

Environmental Context Analysis

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Abbreviations

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghanistan Relief
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management
DFID	Department for International Development, United Kingdom
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GoIRA	Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GCF	Green Climate Fund of UNFCCC (climate convention)
KMO	Kabul Management Office of SCA
MG	Management Group of SCA
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Development and Rehabilitation
NEPA	National Environmental Protection Agency
MSW	Municipal Solid Waste
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RMO	Regional Management Office (of SCA)
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
Sendai Framework	Disaster Risk Reduction Global Framework
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
SMO	Stockholm Management Office of SCA
SMT	Senior Management Team of SCA
UNHCR	United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Executive Summary

The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) operates programmes for education, health, disability and rural development in Afghanistan. After 36 years it continues to be one of the larger international development organisations in the country, with significant footprint at five regional offices (RMO-Mazar, Taloqan, Maidan Shar, Jalalabad and Ghazni) in 16 provinces. Its country office (KMO) is in Kabul, from where it engages national and executive authorities. Its Kabul office also facilitates partner and donor interactions and maintains its operational control base. It is worth noting that SCA has also delivered programme activities to the Kabul Central Region in the past and might do so again. It runs a Satellite operation in Stockholm, Sweden with an executive, normative, support and diplomatic function.

Environmental sustainability is critical to the nation of Afghanistan, but equally to the long-term success, viability and resilience of SCA Programming in the country. In the wake of more than 40 years of conflict, and devastating drought taking place in more than half the country in late 2018, widespread food insecurity, and degraded natural resources base, comes new threats of climate change, and increased incidences of disasters, and shocks.

At the same time environmental programmes can bring economic growth, provide employment and decent jobs to the vulnerable and disabled, help grow green economies around energy, waste and water services, and help protect health. Education programmes can integrate environmental education for all. These are just some possible drivers which the Health, Rural Development, Disability and Education teams can use to justify environmental action integrated into their more traditional workplans from 2019 onwards.

SCA has undertaken one environment analysis in September 2009, which led to the creation of an environmental focal person position from 2013-2014 in the Administration Department. Aside from this there was little or no environmental strategy, action or intentional environmental programming undertaken by the organization. At the same time, informal environmental action, policies, strategies and activities are many. These informal actions have proved valuable and show that though SCA is not actively using the terminology of environment, at the same time its programmes are considering the environment during delivery. Equally SCA internally has the potential to be a strong advocate and demonstration project for green office design, tele-working, low-carbon footprint, ecologically sensitive and nationally and globally environmentally aware workforce.

About 55% of SCA programme unit activities can be seen to have a direct or indirect impact on the environment of Afghanistan. This finding is the direct result of an analysis of the Annual Work Plans of SCA from 2016 onwards, coupled with analysis of the current organigram and the ongoing Country Strategy document. The main issues for each of the four programme units (Health, Education, Disability, Rural Development), the five substantive regional offices (Mazar, Wardak, Takhar, Jalalabad and Ghazni), and cross-cutting sectors are being described in the fact sheets. These analyses point out that

apart from reframing existing work with environmental terms and accounting for them as such, units can undertake simple improvements and adaptations in their current line of work to advance environmental mainstreaming.

The consultant team undertook additional reviews of SCA offices and facilities, in particular to highlight options for reduction of non-renewable resources, and options for integrating appropriate technologies.

Finally, SCA should not stop at just these, and as the external context analyses point out, global environmental problems are disproportionately impacting Afghanistan, which calls for exceptional responsiveness toward change from state, private and civil society actors. SCA, provided it begins now with reframing its programmes in environmental terms, improve its offices and facilities toward being more environmentally friendly, ensure its programme activities are not harming the environment, can then gradually aim at more complex interventions involving communities, natural resources, common property resources and landscapes.