is not necessary that all programmes should bring together more than one organisation.



Ideally, in order to ensure sustainability the organisations coming together within the framework of a programme do this at their own initiative or interest. In this context the importance of supporting already existing networks and movements becomes apparent.