

This paper provides ideas for questions that can be used in dialogue with partners about integration of environment and climate change in contributions within democracy and human rights. It complements Sida's generic guidelines for integration of environment and climate change in contributions.

All people depend on the environment for their existence, and defending human rights helps to protect the environment. According to United Nations Environment Programme, there are three main dimensions of the interrelationship between human rights and environmental protection:

- The environment as a pre-requisite for the enjoyment of human rights (implying that human rights obligations of States should include the duty to ensure the level of environmental protection necessary to allow the full exercise of protected rights);
- Certain human rights, especially access to information, participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environmental matters, as essential to good environmental decision-making (implying that human rights must be implemented to ensure environmental protection); and
- The right to a safe, healthy and ecologically-balanced environment as a human right in itself.¹

The economic development in the past half-century has changed biodiversity, ecosystems and ecosystem services rapidly and extensively. While this transformation has contributed to substantial net gains in human well-being and improvements in many regions of the world, not all people or regions have benefited equally; indeed, conditions for many have deteriorated. In addition to insignificant access to power, information and resources, these people experience negative effects of environmental degradation and ecosystems decline, including water shortage, air pollution, soil loss, and decreased access to natural resources, natural disasters due to for example deforestation, disposal of toxic wastes and products, poor rule of law and institutional deprivation.

Climate change is worsening many of these negative effects of environmental degradation on human health and wellbeing. Climate change is also causing new ones, including an increase in extreme weather events and an increase in the spread of malaria and other vector-borne diseases. These facts show that there are close linkages between and need for an integrated approach on environment, climate change on the one hand and the enjoyment of human rights



Photo: Dominik Vanyi on Unsplash

Mining: East Kalimantan, Indonesia.

and democracy on the other. Further, the Paris Agreement states that climate change is a common concern for humankind and that respect for human rights is a requirement when acting on climate change, including the principle of equality and just transition.

The fields of environment and human rights share a core of common interests and objectives indispensable for sustainable development, which is also expressed in the *Agenda 2030 declaration and the Sustainable Development Goals*. For example, goal 10 which promotes universal social, economic and political inclusion and goal 16 on inclusive societies, public access to information, protection of fundamental freedoms and accountable and inclusive institutions.

While many aspects of the relationship between human rights and the environment are important, one critical concern is to protect those individuals who work to protect their natural environment from unsustainable exploitation and defend the human rights. *Environmental human rights defenders* (EHRD) work under precarious situations and often at great personal risk. Violations of environmental rights are on the rise worldwide fueled by corruption, greater competition for natural resources, weak enforcement of environmental laws, and the irresponsible exploitation of land and other natural goods. Women, especially indigenous women, are particularly vulnerable to environmental-related violence.

The Human Rights Based Approach provides the principles that guide Sweden's efforts for people living in poverty. In many contributions within the area of democracy and human rights there are opportunities to raise awareness on how the environment and climate change impact on fundamental human rights such as right to health, right to livelihood, rights to water and sanitation. In those cases, focus could be on enhancing opportunities and ensuring resilience to climate change.

¹ The right to a healthy environment is now recognized in many national constitutions and regional instruments, with over 90 national constitutions recognizing some form of environmental rights since the mid-1970s.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS FOR THE CONTRIBUTION

Which opportunities are present? Which are most relevant? How can they be realised?

- Are there environmental aspects that the partner is already working with, that could be enhanced in the project? Which are they? What have they led to so far?
- Has the partner organisation assessed rights to water and sanitation, rights related to land issues and natural resources such as forest and fish resources or similar in their programme/project?
- Are there existing environmental opportunities that the programme/project can build upon which involves e.g. access to land, forests and/or other natural resources?
- Which democratic processes do the partner participate/working in locally, nationally, internationally? For example, decentralisation, participatory budgeting, expenditure reviews? Can environmental aspects be relevant for these processes and can the processes be used to bring up environmental issues with politicians?
- Is the target group of the program working with issues related to the environment and climate change? Could the target group identify themselves as environmental human rights defenders (EHRD)? Are there opportunities for the partner organisation to support EHRD's and/or to include them in their general work with freedom of expression, right to information, right to assembly and freedom of association etc.?
- Would it be relevant for the partner organisation to analyse the possibility of integrating monitoring mechanisms on environmental policy governance and/or demand accountability from the implementation of national environmental law and/or international environment or climate commitments, by using the principles of human rights based approach in relation to for example global environmental conventions (e.g. the country's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) under the Paris Agreement/United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), Basel convention, Rotterdam, Minamata etc)?
- Would it be relevant to include, in the scope of the programme's/project's improved access to participation, information and resources for environmental and climate change related matters as part of strengthening the democratic processes and increasing the respect for human rights?
- Are there indirect links to transparency and openness related to institutions working on environmentally related issues?
- Would there be environmental organisations that the partner organisation could team up with exchanging knowledge regarding human rights and environment/climate change issues, resulting in advancing the work of both actors?
- Would the organisation increase its own capacity in the field by training their staff on environmental issues or recruiting environmental specialists?

- Are there opportunities for collaboration with environmental journalists on issues related to environmental degradation, climate change and its direct impact on human rights and democratic development? Such cooperation may, for example, involve in-depth analysis and publishing articles of a relevant subject.

RISKS FROM THE CONTRIBUTION TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

Which risks are present? Which are most relevant?

- Are there substantial emissions from travels? Is there a travel policy to keep emissions low? Could IT be used for meetings? Could local experts conduct training instead of fly-in experts?
- What are the emissions from cars/local transport? Could e.g. smaller and less fuel consuming vehicles be used for local trips?
- Risks from the operations: If the partner is promoting IT solutions, are they accompanied by a strategy for sustainable management of e-waste?
- What are the emissions from energy use? Is there a strategy to keep emissions low or to lower them? Could renewable resources be used, e.g. replace diesel generators with solar power; use compost or sanitation resources for biogas production?
- How is office waste managed? Is there a system for recycling of paper, organic waste, and for how to deal with e-waste from computers, light bulbs and batteries? Can sanitation waste be used for biogas or compost?
- How are water resources managed and water efficiency secured, e.g. by rainwater harvesting from office roof, repaired leaking pipes and water efficient equipment?
- Is the sanitation waste sustainably managed to avoid contamination of the surrounding land and water and/or used as a resource (e.g. for biogas)?
- How are waste and emissions from workshops, courses etc. managed? Choice of materials, served food, provision of documents etc. to limit environmental impact. Are environmental requirements used in procurements? Are there waste management plans?

RISKS FROM CLIMATE CHANGE OR OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION TO THE CONTRIBUTION/PARTNER

Which opportunities are present? Which are most relevant?

- Could the long-term risks from climate change or other environmental impacts be included in strategic analyses of the operations? For example, whether extreme weather events, depleting/contaminated groundwater, large scale land use change could contribute to displacement of people – and higher risks for women, girls and for vulnerable groups; or contribute to increased tensions over water or other natural resources? Could these aspects have an impact on the areas/groups that the organisation work with, and is their strategy adapted to it?

- Does the contribution involve any type of planning, or investments that need to be climate resilient?
- Are there risks related to climate change or environmental degradation that could have a negative impact on the organisation's employees or offices? The risks could for example be increased risk to visit certain areas and risks for floods/ landslides. Has the organisation a strategy for how to deal with these risks?

GENERAL MANAGEMENT TOOLS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRATION

- Does the organisation have an environmental management system? What does it entail? Is it updated and relevant? How it is implemented in practice? Can it be further improved?
- What management tools are in place?
 - An environment policy/strategy?
 - Climate change policy?
 - Environment action plan?
 - Environmental goals?
 - A Green Office strategy?
 - Environmental safeguards?
 - A waste management plan?
 - Environmental requirements in procurements?
 - Any reference to specific tools and/or routines used by the organisation for the operation?
 - Is there a system for improved ambition of the goals over time?
 - Is there a system for monitoring of the policies/ strategies/plans?