



Swedish Committee for Afghanistan

Policy

Approved by the SCA Board on December 1st 2012

Translation from Swedish approved by SG Torvald Åkesson

1. Purpose of this Policy

This Policy document contains guidance for SCA management, staff and members, and applies to all operations. It is adopted by the annual general meeting and expresses the vision, mission and values, as well as the identity and structure, of SCA. It identifies working areas and target groups, and describes important approaches and methods used when achieving development objectives.

2. Introduction

Swedish Committee for Afghanistan

Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) was founded in 1980 in protest against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The purpose was to support the Afghan people's right to self-determination and to raise public support for a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. In 1981 SCA began raising funds for humanitarian aid. This was followed by the first SCA aid intervention in 1982, consisting of medical assistance carried out by Afghan health staff.

Later on, aid interventions within the areas of education, rehabilitation of Afghans with disabilities, and rural development were initiated. The efforts expanded rapidly and have over the years evolved from emergency and humanitarian aid to the present development cooperation, in which capacity development of individuals, organizations and institutions is of great importance.

3. SCA vision, mission and values

Vision: An Afghanistan free from poverty, violence and discrimination

The vision of SCA is an Afghanistan free from poverty, violence and discrimination, where human rights are respected and all live in dignity, enjoy equal opportunity and social justice.

Mission: Giving people power over their development and their lives

The mission of SCA is to empower individuals, communities and local organizations, primarily in rural areas and with particular focus on women, girls, boys and vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, so that they may participate fully in society and influence their own development. SCA will achieve this by working closely with communities, local and national civil society organizations and relevant levels of government, and by combining capacity development, advocacy and service provision.

Core Values: *responsiveness, impartiality, equality, social justice, integrity*

Responsiveness: We work in respectful cooperation with target groups to address their needs and legitimate demands with an emphasis on local ownership.

Impartiality: While upholding the duty to be inclusive and non-discriminatory in our approach, we do not take sides in conflict and do not support specific factions or parties representing various interests in society.

Equality: We promote equal opportunities and facilitate equal access to resources for all citizens, including women, girls, boys and people with disabilities.

Social Justice: We strive to be fair to all with whom we work. While working to affirm the rights of all individuals, we recognise that differences in gender, individual capabilities and identities give rise to varied needs and interests.

Integrity: We are true to our mission, maintaining honesty and transparency in all of what we do and say, upholding a spirit of openness and sharing with stakeholders, while always prepared to be held to account for our actions.

SCA is characterized by

- respect for the Afghan people's right to self determination
- equal treatment of people regardless of religion, gender or ethnicity
- knowledge and understanding of culture and religion in Afghanistan, as well as respect for the importance that cultural and religious values have in people's lives
- compliance with universal human rights

4. SCA organization

Integrated and Unified Organisation

SCA shall work in favour of an integrated and unified organisation where members, elected representatives and staff, both in Afghanistan and Sweden, work together in a spirit of respect and dialogue, aiming to conduct all operations in accordance with the policy of SCA.

Active and Knowledgeable Membership Movement

SCA seeks to maintain and develop its membership base through strong local committees and other forms of active solidarity work, aiming at increased commitment to Afghanistan and support to aid operations through information and fundraising.

Furthermore, activities in broader-based, not geographically defined, groups and networks are encouraged.

Anyone who supports SCA's objectives can become a member. SCA is organised in accordance with democratic principles. The SCA annual general meeting/congress decides on the overall framework for the operations, statutes and policy, and elects the Board.

The Board

Within the framework of the SCA statutes, the Board has the overall responsibility for the organisation's activities including its development cooperation in Afghanistan, fundraising, association and information activities in Sweden. The Board adopts the Strategic Plan, the annual budget and work plan. The Board also appoints the organisation's chief executive, the Secretary General.

Management

SCA's operational organisation shall be characterised by efficient and competent leadership, both in Sweden and Afghanistan. Afghan staff shall exercise real influence also in the management of SCA operations in Afghanistan. SCA shall actively work to increase the proportion of women in leading positions.

The Staff

SCA shall endeavour to develop the professional capabilities of its staff. Positions in Afghanistan should be filled by Afghan nationals wherever suitably qualified persons are available.

As an employer, SCA shall promote a good and harmonious working environment, where every employee is encouraged to take responsibility and actively participate in order to develop the work of the organisation. SCA shall seek to maintain competitive employment conditions. SCA shall strive to achieve a gender balance at all staff levels and shall be prepared to allocate special resources to achieve this objective.

5. Target groups and main working areas in Afghanistan

SCA shall give priority to girls and boys, women and people with disabilities.

SCA shall focus its interventions within the sectors of Education, Health, Disability and Rural Development, with the following development objectives:

<p><u>Education development objective:</u> <i>To support all Afghan children's right to education by promoting equal access to quality education through a sustainable education system</i></p>

Health development objective: *Improved health and reduced morbidity as well as decreased maternal and child mortality rates.*

Development objective for rehabilitation of people with disabilities: *Full inclusion in society of people with disabilities, including their rights to community participation and development as well as improved access to general service development.*

Rural Development development objective: *Increased capacity among local communities to initiate, maintain and increasingly take ownership of, the process of sustainable development*

The development objectives may have to be reconsidered if circumstances change.

Further activities may be considered in emergency situations, preferably within the four sectors and in cooperation with other actors. A certain level of preparedness for humanitarian emergency interventions shall be maintained.

Detailed programme strategies with measurable outcomes shall be described in the strategic plan, which will normally cover a four year period.

6. Development approaches

A Rights-Based Approach

SCA takes a Rights-Based perspective on poverty, viewing it as a result of denied human rights. This implies that marginalisation and disempowerment, rather than simply lack of resources, are seen as root causes of poverty. Consequently, SCA shall apply a Rights-Based Approach, seeking the inclusion and empowerment of its target groups.

SCA recognises its targets groups as rights holders, free to claim and exercise their rights and responsible for being active agents in their own development. The rights-based work of SCA shall also focus on duty bearers obliged to guarantee rights, primarily the State, but also the international community, organisations and civil society, the private sector, the community, families and individuals.

The main responsibility for building a more just Afghanistan lies with the Afghan people. Being a non-Afghan organisation, SCA has the duty to contribute to and facilitate such a development, particularly within the sectors in which the organisation works.

Rights-based principles and gender equality: SCA shall work in accordance with rights based principles of participation, equality, non-discrimination, accountability and

transparency. Gender analysis shall be done to facilitate the participation of both women and men, girls and boys. Special attention shall be paid to strengthening the capacity and participation of women and girls.

Put into practice

Within a Rights-Based Approach, SCA's objectives will be achieved by interventions through three strategic means: Capacity Development, Service Delivery and Advocacy

Capacity Development: SCA defines capacity development as any intervention to assist an individual, organisation, institution or sector to improve its performance and achieve its objectives. In order to empower target groups, increase local participation and achieve sustainable results, capacity development shall be included in all SCA's interventions. The main focus shall be on local community members, local organisations, and on sub-national authorities. SCA can also contribute to capacity development of organisations and institutions on central/national level, if the links to SCA development objectives are obvious.

SCA interventions shall be mainstreamed with national and provincial development plans, and be planned and executed in close cooperation with other capacity development actors. SCA shall focus on developing capacity within the areas in which the organisation has expertise and experience. Strategic partnerships shall be formed when considered to contribute to increased effectiveness and sustainability.

Service delivery: Due to insufficient capacity within the Afghan government and organisations in Afghanistan, SCA's development interventions shall contain elements of service delivery until domestic capacity is sufficient to take over this responsibility. SCA service delivery shall be designed so as to ensure active local participation.

Advocacy: To contribute to SCA's development objectives and give target groups a greater opportunity to influence their own development, changes are required in how power, resources and ideas are created and distributed. SCA shall therefore support and strengthen the voices of its target groups in order to influence those in power as well as the design of policies, structures and systems. The actors that SCA supports in its advocacy are mainly found within civil society, with an emphasis on community organisations.

SCA's advocacy shall reflect its core values and be founded in the experiences of development cooperation. In Afghanistan, the main focus is on rights within the four sectors of operation, while advocacy in Sweden and at the international level can

address issues concerning the broader development of Afghanistan and rights and situation of the people of Afghanistan.

Complementary principles

Support to Civil Society: SCA defines civil society as the arena outside of the state and the private sector, where people work together under democratic principles with a common drive to achieve positive change, development, advocacy, and / or action, owned by themselves. The arena includes a wide range of actors, including formal NGOs, professional associations, formal and informal community-based organisations and self-help organisations. SCA shall ensure that support to and partnership with civil society organisations is an integral part of all capacity development and advocacy efforts.

Sustainability: SCA operations shall be characterised by long term results, as well as social, financial and environmental sustainability. Responsibility for the public services that SCA implements shall be handed over to authorities and partners when deemed possible without compromising quality. Operations and forms of employment shall be designed so as to promote greater Afghan ownership and be cost-effective in order to facilitate future handover.

Environmental sustainability shall permeate all SCA activities. Negative environmental impact of interventions shall be minimised, while strengthening positive environmental impact. SCA shall strive to promote knowledge of environmental and climate issues among its targets groups, including the understanding of how societal and natural processes brings change in living conditions, and how they themselves can affect them.

Quality development and learning: SCA shall strive to be a learning organisation that consciously and continuously increases its knowledge of development and quality improvement. SCA should pay special attention to training of staff at all levels, as well as the development of systems for control, management, monitoring and systematic evaluation.

Conflict sensitivity and crisis preparedness: SCA shall ensure that interventions do not create, contribute to, or worsen conflicts. The organisation shall work to promote cooperation and peaceful conflict resolution. SCA disassociates itself from religious proselytising in Afghanistan. SCA will develop an appropriate level of preparedness to respond to conflict-related crises. This includes continuous monitoring of security as well as risk assessments and associated action plans.

7. Financial Principles

Grants and Fundraising

SCA operations are financed by SCA's own fundraising and by several external institutions. SCA welcomes financing from sources other than its own and may enter into agreements and accept grants from governments, authorities, organisations, foundations or companies. SCA shall protect its independence in relation to the different funding agencies. SCA shall not accept contributions from organisations working in conflict with SCA's purpose as defined in its statutes.

SCA seeks to increase the proportion of its own fund-raising in order to achieve a higher degree of self-reliance and independence.

Financial Management

The Board decides on overall financial issues and acts to uphold accountability and transparency within the organization. The general financial principles of SCA are:

- Financial sustainability.
- Cost efficiency must be sought for throughout the whole organisation.
- SCA shall not own real estate nor invest in construction unless it serves the purpose of SCA operations.
- Financial risks shall be minimised in order to avoid situations where SCA cannot meet its obligations.
- SCA shall counteract corruption at all levels and in any form.