

SwedBio's Human Rights-Based Approach policy

SwedBio, version 251209

This policy document aims to provide comprehensive and practical guidance on a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) for the SwedBio programme. It serves as guidance for the SwedBio team and partner organizations, outlining clear actions and decisions to effectively apply HRBA principles. While the primary audience is the SwedBio team and partners, the content may also be helpful to a broader audience interested in understanding how SwedBio incorporates a human rights-based approach into its activities.

SwedBio's work focuses on sustainable and equitable biodiversity management and governance, addressing ecosystem loss and degradation. It recognizes that **poverty**¹ often stems from the reduced realization of rights, including access to a healthy environment. Therefore, supporting poverty alleviation involves protecting and upholding individual and collective rights.

Committed to promoting human rights, justice, and inclusion, as well as accountability in all aspects of the programme, SwedBio aims to address the interconnected biodiversity, climate, and human rights crises by nurturing inclusive and equitable collaborations that connect local knowledge and experiences to global policy, enabling transformative solutions for the well-being of people and nature. This policy supports SwedBio's mission by ensuring its work is grounded in a human rights-based framework that aligns with international human rights standards, thereby promoting accountability, transparency, participation, non-discrimination, and respect for human dignity. This enhances the impact and relevance of the programme while fostering sustainable outcomes in collaboration with partner organizations.

This policy aligns with and supports SwedBio's gender equality and conflict perspective² policies, emphasizing the importance of addressing intersecting forms of discrimination and structural inequalities.

1. Introduction

A HRBA is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyze inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress and often result in groups of people being left behind.³

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. They include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to work and education, among others. Everyone is entitled to these rights without discrimination⁴. While all people are born equal, opportunities may not be. The rights-based approach seeks to ensure that people are able to achieve equal opportunities and

¹ All bolded terms are defined in Section 4 Definition and Boundaries.

² Note that SwedBio's conflict perspective policy focuses on analyzing and understanding local dynamics, emphasizing power relations and systemic inequalities, and addressing social issues and systems of oppression. SwedBio's work also acknowledges that social conflicts can expose injustices and bring them to light, sparking the need for societal changes and new social relations.

³ United Nations Development Group, 2003. The Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation: Towards a Common Understanding Among UN Agencies. Available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/human-rights-based-approach-Development-cooperation-towards-common-understanding-among-un>

⁴ UN 1948. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

protect their way of life and environment. This includes the principle of **Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)**⁵, which upholds the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination. It affirms that Indigenous Peoples and local communities have the right to receive information, participate in decision-making, and give or withhold consent regarding any actions or initiatives that may affect their lands, territories, resources, and knowledge⁶.

This principle is especially important in fighting **environmental racism**, which impacts Indigenous Peoples and local communities by excluding or limiting access to resources or denying them a say in projects that impact their access and use of resources, not respecting their rights to their knowledge, and affecting their way of life. This fundamental perspective stresses that people facing problems are active participants in tackling them and recognizes their agency in co-creating solutions. In this view, development is human-centered; it addresses, uncovers, and fights discrimination and amends the unjust distribution of power.

The Human Rights-Based Approach as Mindset and Method: Foundation for Collaboration and Development Cooperation

The HRBA, grounded in a human rights legal framework, has reshaped development cooperation and project collaboration and policy development paradigms. It is a foundational framework that guides how SwedBio approaches all collaborations, activities, and actions within the programme. The HRBA envisions more sustainable actions and the process of **empowerment** of people, particularly groups living in marginalization and vulnerable situations, to promote effective democratic participation in decision-making processes. People are active agents of change, and solutions are crafted by the affected people, based on their vision and criteria for change. This approach addresses vulnerability as both a symptom of poverty⁷ or marginalization, and as a structural issue that is both caused by and results in unequal power relations in society. The HRBA framework supports the process of empowerment of people (**rights holders**), individuals, and groups who are entitled to specific rights, so they can be aware of, claim, and realize their rights and demand them. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of analyzing the responsibilities and obligations of states, their institutions, and non-state actors (**duty bearers**) to strengthen their capacities to fulfill their specific obligations and responsibilities toward rights holders, ensuring accountability, and increasing full and effective participation and access to information of rights holders.

The HRBA serves both as an end goal, achieving the full realization of human rights, and as a process-oriented approach that guides the design and implementation of development programmes in a rights-based manner. This includes embedding rights-based principles across all phases of the programming cycle, ensuring that human rights are central throughout the processes.

A HRBA is a foundational framework for SwedBio's work, with gender equality and conflict perspectives as core requirements. Women and girls in all their diversity, gender-diverse people, and other groups living under marginalized conditions are disproportionately impacted by power imbalances and face legal, cultural, and institutional barriers that hinder access to equitable resources and uphold their rights. A

⁵ United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). [Available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)

⁶ In the CBD, FPIC is recognized not only in relation to knowledge, but also to resources. It also applies to local communities. See Mo'otz Kuxtal Voluntary Guidelines available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/8j-cbd-mootz-kuxtal-en.pdf>

⁷ Sida 2017. Dimensions of Poverty: Sida's Conceptual Framework. Stockholm: Government of Sweden. [Available at: https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/sida62028en-dimensions-of-poverty-sidas-conceptual-framework.pdf](https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/sida62028en-dimensions-of-poverty-sidas-conceptual-framework.pdf). See section 4 of this document: Definition and boundaries.

HRBA also addresses the root causes of conflict, such as discrimination and inequality. Through a HRBA, SwedBio upholds women’s and girls’ rights and requires partners to, at a minimum, identify gender inequalities, raise awareness about gender equality, promote women’s and girls’ participation, and work toward **gender-responsive**, inclusive, participatory, and ultimately transformative efforts. This approach is firmly grounded in international human rights standards. For a more comprehensive understanding of the interconnected and intersectional nature of HRBA, gender equality, and conflict perspectives, see SwedBio’s policies on Gender Equality and Conflict Perspectives, as well as the Guidelines for Knowledge Collaborations.

Policies and Guidelines	Intersection with Human Rights-Based Approach
Gender Equality Policy	Promoting gender equality as a fundamental right, challenging discriminatory norms, and ensuring participation and empowerment across diverse identities. It recognizes the overlapping and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as gender, race, and disability, and responds to systemic inequalities through inclusive, human rights-based strategies. Addressing the root causes of inequality, aiming to secure just access to opportunities and resources by implementing systemic change.
Conflict Perspective Policy	The intersectional approach with HRBA promotes accountability while enabling a comprehensive understanding and structural analysis of local dynamics, highlighting power dynamics and systemic inequalities, and addressing social issues and systems of oppression.
Guidelines Principles on Knowledge Collaborations	It is a living, guiding document that outlines a clear framework, along with transparent principles and procedures, to guide the motivation, character, and intent of various collaborations between SwedBio and its partners under the Partner implementation pathway, research scientists, Indigenous Peoples and local communities as rights holders and knowledge holders, and other actors involved in interactions with SwedBio.

2. Global Context: Human Rights as a Fundamental Framework for Policy and Practice

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees several fundamental rights. Additionally, the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment has gained increasing recognition in international law. This acknowledgment is due to the interdependence of a healthy environment with the full realization of a wide range of human rights.⁸ Moreover, human rights law and a human rights-based approach are central to supporting biodiversity mainstreaming, promoting the sustainable use of biodiversity components, and ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources⁹ and taking action on climate change.¹⁰ It aligns with the sustainable goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which incorporate extensive human rights principles in their 17 targets—most notably SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 10 (Reduce Inequality), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Additionally, the 2030 Agenda stresses

⁸ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 28 July 2022: The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/76/300>

⁹ Section C Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/introduction>

¹⁰ See Paris Agreement (2015) Preamble: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

the commitment to realizing human rights in its preamble and shared principles and commitments.¹¹

SwedBio, as a programme based in Sweden, has operated under Swedish development cooperation since 2002. Swedish priorities have guided the work over time, with rights and democracy at the core, emphasizing the rights and perspectives of people living in multidimensional poverty¹² and oppression. At the same time, the 2023 reform agenda¹³ on development assistance builds on this foundation by broadening its scope to include strategic alignments with national interests. It expands the focus and highlights sustainable growth, freedom, education, and empowerment as key elements to reduce poverty, while also integrating global and Swedish.

Furthermore, FAO promotes a human rights-based approach to food security and nutrition^{14 15}, and the right to adequate food is a legal obligation under international law, first recognized as a human right in the UDHR (Article 25). The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Transformative Change Assessment¹⁶ highlights that transformative change for biodiversity must be grounded in four principles: equity and justice, pluralism and inclusion, respectful human-nature relationships, and adaptive learning and action. These principles support the fundamental human rights to a healthy environment and cultural diversity, reinforcing the interconnectedness of biodiversity conservation and human rights. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) Section C states that the implementation of the Framework should follow a human rights-based approach, respecting, protecting, promoting, and fulfilling human rights. The Framework acknowledges the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

Additionally, it is important to recognize racism as a significant barrier to achieving equality in environmental policies. Efforts must also encompass the rights of **persons with disabilities**, ensuring their full inclusion in all stages of environmental and biodiversity conservation¹⁷. Human Rights principles are key to reducing inequalities and strengthening democratic processes; therefore, they are central to the fairness and effectiveness of policies. They also serve as a foundation for effective, inclusive, and equitable development, as human rights and development are closely interconnected and mutually reinforcing¹⁸. Therefore, the HRBA provides a framework for SwedBio's transformative work, especially when intersected with other critical areas, conflict perspectives, and gender equality. Recognizing these

¹¹ United Nations, 2015. Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UNGA. Resolution number: A/RES/70/1. Available at: https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

¹² Dimension of poverty: <https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/sida62275en-dimensions-of-poverty.pdf>

¹³ Development assistance for a new era: freedom, empowerment, and sustainable growth. Available at: <https://www.government.se/reports/2024/02/development-assistance-for-a-new-era--freedom-empowerment-and-sustainable-growth/>

¹⁴ FAO, 2004. Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security. Available at: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/1898ca74-1041-4741-a53a-295af3c09a17/content>

¹⁵ FAO, 2015. Voluntary Guidelines for Small Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). Available at: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/edffbfbc-81e5-4208-a36f-334ff81ac10f/content>

¹⁶ IPBES (2024). Summary for Policymakers of the Thematic Assessment Report on the Underlying Causes of Biodiversity Loss and the Determinants of Transformative Change and Options for Achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Available at: <https://www.ipbes.net/transformative-change-assessment>

¹⁷ SwedBio and Partner organizations are encouraged to consult Organizations of Persons with Disabilities to apply a more structural and analytical approach to ensure that disability rights and systemic barriers are addressed in programme design and implementation.

¹⁸ UN General Assembly Declaration on the Right to Development (1986). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-right-development>

intersections enhances coherence and amplifies the impact of SwedBio's efforts, fostering an integrated and foundational approach to all actions and operations.

These interconnections are further explored in the next chapter, which details how SwedBio operationalizes these principles in practice.

What does HRBA mean for SwedBio?

Human rights-based approach is a foundation (core value), an approach (way of framing the problem), and a method (the 'how') that guides all actions and collaborations of the programme. It involves working with rights holders and duty bearers to advance gender equality and social and environmental justice.

People directly dependent on natural resources, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, as well as those living in rural and urban and peri-urban poverty, are especially vulnerable and disproportionately affected by the adverse effects of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, exacerbated by climate change. They face environmental degradation of ecosystems and limitations in access to nature's contributions to people, and the impacts of climate change. This leads to increasing inequalities and undermines the crucial role that Indigenous Peoples and local communities play in upholding biodiversity. Thus, respecting and recognizing the rights, perspectives, culture, customary practices, and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as key contributors to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment. There is also an increasingly urgent need to protect environmental human rights defenders, who are critical in halting biodiversity loss, safeguarding the right to a healthy environment, and are key to transformative change.

The HRBA provides a framework for reducing inequalities and poverty, while also strengthening equity and democracy. By applying it, SwedBio ensures its practices and collaborations are inclusive and transformative. This promotes transparency and effective participation of rights holders and support duty bearers in fulfilling their responsibilities, actively counteracting all forms of discrimination and exclusion.

3. The Human Rights-Based Approach in SwedBio's work

A HRBA is mainstreamed as a foundational framework in **SwedBio's Theory of Change (ToC)** and its two overarching pathways: the **Knowledge and Policy pathway** and the **Partner Implementation pathway**. The ToC addresses key challenges, including the fact that human rights are often directly or indirectly undermined by influential actors, adversely affecting communities living under marginalized or vulnerable conditions. SwedBio emphasizes supporting rights holders and enabling partner organizations to develop local, context-specific actions that foster sustainability. This also includes holding duty bearers accountable and ensuring that their commitments reflect the claims of rights holders and support the full realization of their rights.

Human rights principles¹⁹ of **indivisibility**, **interdependence**, and **interrelatedness** are crucial for the programme, as the realization of one human right often relies on others, and they all hold equal status. Additional core principles, including **Participation**, **Links to Human Rights Obligations**, **Transparency**,

¹⁹ United Nations Development Group (2003) The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation: Towards a Common Understanding Among UN Agencies. Available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/human-rights-based-approach-development-cooperation-towards-common-understanding-among-un>

Accountability, and **Non-Discrimination**, are fundamental values that guide a HRBA²⁰, shaping all aspects of SwedBio's work and operations. It is essential to recognize that these principles are interrelated in various ways and must be considered holistically.

Implementing a HRBA helps deepen understanding of power dynamics, supports rights holders in their empowerment process, and holds duty bearers accountable. SwedBio facilitates multi-actor dialogues to enhance the capacity of duty bearers to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities concerning the human rights of all people, especially those who are living under marginalized or vulnerable conditions. Methods for equitable dialogue support a collaborative and trustful environment which allows for the sharing of knowledge and experiences of rights holders, facilitating opportunities, and ensuring that all groups' knowledge, experiences, and proposals are respected. Through partnerships, SwedBio supports efforts to reduce capacity gaps and improve communication between rights holders and duty bearers, reinforcing its commitment to a comprehensive, inclusive, and effective human rights strategy.

In terms of policy engagement, SwedBio supports the participation of rights-holders in policy processes and promotes capacity strengthening, facilitating interactions among civil society organizations, and both state and non-state actors, enabling knowledge sharing based on equity, reciprocity, and usefulness for all involved. SwedBio also supports duty bearers to build their capacity to fulfill their responsibilities and accountabilities.

Under the Partner Implementation pathway, SwedBio supports local/national, regional, and global organizations with activities that support rights holder groups living under marginalized or vulnerable conditions in claiming their human rights, including their rights to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, and to improve participation, transparency, gender equality, and accountability. SwedBio, through its partnerships, contributes to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, as a central vehicle of SwedBio policy work, as well as SDGs and related targets, along with many other international processes like the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the FAO The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines), and others.

SwedBio supports partners who explicitly work with a human rights perspective, connecting biodiversity, healthy ecosystems, sustainable livelihoods, and poverty alleviation. While these organizations may use terms other than those in the HRBA, it is crucial that their vision and work respect and promote human rights principles, especially regarding individuals and groups living in poverty or vulnerability. It's also important to recognize that SwedBio's partner organizations are diverse, including member-based rights holders groups, local and global civil society organization networks, and intergovernmental and government bodies. These partners are evaluated based on their work, values, practices, and operations, which are aligned with human rights principles such as non-discrimination, participation, accountability, and transparency. SwedBio encourages that partners uphold and promote such principles in their treatment of team members and the communities they serve. This involves assessing internal governance and practices, particularly regarding accountability, equality, and non-discrimination, with a focus on a gender and taking an **intersectional lens** that addresses overlapping forms of discrimination. SwedBio acknowledges that racism intersects with gender inequality, as well as recognizes that challenges faced by

²⁰ <https://www.sida.se/en/for-partners/methods-materials/human-rights-based-approach#175e25f9-1804-4212-8ad3-04915a7587da>

persons with disabilities, LGBTQIAPN+²¹ individuals, and other marginalized communities compound these issues. Addressing these intersections is crucial for promoting inclusivity and equity for all. Please refer to SwedBio's gender policy for more detailed information.

Partners are expected to share a risk assessment of their interventions and safeguarding strategies to identify potential risks and vulnerabilities. SwedBio and its partners maintain close communication to help prevent, reduce, and mitigate risks while upholding the dignity, rights, and well-being of all involved in the interventions. Partners should work to identify gender inequalities and raise awareness of gender equality, with a focus on promoting the participation of women and girls. They should adopt gender-responsive, conflict-sensitive, and culturally appropriate approaches, possibly aiming for gender-transformative strategies. Through these efforts, SwedBio reaffirms its alignment with international human rights frameworks, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and its own Guidelines for Knowledge Collaborations.

3.1 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

SwedBio's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) approach identifies rights holders and duty bearers, and prioritizes the participation, influence, and lived experiences of rights holders. Partner organizations are encouraged to track and report how the project supports change, inclusion, equity, and the process of empowerment. The approach not only tracks results but also emphasizes efforts to reduce structural inequalities and fosters accountability. SwedBio encourages its partners to base their project implementation on a HRBA by promoting and facilitating a listening and learning approach to exchange perspectives, experiences, and recommendations, and the promotion of HRBA actions at the intervention level. Actions taken by SwedBio to monitor, evaluate, promote mutual learning, and ensure accountability with partners include: tracking of SwedBio's theory of change; annual review meetings²²; maintaining close communication with partners, engaging with partners in policy spaces; and visiting partners'. . An **adaptive approach** is applied to continuously improve the programme based on feedback from communities and partners, as well as the evolving context. This means SwedBio is open to emerging issues, recognizes opportunities, mitigates risks, and navigates complex environments where the program operates. This enables us to adjust our operations based on ongoing learning, analysis, and a deepened understanding of the context, rooted in a continuous learning process that informs action. From a HRBA perspective, it is especially important because it incorporates the experiences and perspectives of rights holders, ensuring that interventions are not top-down or pre-determined, but instead are adaptable and responsive. This links to accountability and an adaptive approach, enabling us to respond effectively to the needs and inputs of those with whom we work with.

3.2 Communication

All SwedBio communication work adheres to a HRBA, emphasizing principles such as transparency and non-discrimination. It also aims to be inclusive and equitable, providing space for diverse knowledge and cultural perspectives by amplifying the voices and experiences of those who have been historically excluded, silenced, or undermined. Efforts are made to make communication as accessible as possible to

²¹ LGBTQIAPN+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual, Non-binary, and plus which represent people that do not identify with any that was included before.

²² A formal annual meeting, as outlined in the collaboration agreement, to review overall project progress, budget, resource use, challenges, and lessons learned, and to discuss future plans. Additionally, we regularly meet with partners to address specific issues, monitor progress, and collaborate on resolving particular concerns as needed.

the intended audience, while recognizing its limitations. More importantly, most materials are developed in partnership with partner organizations, avoiding tokenism or exploitative imagery, and focusing on consent, representation, and cultural sensitivity. See SwedBio communication strategy and policy.

3.3. Methods for Knowledge Co-creation Processes

SwedBio promotes the development of policies and methods that adopt a HRBA to foster equitable, sustainable resource use, biodiversity conservation, and governance. Along with our network of partners we employ diverse strategies, including dialogue processes, as enabling conditions to advance HRBA within multilateral environmental agreements and their implementation.

SwedBio facilitates a Human Rights and Biodiversity Working Group that has undertaken various actions, including policy briefs and side events, to integrate a HRBA into the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Methodologies such as the Multi-Actor Dialogue Seminar methodology (MADs)²³ and the Multiple Evidence Base (MEB)²⁴ methodology are some of the methods that SwedBio has helped develop and will continue to use to implement the HRBA. These methods have been helping to elaborate solutions in the knowledge, policy, and practice interface on biodiversity multi-level governance. The MADs methodology helps understand the main challenges, interacting factors, and proposed solutions for applying the socio-ecological aspects of the HRBA. Created by SwedBio with its partners, it is based on experience from the past decade and draws from various social learning literature. It combines views that see multi-actor dialogue as a tool for both personal and systemic transformation, and as a way to identify innovative, sustainable, and inclusive solutions.

SwedBio's Guidelines for Knowledge Collaboration establish transparent core procedures and values, such as respect, reciprocity, trust, and equal sharing, to guide all collaborations. These principles steer SwedBio's work in bridging and co-creating new knowledge across knowledge systems and actors, and is guided by international human rights frameworks, such as the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Additionally, SwedBio's activities and collaborations are guided by gender and conflict policies alongside the Guidelines for Knowledge Collaboration.

Finally, SwedBio supports and highlights the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities by applying the walking workshop methodology²⁵ within various dialogue processes. The methodology facilitates participant interaction and knowledge exchange, promotes contact with the environment, and allows individuals and groups to experience different perceptions and reflections.

²³ Schultz, M. et. al. (2016), The biggest single opportunity we have is dialogue - Dialogue seminars as a methodology for transformative social learning and conflict resolution in international environment negotiations, SwedBio at Stockholm Resilience Centre.

²⁴ <https://swed.bio/meb/>

²⁵ Malmer, P., Tengö, M. (eds), Fernández-Llamazares, A., Woodward, E., Crawhall, N., Hill, R., Trakansuphakon, P., Athayde, S., Cariño, C., Crimella, D., Farhan Ferrari, M., Pérez, E., Spencer, R., Trakansuphakon, N., Bicksler, A., Cariño, J., Gonzalo, E., Lengoisa, J., Lungharwo, T., Tahj, B., 2019. Dialogue across Indigenous, local and scientific knowledge systems reflecting on the IPBES Assessment on Pollinators, Pollination and Food Production, 21th to 25th January 2019, Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, Thailand. Workshop report. SwedBio at Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm, Sweden.

4. Definitions and boundaries

Concept	Short definition	What does it mean for SwedBio and supporting questions to integrate HRBA into the programme? ²⁶
Accountability	Accountability means that duty-bearers are responsible for fulfilling their obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights of rights holders. Duty bearers should be transparent in their actions, accept their responsibilities, and be held accountable if they fail to meet their duties.	SwedBio and partners are accountable for implementing initiatives and engaging in policy processes. Updates should be shared, concerns addressed, and adjustments made to meet goals. In dialogue processes, especially when bridging knowledge systems and actors, a clear framework and transparent principles are essential to guide collaborations, motivation, and intent. <u>Supporting questions:</u> # Are roles clearly defined and communicated? Who are the duty bearers at different levels, and do they have the capacity and interest to be accountable to rights holders? Do rights holders know who the duty-bearers are, and can they hold them accountable? How can they do so? # Are community members involved in implementation and decision-making? Was information about the goals, activities, and budget shared openly, with updates in an accessible format? # Is there a mechanism to enforce rights, support collaboration, and uphold HRBA principles, gender equality, and conflict perspectives?
Adaptive approach	An adaptive approach is a flexible, collaborative method that adjusts to changing circumstances and new information. It involves continuous learning, feedback, and modifying plans, in contrast with rigid, predictive approaches that rely on upfront planning. It is responsive to changing dynamics and challenges, involving a learning process through the monitoring and evaluation of actions.	SwedBio's adaptive approach enables adjustments based on continuous learning, analysis, and understanding of the context. It emphasizes staying open to emerging issues, recognizing opportunities, and managing risks through ongoing communication with partners. Supportive activities include annual review meetings and visits to the partner organization. From an HRBA perspective, this adaptability is critical as it facilitates the adaptation of projects based on rights holders' priorities.
Capacity development	Capacity is the ability of people, organizations, and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully. Capacity building and development is <i>the process whereby people, organizations, and society as a whole unleash, strengthen,</i>	It involves strengthening partner organizations, rights holders, and duty bearers. It supports rights holders in claiming their rights, increases participation in decision-making, and supports duty bearers in strengthening their capacities by encouraging and creating a willingness to recognize, understand, and fulfill their obligations.

²⁶ See SwedBio's Guidelines for Knowledge Collaboration document, Gender Equality and Conflict Perspective policies

	<i>create, adapt, and maintain capacity over time to achieve positive biodiversity results at the enabling environment, organizational, and individual levels.²⁷</i>	<p><u>Supporting questions:</u></p> <p># What is the organization’s implementation capacity? Has the partner organization assessed its ability to address potential external effects or influences resulting from its work? Has the partner organization identified any needs or opportunities to strengthen its organizational capacity?</p> <p># What is the current status of MEL, conflict sensitivity, management capacities, and the integration of gender equality across implementation and operations? How are the financial processes functioning?</p> <p># How is the organization engaging with duty bearers to increase their willingness, understanding, or commitment to their obligations?</p> <p>It is important to note that SwedBio has zero tolerance to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, in line with the Code of Conduct of the Stockholm Resilience Centre.²⁸ Therefore, the following questions are important to assess the organization's capacity and preparedness to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH):</p> <p># Does your organization regularly discuss issues related to power dynamics, gender, and inclusion? Do staff feel comfortable speaking out, reporting, and addressing these issues?</p> <p># How do you prevent and manage the risk of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in your work?</p>
Disabilities	Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, intellectual, or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Disability is an evolving concept that results from this interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers. ²⁹	SwedBio upholds the concept of persons with disabilities in the same terms as outlined in the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and addresses this within broader principles, including fundamental principles of non- discrimination.
Duty bearers	States and non-state actors that have legal obligations and	Formal duty bearers, such as government agencies and public institutions, have obligations that

²⁷ Convention on biological Diversity, Capacity-Building and Development Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/cb/default.shtml>

²⁸ SwedBio is dedicated to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment in line with [Stockholm Resilience Centre Code of Conduct](https://stockholmresiliencecentre.org/Code-of-Conduct), Available at: <https://stockholmresiliencecentre.org/Code-of-Conduct>. SwedBio also follows Sida’s Guidance on preventing SEAH: <https://www.sida.se/en/for-partners/guidance-for-sidas-partner-organisations/preventing-sexual-exploitation-abuse-and-harassment>

²⁹ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Art. 1 and Preamble (e) Internationally agreed language (inter alia CRPD).

	<p>responsibilities to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights of rights holders. In the context of human rights framework, duty bearers are primarily state actors, including government institutions at all levels. However, non-state actors, such as international organizations, businesses, civil society actors, religious and traditional leaders, depending on the context, can also be duty bearers. For instance, these actors can be duty bearers to their staff, members, and/or constituencies, and can also be governed by national laws and, thereby, have legal duties. It is worth noting that all individual duty-bearers are also rights holders.</p>	<p>may arise from legal frameworks or organizational, social, and moral responsibilities. They may include Partner organizations, state and intergovernmental agencies, such as the FAO, OHCHR, CBD Secretariat, and UNFCCC Secretariat, among others, depending on the context. Other duty bearers, which are informal or contextual, might not always be mandated by law but still have influence and responsibilities because of their societal or institutional roles (e.g. civil society organizations, traditional, religious and community leaders, donors, etc.). SwedBio engages with these groups in various ways, including by promoting and co-convening policy dialogues, capacity building, and holding partnerships/collaborations. SwedBio and its partner organizations are also duty bearers; recognizing this is essential for accountability and legitimacy.</p> <p><u>Guiding questions:</u></p> <p># Who are the duty bearers relevant to the project/initiatives? What are their specific legal obligations and how are they currently fulfilling or failing to fulfill these duties? Do they have the capacity to fulfill their obligations? What barriers might they and the initiative encounter? Is there a willingness to engage with rights holders? How accountable are they?</p> <p># How can the project support or influence them to hold rights holders accountable or interact with them?</p> <p>It's also crucial to assess how the collaboration ensures it respects, protects, and upholds the rights of all involved.</p>
<p>Empowerment</p>	<p>Empowerment means that individuals, groups and communities hold the knowledge, skills, and resources, as well as an understanding of their rights, which enable them to claim and exercise their rights and participate meaningfully in processes, influencing and holding duty-bearers accountable.</p>	<p>To SwedBio, the process of empowerment involves supporting and strengthening the capacities of rights holders and organizations to effectively engage in and influence decision-making at the national, regional, and global levels. It also ensures that partner organizations and rights holders have access to justice and accountability mechanisms.</p> <p><u>Guiding questions:</u></p> <p># To what extent has the project increased rights-holders' awareness and understanding of rights policies and instruments? Have rights holders, especially marginalized groups, been meaningfully involved in decision-making throughout the collaboration? What actions will be taken to enhance the capacities of rights-holders and duty-bearers to support meaningful participation in processes? Has the collaboration been designed to support rightsholders' access to accountability mechanisms or redress when their rights are violated?</p>

<p>Environmental Racism</p>	<p>Racism and racial discrimination are often used interchangeably as they are closely related but slightly different. Racism is about ideology or a belief system. Racial discrimination, which can often result from racism, is therefore a behavior or action. Therefore, racial discrimination refers to <i>any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.</i>³⁰</p> <p>Environmental racism describes institutionalized discrimination involving <i>environmental policies, practices, or directives that differentially affect or disadvantage (whether intentionally or unintentionally) individuals, groups or communities based on race or colour.</i>³¹</p>	<p>SwedBio upholds the concept of environmental racism in the same terms as outlined in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), and addresses this within broader principles, including fundamental principles of non-discrimination.</p>
<p>Free Prior and Informed Consent</p>	<p>It is a principle that affirms the right of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to approve or decline projects or activities that affect their lands, territories, or resources. It is recognized in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).³²</p>	<p>Please see Transparency below.</p>
<p>Gender responsive approach</p>	<p>It is the process of ensuring that programmes, policies, and organizations take into account the different needs and experiences of people based on their gender identity. Actions are responsive to the diverse needs, experiences, and realities of people, including those who may face discrimination or</p>	<p>A gender-responsive approach is fostered in all collaborations, securing funding and support for women- and girls-led initiatives. Collaborations are fostered to support the process of empowering and strengthening women’s and girls’ organizations, increasing their participation in decision-making at various levels—including within their communities, encouraging sex-disaggregated data and indicators, and ensuring their protection and enjoyment of human rights while ensuring access to opportunities. The collaboration addresses the issues and responds,</p>

³⁰ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), Article 1 Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial>

³¹ Un General Assembly - Contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, A/77/549 Available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/77/549>

³² FAO, Indigenous Peoples and the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC): <https://www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/pillars-of-work/free-prior-and-informed-consent/en>

	disadvantage because of their gender. ³³ Gender responsive actions address equitable distribution of benefits, resources, status, rights, but does not address the root causes of inequality.	aiming to transform relations. <u>Guiding questions:</u> # Have you observed any specific gender-related significant change? How are gender equality efforts integrated, and how could they be strengthened? Were there any opportunities to increase gender equality, and are there areas where there is a need to engage different actors? How do you see the project contributing to reducing gender inequalities? # Are activities accessible and culturally appropriate for all genders? Are there any gender related risks identified? # Have you observed any signs of gender-based violence (GBV), and do you have any mechanisms to prevent or mitigate?
Indivisibility, Inter-dependence and Inter-relatedness³⁴	Human rights are indivisible, meaning they cannot be divided. Whether they are of a civil, cultural, economic, political, or social nature, they are all essential to the dignity of every human person. As a result, all human rights share equal importance and cannot be ranked in a hierarchical order from the outset. Interdependence and Interrelatedness: The fulfillment of one right often relies, wholly or partially, on the fulfillment of others. For example, the realization of customary rights, such as land, resources, and access by IPLCs, often depends on the realization of the right to a healthy environment.	SwedBio emphasizes the importance of biodiversity and human rights. It recognizes that protecting biodiversity is essential for upholding human rights, and that respecting human rights is vital for successful biodiversity conservation. SwedBio asserts that promoting the right to a healthy environment cannot be separated from respecting the participation, self-determination, and social, economic, and cultural rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs). Therefore, advancing ecosystems should be accompanied by safeguarding customary land rights, the right to food, and other related rights. Additionally, gender equality is crucial for strengthening social, environmental, cultural, and economic rights. <u>Guiding question:</u> # Is SwedBio's work identifying and supporting rights holders, such as Indigenous peoples and local communities, in the enjoyment of interrelated rights, including the right to food and its connections to biodiversity, as well as the right to public participation? # Have human rights-based approach, gender equality, and conflict perspective, been addressed in ways that reflect their interconnectedness?
Intersectionality	Gender is a social variable that intersects with other social identities like age, ethnicity, class, religion, disability, and	<u>Guiding questions:</u>

³³ Consolidated guidance notes for the targets of the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework. Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/files/km%20gbf%20targets%201%20to%2023-%20consolidate%20guidance%20notes.pdf>

³⁴ United Nations Development Group 2003. The Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation: Towards a Common Understanding Among UN Agencies. Available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/human-rights-based-approach-Development-cooperation-towards-common-understanding-among-un>

	<p>sexual orientation. Intersectionality helps understand how these identities interact to create unique experiences of privilege and oppression. For example, a woman’s experience is also shaped by her ethnicity, age, or sexuality. An intersectional approach shows how systems of power, such as racism, ageism, sexism, and classism, operate through institutions, policies, and cultural norms, affecting people in interconnected ways. Oppressions based on ethnicity, gender, or disability don’t act alone but influence each other. It’s crucial to specify which group of women or men is being discussed, as experiences are diverse. This framework can be a tool for resistance and social change by addressing how structures of inequality can be transformed.³⁵³⁶³⁷</p>	<p># Who are the rights holders and what are their intersecting identities? Do you foresee any barriers, particularly based on the intersecting identities? How can invisible realities and groups be visible? Will the project, in any case, exacerbate the barriers and inequalities? What are the risks? How will barriers be addressed? How can SwedBio support the participation of all? Will the interactions and inclusion process be sustainable and continue beyond the implementation period?</p> <p>Given the identified existing intersections of discrimination and marginalization, do you need to take specific measures to ensure active and meaningful participation, influence, leadership, or other forms of inclusion?</p>
Link to human rights	<p>This involves identifying and applying human rights standards and recommendations from international human rights mechanisms to underpin actions and programmes. It supports accountability and upholds justice and human rights on domestication of international agreements, treaties, and legal systems. The rule of law is often used interchangeably, referring to a core principle that ensures laws are transparent, well-publicized, applied equally, and enforced consistently; that is, laws are user-friendly and accessible to monitor, with support of a complaint mechanism.</p>	<p>Initiatives and dialogue processes supported by SwedBio link to and support the implementation of international and regional human rights frameworks, treaties, and guidelines.</p> <p><u>Guiding questions:</u></p> <p>What links are there to human rights laws, treaties, and systems (such as complaint mechanisms, courts, and human rights bodies) at the national, regional, and/or international levels that are also applied in actions or the programme? Do actions support accountability, justice, and the domestication of international agreements, treaties, or guidelines? (e.g., CBD, UNDROP, UNDRIP, SSF Guidelines, etc.) Are laws, international agreements, treaties, and guidelines well publicized (access to information), user-friendly, and equipped with monitoring mechanisms, including complaint mechanisms that allow people’s participation?</p>
Non-discrimination	<p>Human rights are inherent to all individuals regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, disability, or any other status. No individuals or groups should be excluded from</p>	<p>To SwedBio, everyone, regardless of status, should have equal rights, recognizing that people are different and require various forms of support to achieve the goals and actions set by local intervention and decision-making spaces. This includes addressing racism and ensuring that</p>

³⁵ Sida Gender Equality in Practice: <https://www.sida.se/om-sida/publikationsarkivet/gender-equality-in-practice>

³⁶ Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 139–167.

³⁷ Hill Collins, Patricia, and Sirma Bilge. *Intersectionality*. Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016.

	<p>information, participation, or the possibility of monitoring and holding duty-bearers accountable. Everyone is entitled to their rights and should be treated with dignity and respect. Therefore, this principle involves identifying and addressing inequalities and discrimination in policies and practices. The non-discrimination principles align with the principles of equality, participation, and inclusion.</p> <p>The principle of non-discrimination is relevant to the understanding of intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization. It requires that the consequences of intersecting excluding structures and behaviors are understood and addressed.</p>	<p>individuals with disabilities, women, youth, and other groups living under marginalized conditions are included in all phases of an intervention. Therefore, active measures are needed to secure the rights of individuals and groups who are discriminated against, marginalized, disadvantaged, and hard to reach. SwedBio aims to make sure that no group is excluded from using, managing, or benefiting from biodiversity. For example, it facilitates actions that incorporate the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and marginalized groups into governance and decision-making processes. Ensuring all voices are heard in decision-making is crucial for SwedBio. It is important to avoid reinforcing inequalities and further marginalizing these groups. Different communities experience and are impacted by biodiversity loss and climate change in varied ways, so actions must be tailored to promote equity. Through support, SwedBio strives to foster biodiversity governance that uplifts every community, ensuring no one is left behind, considering all the existing intersections of discrimination/marginalization.</p> <p><u>Guiding questions:</u></p> <p>How does the project ensure meaningful inclusion of all affected groups, particularly Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), Afro-descendants, People with Disabilities women, and gender-diverse individuals?</p> <p>What specific barriers to participation (e.g., legal, cultural, linguistic, or safety-related) have been identified, and what targeted measures have been taken to address them?</p> <p>How has the project respected the rights, knowledge, and contributions of IPLCs, particularly through Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and recognition of customary land and resource rights?</p> <p>Were gender-responsive, or -transformative approaches applied? What impacts did the intervention have on gender roles, power dynamics, and equity within communities? How were intersecting forms of discrimination and structural inequalities identified and addressed? Given the identified intersections of discrimination an, do you need to take specific measures to ensure active and meaningful participation, influence, leadership, or other forms of inclusion?</p>
<p>Participation</p>	<p>Participation means that people have the right to actively and meaningfully take part in social, economic, cultural, and political decision-making processes that impact their lives. Participation should not be tokenized. It must enable individuals and groups to share their perspectives and</p>	<p>Collaboration should foster meaningful and culturally sensitive participation by representatives of social groups. All collaborations must begin with clarity on who is involved and their respective purposes. Maintaining transparency and managing expectations are essential.</p> <p><u>Guiding questions:</u></p> <p>To what extent was the programme/initiative initiated or co-designed by IPLCs/rights holders? Is</p>

	knowledge to shape decisions.	<p>there participation in decisions concerning the realization and protection of people's fundamental human rights and their right to a safe, clean, and healthy environment? Is there a specific mechanism for participation by rights holders and civil society organizations, including marginalized groups within vulnerable groups (e.g., women, youth, people with disabilities, etc.) that is inclusive, accessible, and culturally appropriate?</p> <p>How does the intervention accommodate local and traditional knowledge, methods, forms of governance, communication, and consent (FPIC)?</p> <p>To what extent are duty-bearers accountable for facilitating meaningful participation and support for these groups?</p>
Poverty	<p>According to Sida, poverty is multidimensional, encompassing four dimensions: resources, including money, literacy, food, water, sanitation, skills, good health, tools, or land; opportunities and choices, which involve access to education, healthcare, infrastructure, energy, markets, and information, as well as productive employment; power and voice, meaning the ability to exercise human rights, to articulate concerns and needs, and participate in decision-making, which requires knowledge, access to information, and participation on equal terms; and human security, which is impacted when physical, psychological, or sexual violence or threats of such affect individuals' lives. According to Sida, a person living in multidimensional poverty is resource-poor and poor in one or several other dimensions.³⁸</p>	<p>Although definitions of poverty are generally focused on income, or characterize a state of economic deprivation, SwedBio chooses to approach poverty as dynamic and multidimensional, implying that poverty not only means lack of material resources, but also lack of power, voice and respect for human rights, lack of opportunities and choice, and/or lack of human security.³⁹ Poverty also incorporates critical interdependencies between humans and nature, as resilience thinking recognizes that the biosphere is the basis for development.⁴⁰ As it is also our intention to recognize that the definition of poverty changes depending on local contexts, to let people develop their own definitions of poverty, and to use the concept that they feel best describes their situation, we keep the definition broad and use the terms poverty alleviation/reduction and human well-being interchangeably and appropriately.</p>
Rights holders	<p>Individuals and groups who are entitled to enjoy human rights under international law, including all people, with particular attention to those whose rights are violated or are most at risk of being violated or overlooked, such as</p>	<p>To SwedBio, rights holders are groups living in urban, peri-urban, and rural poverty, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, Afro-descendants, small-scale food producers, Fisher peoples, and</p>

³⁸ Sida Dimensions of Poverty: <https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/sida62275en-dimensions-of-poverty.pdf>

³⁹ Alkire, S., and M. E. Santos. 2010. Multidimensional Poverty Index. Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI). Oxford.

⁴⁰ Haider, J. 2017. Development and Resilience. Rethinking poverty and intervention in biocultural landscapes. Stockholm University, Stockholm Resilience Centre.

	vulnerable and marginalized groups.	many other groups at risk of vulnerability in least - low and middle-income countries ⁴¹ . These groups are supported by SwedBio in their efforts to claim and uphold their rights.
Transparency	Access to and availability of relevant, clear, timely, and accurate information that enables people to participate in and understand decisions and processes that affect them.	<p>All collaborations should begin with clarity on how to manage who should be involved and for what purpose in the collaboration. It is important to have a transparent process and manage expectations. Additionally, collaborations would create space for meaningful and culturally appropriate participation of representatives of social groups.</p> <p><u>Guiding questions:</u></p> <p>Is all the necessary information from partners and SwedBio available? Are the rights holders involved in the initiative able to access relevant information and knowledge regarding the intervention? How does the partner organization ensure transparency and support Free, Prior, and Informed Consent in its initiatives? Were mechanisms established for transparency during planning, implementation, and evaluation? How were communication barriers, such as language, literacy, or digital access challenges, addressed to improve transparency?</p>

⁴¹ To identify the regions where SwedBio works, including Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, SwedBio uses the OECD and World Bank definitions. However, we acknowledge other decolonized categorizations used by different groups, such as the Majority world and historically colonized countries, colonized and formerly colonized nations.

Note on this document's development and evolution:

This policy document was developed by SwedBio's team in 2020 and revised and adapted in 2025 to remain relevant and aligned with the programme. SwedBio acknowledges Annica Holmberg, a Gender and HRBA specialist, for her valuable contributions during the revision process. The updates reflect a commitment to continually strengthening a human rights-based approach and offer guidance that addresses the daily needs of our work. SwedBio recognizes and appreciates the contributions of everyone involved, past and present, including partner organizations, for their collaboration and mutual learning, which helped shape this living document.