

## Annex 6. Policy on integrating a conflict perspective within SwedBio's operations

(August 2020)

### Background and context

This policy is in part a response to the Government of Sweden's Policy Framework for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian assistance<sup>1</sup> stating that "Swedish development cooperation is to be based on a conflict perspective".

This policy is also a response to the increasing conflict risks that are caused by higher pressure on biodiversity and ecosystem services. This pressure is the result of the rapid growth in commercial agricultural investment to feed an increasing global human population, rapid urbanization affecting biodiversity-rich areas, overexploitation of coastal and marine resources, threats against Indigenous peoples and local communities' traditional lands and territories on which they live, and the economic and environmental threats caused by climate change. The impacts of biodiversity loss and climate change, including local resource competition, livelihood insecurity and migration, extreme weather events and disasters, food insecurity, and sea-level rise and coastal degradation, can exacerbate the drivers of conflict or existing sources of tension in societies. Policy decisions and interventions can also have unintended consequences and increase conflict risks, especially when they are poorly planned and implemented.

The degree to which biodiversity loss and climate change multiplies these conflict risks is context-specific; it depends upon factors such as the effectiveness of mechanisms for natural resource management, and upon the degree of local communities' and state institutions' resilience to such impacts. The consequences of such impacts can also generate new opportunities for collaboration between individuals, groups and state agencies. This highlights the need to address the risk factors generated or exacerbated by environmental degradation, and also to ensure that the policies and interventions designed to address them are appropriate, flexible and conflict-sensitive.

Conflict risk is a function of the consequences of environmental degradation, and the contexts of the societies in which they occur. The specific effects of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation are important to disaggregate and understand in order to develop policies and interventions, whether seeking to address the effects of environmental degradation or conflict dynamics. Understanding how environmental degradation and conflict will interact in any given context requires a nuanced analysis of a number of factors.

The effect of conflict on social resilience, regardless of the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services, occurs at both the community and state levels. This can create a vicious cycle, where loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services can both exacerbate conflict risks and limit the capacity for communities and states to respond to natural resource losses, leading to ever-increasing conflict risks.

Conflict dynamics also affect the same factors influenced by environmental degradation: resources, livelihoods, and migration. An analysis of the interrelation of these factors and understanding of relationships should be continuous. In complex and dynamic systems, factors change over time. New actors emerge to distribute or acquire resources or exert political power. To effectively plan policies and interventions, all actors, whether international players, states, civil society organisations and NGOs, or local communities should strive to understand not only the factors of the system, their

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<sup>1</sup> Government Communication 2016/17:60, p. 15

dynamic relationships and how they change over time, but also the impacts of a policy decision or intervention on that system.

The dynamics of conflict systems are at play at all levels, local, national and international. They reverberate through contexts and have an impact at all levels of governance and society, as well as across boundaries and borders. This may generate unforeseen conflicts, but it also provides unique opportunities for collaboration and joint problem-solving across multiple levels, and an integrated adaptive approach to the intersection of biodiversity, climate and conflict.

### **The definition**

This policy is concerned with conflicts that are triggered or exacerbated by the vulnerabilities caused by loss and degradation of biodiversity and ecosystem services along existing social cleavages such as gender, ethnicity, class, region, or deprivation of human rights. It includes conflict arising from discrimination against minority groups and Indigenous peoples. This policy is also concerned with conflict arising from adverse impacts associated with policies and operations to which Indigenous peoples and minority groups are particularly vulnerable, including risk of impoverishment and loss of resource-based livelihoods.

This policy defines violent conflict when hostile attitudes and behaviour cause damage to the other party and goals are pursued with force/violence. Conflicts often fluctuate back and forth through various stages and intensity. Conflicts are complex and protracted with no clear-cut beginnings or ends.

Conflict can play a constructive role as long as social and political processes provide channels for dialogue, participation and negotiation. Conflict of interests or goals, and struggle over power, values and resources in a society, can mobilise people and produce opportunities for transformative change and learning.

Fragile societies with weak governance, rule of law and generally low respect for human rights are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of environmental scarcities (shortages of water, forests and fertile land) and social crises.

### **The purpose**

The purpose of the policy is to *increase the awareness* of a conflict perspective and support its integration into all procedures, protocols and guidance for SwedBio's operations. This policy serves as a guidance for SwedBio staff. Others such as SwedBio's partners may also find it useful. Considerations for integration of a conflict perspective with SwedBio's operations need to influence *what* is prioritised as well as *how* interventions are undertaken, based on the conflict analysis, themes and strategic focus of the interventions.

### **Goals and commitments**

The goal of the policy is to inspire new ways of understanding the relationship between biodiversity, climate and conflict as part of SwedBio's facilitation of and contribution to improved understanding, knowledge generation, management and good governance of social-ecological systems for human well-being. The objective is to explicitly integrate a conflict perspective in the development and implementation of policies and methods which positively contribute to sustainable livelihoods and social-ecological systems in biodiversity.

SwedBio commits to gradually integrate a conflict perspective within its:

- Management processes and operational practices.
- Monitoring Evaluation and Learning framework and approach to Theory of Change.

- Risk Analysis.

Furthermore, SwedBio commits to:

- Promote a conflict-sensitive approach within SwedBio and among its partners.
- Encourage its partners to support their national and local partners to base their project implementation on the principles of a conflict perspective (including a strong contextual understanding, participatory and accountable partnerships, flexibility and responsiveness).

### **SwedBio's approach**

SwedBio's adaptive approach to *seize synergies and embrace complexity* is well aligned with the principles of a conflict-sensitive approach recognising the importance of understanding the local context and contributing to dialogue and collaboration. SwedBio's engagement in policy processes with partners, facilitation of equitable multi-actor dialogues, and support to partners to design collaborative approaches and catalyse locally driven initiatives create opportunities to have a positive impact on conflict situations. SwedBio's Multiple Evidence Base approach (MEB) and Dialogue Seminars are good examples of approaches and methodologies that use participatory and collaborative processes for learning and exchanging experiences amongst partners and actors and for conflict resolution in e.g. environmental negotiation processes. Tools such as Community Based Monitoring and Information Systems (CBMIS) are useful to secure vital information and strengthen local partners' capacity to articulate their concerns and propose solutions. These tools can also be used to develop the knowledge, institutions, leadership and accountability through public participation, active listening, equality, respect, and mutual trust building, which are necessary to address conflicts over natural resources peacefully. Enhancing the role of 'true' public participation in planning processes has the potential to mitigate and reduce risks and explore opportunities to benefit all.

SwedBio's Dialogue for knowledge and policy pathway and the Collaborative partner implementation pathway include key elements of integrating a conflict perspective with SwedBio's 'knowledge interface' role – facilitating connections across knowledge systems and cultures. This role provides opportunities for dialogue, learning and understanding among partners and other actors about the linkages between environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and conflict. SwedBio shall continue to build on its long experience of dialogue seminars as it facilitates trust-building between different actor groups and contributes to more equitable and sustainable governance and management of natural resources. This work promotes social cohesion and conflict prevention.

SwedBio's integration of a conflict perspective within its different themes entails encouraging partners to design programmes to address underlying causes of vulnerability — e.g., weak governance capacity or a lack of livelihood sustainability — in a conflict-sensitive manner, that may lead to a significant peace dividend. Policies and interventions designed to address the effects on people from loss and degradation of biodiversity and ecosystem services and other environmental and climate change issues or conflicts must integrate the analysis of each of these elements in order to understand its broader impacts on the system.

### **Implementation**

SwedBio will gradually, yet systematically, integrate a conflict perspective in a number of ways:

- SwedBio promotes and facilitates a collaborative listening and learning approach to exchange perspectives, experiences and recommendations regarding conflict, to contribute to improved dialogue and respect for diversity, trust, reciprocity and equal sharing.

- SwedBio's overall Theory of Change takes conflict risks into consideration in relation to the underlying assumptions behind the results chain.
- SwedBio's will, in a step-wise manner, integrate a conflict perspective into its management processes and operational practices, for example into the SwedBio's Routines and Procedures that include partners' self-assessment, decision memo for support to partners, as well as Annual Review Meetings.
- SwedBio applies a human rights-based approach and gender equality to programming and links it with integrating a conflict perspective
- SwedBio facilitates and supports partners by providing space and time for reflection and learning about the analysis of conflict dynamics, mitigation of conflict risks and promotion of peace at the intervention level.

### **Accountability**

The integration of a conflict perspective within SwedBio's operations is managed by the programme officers for their relevant theme. All employees should be aware of SwedBio's approach to integrating a conflict perspective.

Partner organisations will be responsible for developing their own structures and systems for integrating a conflict perspective. The analysis of conflict dynamics and risks should be done on the level of project/partner.

### **Concepts**

*Conflict* is a disagreement between two or more individuals or groups. Conflicts are a natural part of every society and can be positive as long as they are managed constructively. A conflict becomes violent when one or several parties seek to attain their goals with destructive means and resort to violence or threat of violence in one form or another. (Sida, Peace and Conflict Tool, Defining Key Concepts, Tools and Operational Responses, 2017)

*Conflict analysis* is a systematic study of the political, economic, social, historical and cultural factors that directly influence the shape, dynamics and direction of existing or potential conflicts. It includes an analysis of conflict dynamics and risk, and to identify dividers and sources of tension as well as connectors and opportunities for peace. (Sida, Peace and Conflict Tool, Defining Key Concepts, Tools and Operational Responses, 2017)

*Conflict sensitivity* is the ability of an organisation to understand how the development initiative may affect the conflict situation, and how to minimise potential negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on conflict dynamics, within an organisation's given priorities/objectives. (Sida, Peace and Conflict Tool, Defining Key Concepts, Tools and Operational Responses, 2017)

*Peace dividend* is practical positive improvements in people's daily lives. (Sida, Peace and Conflict Tool, Defining Key Concepts, Tools and Operational Responses, 2017)

## Appendix. Guiding questions

The following guiding questions have been recommended by STHLM Policy Group to support the management of SwedBio's mission to enhance its work with the integration of conflict perspective. We will consider these recommendations when further operationalising our policy.

SwedBio staff will take into account and adapt the below guiding questions as required to the context and themes of partners' interventions in order to initiate a conflict analysis to be used in dialogue with partners throughout the project/programme cycle.

Most answers to the below questions will be based on the perception and views among the actors who are included and participate in the analysis of the conflict dynamics and conflict risks.

### Actors

- Which actors are the main opposers to what you aim for in your work? What kind of dialogue (if any) do you have with them? What is your understanding of their driving forces? Is there any kind of dialogue that could happen between your target group and those who cause the problem? How can the trust and dialogue between the conflictual parties be eased? What is the role of your organisation in such conflictual matters?
- What are various actors' (particularly local communities) perceptions regarding potential and actual tensions around biodiversity and ecosystem service governance and management?
- What roles have various land and biodiversity/environmental governance institutions played in creating or sustaining conflict?
- Who makes decisions on natural resource use and management? Whose interests do they take into account in making these decisions? Who is excluded by such decisions and consultations and how are they likely to react?
- Which groups are in conflict over a particular resource (make conflicting land- and sea claims)?
- Which institutions in the sector are trusted, and by whom? Are there competing power structures and, if so, where do these systems overlap and create competing land/sea/resource claims?
- What is the nature of the competing power structures that control water, forests, fisheries, and agricultural practices?
- What are the attitudes (confidence/mistrust) of major actors towards public institutions and government agencies (judiciary, land commission, local government, ministry of environment, etc.)? What are the attitudes of public institutions towards marginalised groups (e.g. Indigenous peoples)?

### Structural conflict factors

- What are the grievances, concerns and interests of marginalised groups? Which pathways are likely to contribute to vulnerability and social unrest (social disparities, weak state structures, corruption, ethnic differences, separatist movements, food insecurity, migration pressure)? What kind of rights are violated/abused? How do the political institutions handle the grievances?
- Are land conflicts tied to other resource issues such as access to water? What kind of conflicts related to biodiversity and ecosystem service use exist, apart from land and water tenure issues?
- How does land- and sea/lakes factor into ethnic, religious, or other group identities?
- Is species loss and ecosystem degradation or scarcity an issue fuelling a resource conflict?

- Does insecurity of tenure, conflicts between traditional customary laws and other overlapping governmental tenure systems and laws, or an open-access resource system lead to violence?
- Are there disputes about revenues, control of land, consultation and involvement, lack of, or weak, Environmental Impact Assessments, negative environmental impacts, failed compensation schemes?
- Are there community concerns about current exploration or other early-stage developments?
- What is the impact of climate change adaptation, promotion of agroecology, seed banks, livelihood improvements and diversification measures on biodiversity and other natural resources, livelihoods, and human security?

Peace opportunities

- Are there conflictual issues that you think SwedBio as a facilitator (or mediator) could support you in by arranging a multi actor or MEB kind of dialogue?
- What are the most effective ways to reduce tensions or prevent conflict? How can your work maximise peacebuilding actions in your project?
- What areas of external interventions (e.g. support to agribusiness, infrastructure or industries) will require the use of natural resources related the scope of this project? How will this affect pressures on local communities and any conflicts or competition related to natural resource use? Who will be displaced by the intervention and what impact will this have on their socio-economic opportunities and relationships with other groups?
- Which mechanisms can be strengthened to promote resilient and stable communities (governance, social protection, social capital)?
- Which cooperative strategies and institutional frameworks on a national or regional level are appropriate to promote resilience to climate change, natural resource-related and political security at the local and national level? How effective are these strategies/frameworks? How does partners' action fit within these mechanisms? How could they be strengthened?

How cooperative strategies and institutional frameworks on a national or regional level are appropriate to promote resilient social-ecological systems as a base for adaptation to climate change, and to natural resource-related political security at the local and national level? How effective are these strategies/frameworks? How does partners' action fit within these mechanisms? How could they be strengthened? How does partners' strategies seek to identify opportunities to contribute to positive change by transforming attitudes, structures and institutions?