

Change and Resilience

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2027

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SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE FOR AFGHANISTAN

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Rawza Sakhi Shah-e-Mardan mosque, Kabul.

PHOTO | ZEMARAI SAOEB

Background

The challenges facing the Afghan people are enormous. Poverty, displacement, unemployment and the effects of climate change afflict communities across the country, leaving more than half of the population in need of humanitarian assistance.

Since the Taliban assumed control as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) in August 2021, the country has entered a new political era. The IEA has initiated a broad range of policy reforms that put many of the gains made over the last two decades at risk, not the least changes related to human rights, development, and decentralisation. The most notorious policy change is the restrictions on rights of women and girls, limiting women's participation in public life and girls' access to education. Afghanistan remains one of the countries in the world with the least gender equality.

At the same time, the withdrawal of international military forces has brought an end to two decades of conflict, creating a degree of stability and enabling access to parts of the country that were previously inaccessible. Access has been further enhanced by the authorities' investments in infrastructure. Effective measures to combat corruption constitute another important improvement.

The international community, especially Western nations, is largely disengaging with the IEA and long-term development funding levels have not recovered from the drop experienced in August 2021. The IEA is currently not represented at the United Nations. At the same time, the IEA is strengthening its political and economic relationships with countries in the

region, including Russia, China, Iran, Qatar and Central Asian countries.

Sweden is a part of the pattern of disengagement and currently has no dialogue with the IEA. The Swedish policy for development cooperation is increasingly focusing on the geographic area closer to Sweden, and Ukraine specifically, as well as Swedish domestic interests related to migration and the private sector. The target of allocating 1% of the annual GDI to development aid has been abandoned. Afghanistan is not very visible in the Swedish public debate and when it is, the country is framed by a sense of hopelessness.

In this context, we see a continually important role for the Solidarity Committee for Afghanistan to not only stay committed to the Afghan people, but to renew and strengthen our commitment. This strategic plan constitutes a roadmap for 2025–2027 and describes how we, together with partner organisations, will contribute to addressing the development challenges in Afghanistan, especially focusing on the livelihoods of the rural population. This includes the right to food and the impact of climate change, as well as the right to quality basic services such as education and health. The plan describes furthermore how the Solidarity Committee will respond to and try curb the decline in interest and engagement from the international community, building on solid knowledge, experience and broad public commitment.

In a changing and highly unpredictable world, the strategic plan offers a possibility to continuously prioritise, calibrate and analyse how to adapt our work to ensure its relevance to the Afghan people, and to make the best use of opportunities and available resources. ■

Our vision, mission, target groups and core values

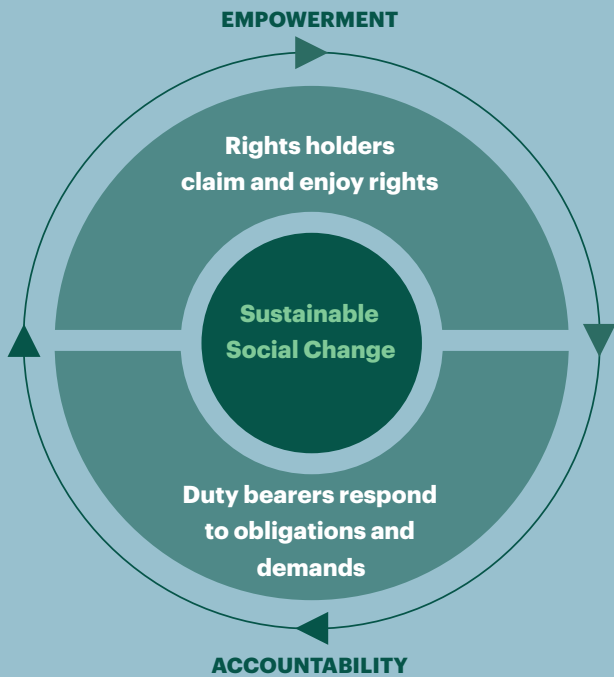
Our analysis of how we believe that change in the lives of the Afghan people takes place, and how we best contribute to it, is at the centre of the strategy. The foundation of this analysis comes from the Solidarity Committee's policy, which states our vision, mission, target groups and core values.

OUR VISION	OUR MISSION	OUR TARGET GROUPS
An Afghanistan free from poverty where everyone enjoys their rights and lives in dignity.	To assist in empowering and building the resilience of individuals, communities, and local organisations, primarily in rural areas of Afghanistan, and to mobilise support and commitment for the rights and welfare of the Afghan people.	People living in poverty and with vulnerabilities in rural areas, with priority given to children, youth, women, and persons with disability. When mobilising support and engagement for the rights of the Afghan people we focus on the interested public, decision-makers, opinion leaders and donors.

OUR CORE VALUES	
RESPONSIVENESS	We work in respectful cooperation with target groups to address their needs and legitimate demands with an emphasis on local ownership.
IMPARTIALITY	While upholding the duty to be inclusive and non discriminatory in our approach, we do not take sides in conflicts and do not support specific factions or parties representing various interests in society.
EQUALITY	We promote equal opportunities and facilitate equal access to resources for all citizens, including women, girls, boys and people with disabilities.
SOCIAL JUSTICE	We strive to be fair to all with whom we work. While working to affirm the rights of all individuals, we recognise that differences in gender, individual capabilities and identities give rise to varied needs and interests.
INTEGRITY	We are true to our mission, maintaining honesty and transparency in all of what we do and say, upholding a spirit of openness and sharing with stakeholders, while always being prepared to be held to account for our actions.

A RIGHTS-BASED DEVELOPMENT ACTOR

We are committed to the principles of participation, equality, non-discrimination, accountability, and transparency. We are a people-driven movement.



WE ASSUME

- That empowerment and development are long-term objectives that require maintaining flexibility and pragmatism in “negotiating” with power holders.
- That rights are universal and inalienable, but that the pace and progress towards their realization are conditioned by context, power-dynamics and resources.
- Rights holders will claim and enjoy rights, if having awareness, means and capacity, and opportunities to demand accountability.
- Duty bearers will respond to rights, if having the means, knowledge and capacity, and are held to account.



Street view, Kabul.

PHOTO | ZEMARAI SAOEB

How we understand the problem

The Solidarity Committee believes that poverty is the underlying cause of the challenges to Afghanistan’s development and recovery. SC views poverty as multi-dimensional and characterised by a lack of resources, lack of agency, lack of opportunities and choice, and lack of security. These dimensions are interconnected, mutually reinforcing, and are both causes and effects of poverty. The manifestations of poverty interplay with broader constraints and opportunities to development that are context-specific and found within, for instance, political, institutional, economic, social and environmental spheres.

Structural inequalities, marginalisation, and unequal power relations further deepen poverty, particularly in a context of weak governance and political instability. For instance, the absence of inclusive state-building efforts and the increased concentration of power to Kandahar exacerbate governance challenges, further limiting the state’s ability to effectively respond to development challenges. The disengagement of the international community, especially Western nations, adds to these constraints.

Poverty in Afghanistan is often most acute in

remote rural areas, as these areas are the very last to benefit from investments and development efforts. As a result, people living there have limited access to public services such as health, education, and infrastructure, and economic opportunities are few. These are also areas where harmful cultural practices are the most deeply entrenched, particularly regarding women’s and girls’ rights. In addition, rural communities are particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change.

Poverty persists as communities remain disempowered, lacking awareness of their rights or the means to claim them. At the same time, duty bearers have neither the means, knowledge nor capacity to fulfil their mandates to serve citizens. Power imbalances within and between groups prevent individuals from exercising their rights.

Traditional norms, patriarchal structures, and the current political landscape on both national and international levels constitute additional challenges. The situation is further complicated by the IEA’s hostile stance on mobilising communities to claim their rights, particularly when those rights are perceived as “foreign” or based on Western concepts of individual freedoms. ■

How we believe sustainable social change can happen

Sustainable social change needs to be built on initiatives that are owned and driven from within Afghan society, addressing the underlying causes of multidimensional poverty. Change is possible when rights holders are empowered and have access to opportunities, awareness of their rights and the capacity to advocate for them.

Change is also furthered when accountability among duty bearers – the State, the international community, communities, and individuals – is strengthened and they are aware of their obligations, as well as capacitated and resourced to respond to legitimate demands. Change can occur when unequal power relations within communities and households are transformed to enable the equal participation of women and men, girls and boys.

In Afghanistan, it is essential to approach change with patience and an in-depth understanding of Islamic and traditional frameworks. Progress must be cultivated from within these cultural and religious contexts, respecting the nuances of the Afghan society while working toward sustainable and inclusive development. By focusing on locally rooted approaches and working closely

with community-based structures that align with Afghan traditions, there is a greater chance of contributing to lasting impact.

Support to civil society, particularly community-based structures including informal organisations, is therefore crucial in providing forums for citizens and groups to identify collective interests, organise, and to formulate and voice their demands from the State and other duty bearers. Furthermore, we believe engaging religious leaders and other locally influential actors can facilitate change in attitudes towards women’s and girls’ participation for example. The fact that universal human rights are critical for social and economic development resonates well with Islamic thought traditions.

The Solidarity Committee believes that the *localisation* of development cooperation is needed to address the power imbalances between international and local actors. Local organisations should lead, own and deliver in their respective contexts and are crucial to ensure that local voices are heard and influence priorities and ways of working. Traditional and organic forms of organisation, including mutual support and solidarity mechanisms that enjoy popular legitimacy, should be nurtured and built upon. ■



Market in Mazar-e Sharif.

PHOTO | KAJSA JOHANSSON

Our contribution to change

SC's vision rests on the notion of a society with communities characterised by economic and social justice, the full participation of women, the full inclusion of persons with disabilities, and the achievement of the full potential of all children. We believe the evidence of a just society is the way it treats the marginalised, disempowered and vulnerable.

We recognise the need to facilitate long-term and structural change, as well as to address

the urgent needs and rights of the Afghan population. Hence, we combine the strategic means of *partnerships for social change* and *policy influence*, to contribute to both concrete and direct changes in the lives of target groups as well as the conditions for that change on the political and institutional levels. Our third strategic approach, that of building *public commitment* for a strong support for the Afghan people, underpins the other two. Below, we describe our three strategic means and their change strategies. ►



POLICY AND INFLUENCE

If SC on our own and by partnering with relevant actors develops policy analysis, generate knowledge and communicates and advocate based on evidence and constructive dialogue, then policy development will become more contextualised and effective. The rights of the Afghan people will be at the centre, and the support for strong engagement with Afghanistan as well as accountability of duty bearers, outside and inside of Afghanistan, will increase.

SC SEEKS TO influence policies that are decisive for the rights of the Afghan people and particularly our target groups. These policies include those under the responsibility of the authorities of IEA, the international community operating in or affecting Afghanistan, and the Swedish government. We strive to influence policy in joint efforts with likeminded organisations and networks.

In our policy efforts, we work closely with research institutions in Sweden and internationally, including in Afghanistan and/or with researchers of Afghan origin. We provide financial support to think-tanks within or with specific relevance to Afghanistan.

We support the participation of target groups and local experts in decision-making processes affecting them. We use the lessons learnt and access to target groups of our partners to inform our policy influencing and evidence-based advocacy, giving it legitimacy.

We strive to support and participate in inclusive platforms at different levels in Afghanistan and internationally, promoting dialogue on the non-isolation of Afghanistan and the unlocking of positions. We collaborate with religious scholars and networks inside and outside Afghanistan to ensure contextually relevant, legitimate and effective policy work, with a higher possibility of making an impact. ►



PARTNERSHIPS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

If SC works with a range of local and international partners addressing development challenges of communities, power imbalances, discrimination and vulnerability, by a) building on its experience and knowledge of rights-based programming in an Islamic setting, b) ensuring access to funding and expertise, c) providing relevant resources for learning and development, and d) promoting innovation and collaborative platforms, then the quality, diversity and reach of interventions will increase and conditions for social change for target groups in Afghanistan will be enabled.

SC ENVISIONS PARTNERSHIPS as long-term commitments, relying on the mindset that we go further together. SC seeks to establish partnerships with local organisations in Afghanistan, preferably rooted in rural areas, empowering local actors and organisations to own and lead the development and promote rights within their communities. Partnerships with local actors will enhance the capacity of community-based structures and local forms of civil society, as well as strengthen the resilience of local communities. Partnerships are based on the principles of localisation, empowering local organisations and recognising the importance of local knowledge and cultural understanding. To strengthen legitimacy as well as impact, we acknowledge the importance of working with local organisations that are engaging with religious scholars.

Furthermore, we explore the opportunities to continue to develop partnerships with international non-governmental organisations. We aim at building on each other's strengths to support social change and conduct joint policy advocacy for greater impact. Through partnerships, SC will also explore working with the capacity development of duty bearers in Afghanistan to enhance their responsiveness to rights. A requirement for such capacity development is alignment with SCA's core values, including non-discrimination.

SC will seek to collaborate with actors who can contribute to innovation and digitalisation in start-up initiatives that could, if evaluated positively, be scaled up and replicated.



PHOTO | LAURA LINDHOLM

PUBLIC COMMITMENT

If SC works with building public commitment together with our member base, by providing opportunities for influence and involvement and by giving access to knowledge and Afghan voices to the Swedish public, then the sense of solidarity and the number of joint actions will increase, leading to broader public awareness, increased funding from private actors, and stronger support and engagement of policy-makers towards rights-holders in Afghanistan and their development.

SC IS A member-based and people-driven organisation. SC strives towards an increased public and political support for the rights of the people in Afghanistan. SC generates and disseminates knowledge and highlights Afghan voices and perspectives in broad communication channels, to ensure that Sweden and the world does not forget Afghanistan. SC fundraising from private persons contribute to the funding of the partnerships for social change and policy and influence, while showcasing the results to a wider audience.

The members are engaged in fundraising for and communicating the work that SC is supporting through partnerships for social change, offering concrete examples of change in the lives of the target groups. The work with innovation, digitalisation and start-ups offers an opportunity

for members to engage concretely in activities contributing to change. The members are engaged in the policy influencing work, especially that target Swedish politicians, and creating public awareness and opinion. Members can also engage in the research contributing to policy change.



PHOTO | HAJI MOHAMMAD

PUTTING IT TOGETHER AND ADDING VALUE

If SC combines the three strategic means,

then policy influence is based on a broad public commitment as well as an ear to the ground amplifying the voices and experiences of our target groups, and,

then concrete social change in the lives of the target group is complemented with policy advocacy backed by public support which can create conditions for sustainable change, as root causes of poverty are addressed,

because the strategic means are mutually reinforcing, and jointly contribute to augmenting the desired impact.

ONE OF OUR main added values is the combination of three strategic means and how they mutually reinforce each other. Defining and continuing to develop our added value is crucial to our relevance. Some of the ways SC adds further value are described below.

Our **comprehensive rights-based approach** includes a broad range of tools and methods, one of which is the recognition and understanding of Islamic principles and their function when working for human rights, social justice and equality in Afghanistan. This also includes an understanding of how to work with and capacitate formal and informal civil society organisations at the grassroot level. It further involves a

nuanced understanding of power dynamics in rural Afghanistan and how to engage influential actors as change agents.

Our **principled pragmatism approach** reflects a balanced approach to promoting human rights within the complexities of the Afghan context. We have gained an understanding of how to operationalise the rights-based principles of non-discrimination, participation, transparency and accountability in a manner that enables incremental progress while mitigating backlash. By fostering trust through dialogue, prioritising community ownership, and acknowledging cultural and religious dynamics, the approach entails leveraging progressive Islamic discourse, ►

engaging local change agents. It aims at stimulating a continuous negotiation in seeking locally acceptable solutions to disempowerment, without compromising on human rights.

Our **diverse understanding of Afghanistan**, as well as sector-specific experiences and knowledge within education, health, rural development, livelihoods, resilience building and climate change adaptation is key.

Our **work for gender equality and women's and girls' participation** will drive our programming. SC has developed context-sensitive methods and approaches enabling women to act with agency and earn a living, and women and girls to access essential services. This experience and know-how also relate to how to work with men, including religious leaders and elders, to create supportive conditions for the rights of women and girls.

Our know-how of **conflict sensitive approach to development**, including how to avoid doing harm and identifying opportunities to build trust among actors, will be used to ensure effectiveness and quality of programmes supported by SC. This is also true for the nexus of humanitarian, development and peace.

Our experience of applying a **climate lens to development work**, analysing the impact of climate change on livelihoods, raising environmental awareness and strengthening community resilience to climate change, will provide important contributions to our partnerships.

Being **well-positioned as an intermediary** is central to our success. To local organisations, we bring experience of implementation on the ground with methods and lessons learned that can be used for capacity-building. For donors, we offer meaningful dialogue and learning about on-the-ground realities in Afghanistan. We put forward insights and skills in identifying opportunities and methods that work, while having seasoned awareness of pitfalls and risks.

Our track-record of having **convening power and skills in alliance-building** provides legitimacy. With our dedicated one-country focus, we have been central to establishing and running coordination bodies in Afghanistan, Europe and Sweden. Furthermore, SC continues to organise the well-reputed biennial International Conference on Afghanistan in Stockholm. Through our established networks, we contribute to connecting practice and theory,

building knowledge, promoting dialogue, and advancing innovation.

We use our **capacity to mobilise**, embodied in a broad popular movement engaged in supporting the Afghan people and ensuring they are not forgotten. Our almost 3 000 individual members across Sweden engage in advocacy, fundraising and communication work on a voluntary basis.

Our extensive base of individual donors and philanthropists contribute by own means and via fundraising campaigns. Our “people-to-people” movement is a key asset for upholding legitimacy, nurturing solidarity, building commitment, raising awareness and forging opinion.

The added values depend on people possessing experiences, capacity and knowledge. To maintain this in times of the reduction of staff members poses a challenge. SC will maintain a continuous dialogue with organised networks of former members of staff, i.e. alumni, as well as with SC members with experience from living and working in Afghanistan. However, the capacity and knowledge resting with former staff and networks will not be sufficient. We aim therefore to internalise as much of this capacity as possible while developing structures that can retain and regenerate that knowledge and capacity within the organisation for the future. In addition, we will develop experience, capacity and knowledge in our work with local partner organisations, researchers, religious scholars and other stakeholders. ■



Facade of Shrine of Hazrat Ali, Mazar-e Sharif.

PHOTO | KAJSA JOHANSSON

Alignment with key international frameworks and strategies

In the current context – where the strategies of the previous government are no longer reference points – SC aligns its work with key frameworks guiding the international community’s support to Afghanistan, such as the United Nations Strategic Framework 2023–2025 for Afghanistan. This framework entails support to essential services, promoting resilience and the fulfilment of basic needs.

Additionally, the annual UN Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) provides guidance for addressing humanitarian needs. The HRP is significantly underfunded and SC’s efforts to advocate for Afghanistan’s visibility and increasing donor commitment aim to contri-

bute to reducing the funding gap. The strategic impact areas (see below) also envisage contributing to reducing the need for humanitarian assistance, through enhanced climate resilience, livelihoods and food security.

While the future of the Swedish development cooperation with Afghanistan remains uncertain, SC’s strategy is consistent with Sweden’s current overall development policy, for example, as regards climate, health, education, and the rights of women and girls. Moreover, SC directly contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These alignments position SC as a credible partner for international donors and stakeholders. ■



View from Takht-e Rostam, Samangan.

PHOTO | KAJSA JOHANSSON

Strategic impact areas

Building on our understanding of how contextual challenges impede the empowerment and resilience of our target groups, our theory of change and strategic means, as well as our added value, we have identified four strategic impact areas (SIA) within which we intend to contribute to outcome for the duration of the strategy period. Initially, priorities will be refined based on further analysis of opportunities and the navigation of challenges. In ad-

dition, the approach of the strategy is one of continuous agility and contextual adaptation. SC envisages therefore that certain prioritisation and concretisation within the impact areas will be an ongoing process, based on learnings throughout implementation. Each of the SIAs is linked to one or several of the SDGs and contain outcomes which describe our ambition in terms of medium-term, as well as qualitative changes to be achieved in the strategy period. ►



SIA 1. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION WITH AFGHANISTAN

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL:

17. Partnership for the goals



AFGHANISTAN'S UNRECOGNISED GOVERNMENT and international sanctions have created significant challenges for delivering humanitarian aid and development programs. Current aid frameworks are short-term and delivered via parallel UN-led systems that circumvent and thus undermine Afghan authorities' ownership, widening the gap between domestic and international policymakers and weakening state capacity by relying on off-budget funding. Delivering through parallel systems also undermines the sustainability since it does not contribute to strengthening, but rather undermining, national systems.

**Outcome 1.1:
Policy makers and decision makers in Sweden, Afghanistan and internationally act in support of the rights of the Afghan people**

SC prioritises promoting strong political com-

mitment to the rights of the Afghan people from both the IEA authorities and the international community. SC will advocate for sustainable, long-term development frameworks that promote effective aid delivery and reduce dependence on external support, including humanitarian aid.

SC will engage with the Swedish government and parties represented in the Swedish parliament to try to ensure that Afghanistan remains a priority for Swedish aid and that the rights of the Afghan people are well-reflected in policy decisions. Together with other organisations in Sweden, SC will strive to strengthen political commitment to increase the levels of overseas aid expenditure and to contribute to sound aid policy formulation, as these broader factors also impact on the support to Afghanistan. We will likewise explore opportunities to influence other governments, in collaboration with likeminded organisations.

SC will use the experience from partnerships in Afghanistan to contribute to the ongoing international policy discussion on engagement and cooperation with marginalised states and estranged regimes, which in turn influence aid policies towards Afghanistan. We will involve researchers, religious scholars, civil society actors and decision-makers in contributing to inclusive ►



Sunset over Kabul.

PHOTO | ZEMARAI SAQEB

platforms through which we aim at bridging divides, overcoming locked positions and promoting a principled pragmatic approach.

**Outcome 1.2:
Increased public support in Sweden
for the rights of the Afghan people**

SC will engage with its members and the public in Sweden to build commitment for the human rights of people in Afghanistan. This will be done through strategic communication in our own channels, such as SC's social media, web and magazines, as well as in mainstream media and through events such as seminars and conferences. By elevating the voices of our target groups through examples from our partner organisations' work, we will contribute to greater knowledge of the situation in Afghanistan, increased solidarity and public support for the rights of the Afghan people.

Our diverse membership is committed, informed and passionate about advocating for the rights of people, especially women's and girls' rights, to both the public and to decision-makers. SC strives to strengthen the interest in Afghanistan among members, the public and decision makers, and contends that Afghanistan is overshadowed

by other crises or threatened by a sense of fatigue among the public of being a lost cause. It is important that SC communicates clearly that change for our target groups in Afghanistan is still attainable, that work to support them is still possible, and that individual and institutional donors' continued contributions are critical to support that change.





SIA 2. DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS IN AFGHANISTAN

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

- 1. No poverty
- 16. Peace, justice and strong societies



THE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES in Afghanistan are many and complex. At the same time, deep knowledge and understanding about the dynamics driving change are scarce. There is also limited analysis on opportunities and best practices on how to influence the policies of the IEA in a way that increases their accountability and responsiveness, as well as their consideration of the interests and rights of the population.

**Outcome 2.1:
Afghan national policies on economic, social, and governance issues reflect improved accountability and responsiveness from Afghan authorities**

SC will contribute to knowledge production and evidence-based advocacy to influence decision-makers in Afghanistan, as well as the

international and donor community, to pursue policies that have the rights and interest of the Afghan people at the centre. Initially, we will explore and identify thematic priorities for such advocacy work within the following three clusters:

- State building, governance, decentralisation and civic space.
- Rights and opportunities of women and girls.
- Inclusive economic development.

The clusters are all of relevance to SIA 1, 3 and 4, as preconditions for sustainable and participatory development in Afghanistan.

SC will identify research institutions, individual researchers, religious scholars and civil society actors to collaborate with in identifying thematic priorities, analysing gaps and added value in the current policy landscape, as well as in forging relevant strategies to disseminate knowledge and influence policy. SC aims to identify think-tanks and research institutions that could become partners, to further strengthen and amplify Afghan voices and interests within and outside of Afghanistan.

The involvement in research, knowledge ▶



Panjshir valley.
PHOTO | KAJSA JOHANSSON

production and dissemination will enable SC to position itself as an expert organisation on matters related to Afghanistan. This involvement will furthermore ensure that members and the general public have access to up-to-date and comprehensive information on developments in Afghanistan. The knowledge prevalent among SC membership will be a resource to be utilised and nurtured.

Contributing to knowledge through research comes with several challenges in terms of access to different structures and functions in Afghan society, including the authorities. This is decisive for understanding underlying reasons as well as opportunities for change. Another access-related challenge concerns voice and representation and how to ensure the inclusion of the rural population in general, and women and girls more specifically, in research. While the more connected parts of the Afghan population, as well as the diaspora, can provide valuable perspectives, SC stands firm in the conviction that also hard-to-reach groups have the right to be heard, and that they need to be included for change to happen. It will be decisive to work together with scholars, including religious scholars, who are accepted and respected in the local context and

who have access to all of the above. Recognising and including change agents within the system is crucial to create an understanding of what kind of change is possible and how.

Believing that change needs to come from within Afghan society, from the grassroots upwards, knowledge-production and dissemination will have to be accompanied by support to local actors. i.e. the owners and drivers of change. These could be community-based organisations, Ulema councils, professional associations or informal cultural and religious groups. SC will support the empowerment of these actors and their increased capacity to mobilise and advocate for change from below and within, and to hold the national and international decision- and policy makers to account. Partnerships with local actors will in turn inform and feed into our continued work with research and advocacy.





SIA 3. RIGHT TO FOOD, LIVELIHOODS AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

- 1. No poverty
- 2. Zero hunger
- 5. Gender equality
- 13. Climate action



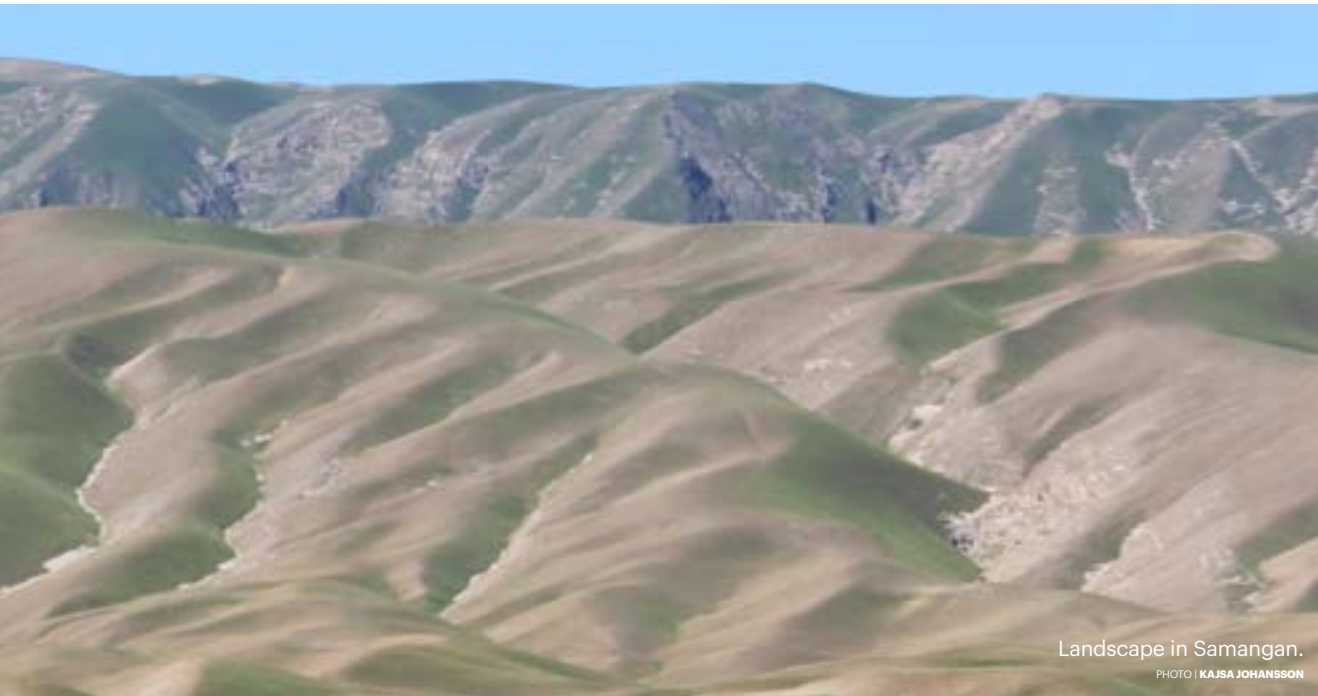
CLIMATE CHANGE, FOOD insecurity, and immediate humanitarian needs highlight the urgency of a robust response. Recurring extreme weather, such as drought and floods, have increasingly disrupted agriculture, exacerbating food shortages and threatening livelihoods. While short-term humanitarian aid is crucial for survival, sustainable development initiatives are needed to build resilience, strengthen food security, and address the underlying vulnerabilities that climate change intensifies.

Outcome 3.1:
Afghan communities, particularly in rural areas, have more resilient livelihoods, are better equipped to cope with climate change, and enjoy greater food security through sustainable practices

SC will support partner organisations promoting sustainable, climate-resilient agriculture, including the diversification of cash-crops to increase rural households’ income, as well as food crops to enhance food security and reduce reliance on food aid. We will support partners involved in the construction and rehabilitation of agricultural infrastructure, such as small-scale irrigation, storage and local market structures. Enhancing producers’ skills, finance, and market access will help them increase their production and earnings. SC will furthermore support organisations that enhance resilient livelihoods through the promotion of vocational and entrepreneurial skills. A diversified approach will be sought, to reach the most vulnerable, including people with disabilities, as well as female farmers.

SC partners will contribute to the enhanced capacity of target groups and their communities in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation including natural resource management. Support will be provided to analyse and map disaster risks, establish community-based early warning systems, and formulate disaster management plans.

We will seek to establish partnerships with local associations of female and male farmers. The ▶



Landscape in Samangan.

PHOTO | KAJSA JOHANSSON

associations are crucial for addressing production, post-harvest and marketing challenges in a collective way, but also in serving as platforms for small landholders to convene and strengthen support mechanisms and bonds of solidarity. The local associations are also crucial to create awareness of environmental risks, develop small-scale mitigation measures and promote sustainable management of natural resources. These structures and organisations are furthermore key for local communities to mobilise a collective voice and demand action from the authorities, as solutions to the challenges go beyond the resources available in the local community. SC will support organisations in their joint advocacy with local communities. As women, children and persons with disabilities are among the most vulnerable and socially excluded, it will be particularly important to empower them to participate.

SC will engage in the international policy discussions on climate change resilience and adaptation. We will partner with research institutions and individual researchers to advocate for the Afghan people to benefit from global climate funding, despite the IEA not being a recognised member of the UN. We will support the participation of Afghan civil society and the research community in

international forums and policy-debates on climate change. Furthermore, we will explore opportunities to support partner organisations working with IEA authorities to increase their capacity on climate change effects and advocate for an increased prioritisation of climate resilience within Afghan policies. In addition, we will engage in the policy discussions on the right to food, food systems and humanitarian food aid.

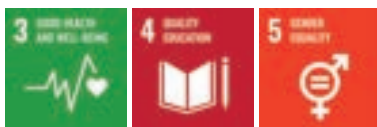
SC and our members will engage in activities and campaigns for increased awareness of the effects of climate change in Afghanistan and the right to livelihoods and food, using concrete examples from partners' operations on the ground.



SIA 4. RIGHT TO QUALITY BASIC SOCIAL SERVICES

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

- 3. Good health and well-being
- 4. Quality education
- 5. Gender equality



ACCESS TO BASIC services has decreased despite soaring demand. Hundreds of health facilities have closed since 2021, while those remaining face shortages of medicine, equipment, and staff. Restrictions on the ability of women to work create further challenges. Water infrastructure has deteriorated, and a rising number of households lack access to safe water. Secondary schools and universities for girls have been closed. There is a critical need for interventions that address the need for quality basic services for the most marginalised and vulnerable, including people with disabilities.

Outcome 4.1:
Our target groups have improved access to quality education, health-care, disability and social services

SC will explore opportunities to engage in the development of a collaborative platform to re-envision education, focusing on the role of education for development, and to conceptualise an ideal curriculum appropriate to the context of Afghanistan. The dialogue platform will include Afghan educators, religious scholars, researchers, civil society organisations and international stakeholders, primarily from the region. SC will seek to facilitate knowledge exchange and learning from diverse models, adapting insights to the context for a curriculum that promotes critical thinking, resilience, and skills required for the future development of the country. The platform would also be an opportunity for SC to engage in the critical discussion on the right to education for women and girls.

SC will support partner organisations to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all children, including girls and children with disabilities. Caregivers, local councils and parents’ councils will be supported to advocate for provision of quality education. SCA’s partners will work on interactive teaching and learning tools and materials in accessible digital forms. SC will engage with a range of stakeholders to carefully explore opportunities to further engage in online education for



Orthopedic workshop, Taloqan, Takhar province.

PHOTO | SAYED QUDRATULLAH ATTAYE

women and girls, including for professional training such as midwifery.

In the health sector, SC will, together with local partner organisations, explore a strengthened role in the policy debate on the rights to quality public health services in general in Afghanistan, and for women, girls and people with disabilities in particular. Key needs include the increase of qualified female health staff, particularly within maternal health care, and the integration of physical rehabilitation into the public health system. We will build on existing partnerships with key civil society organisations in the sector, including professional associations such as the Afghanistan Midwifery Association, while also seeking to expand the number of partners.

SC's partners will improve the capacity of community-based organisations to voice concerns, enhance cohesion, increase awareness and acceptance around the rights of women, girls and persons with disabilities, as well as demand accountability and responsiveness of local duty bearers to deliver quality public services.

In addition, SC will support organisations directly contributing to increased access to

health services. The organisations will improve the access of persons with disabilities to mobility devices, physiotherapy, psychosocial support services and community-based care, as well as train health staff on disability-inclusive health services, early identification, and rehabilitation. Furthermore, the scope and capacity of skilled midwives will be enhanced, helping to address a critical shortfall of female maternal health staff.

SC's partner organisation will improve access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities and services through construction and rehabilitation of infrastructure. Together with rural communities, public health institutions and other stakeholders, partners will encourage the active and meaningful participation of women, children and persons with disabilities to promote increased equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, as well as improved knowledge on good hygiene practices.

SCA's membership and public communication will inform about and contribute to knowledge and support for the right to education, health and social services, especially for women and girls and persons with disabilities in Afghanistan. ■



Participants at the SC annual meeting 2024.

PHOTO | BJÖRN O HENRIKSSON

Developing who we are and how we work

To effectively deliver on our strategic impact areas, we need to develop our organisational capabilities.

We aspire to be credible, relevant, accountable and adaptive, rooted in our vision, mission and values, while continuously evolving to be effective in meeting legitimate needs of our target groups.

Broadened and strengthened membership movement

SC will explore more dynamic ways for members and the public to participate in activities and express support for the rights of target groups. A key focus will be on lowering thresholds for becoming an active and participating member. SC will continue to adapt our activities in order to mobilise commitment in geographical areas without local SC associations, as well as among youth.

Strengthened capacity in policy advocacy and partnerships

SC will prioritise building internal expertise in policy analysis, advocacy and managing partnerships. This will include attracting staff with the required skills, investing in the capacity development of existing staff, and developing tools and resources to monitor and evaluate the impact of policy work, partnerships and building commitment.

Developing our humanitarian-development-peace triple nexus approach

To effectively address the development challenges in Afghanistan, the gaps between humanitarian and development interventions will have to be closed. In practice, this means that develop- ▶

ment actors will have to approach the humanitarian space by increased focus on building resilience and local capacities for early response to disasters, and that humanitarian actors will increasingly need to consider durable solutions. SC will seek to increase its capacity to contribute to closing the gap and will assess whether to seek Core Humanitarian Standard Certification to receive humanitarian funding.

Strengthened agility and accountability in structures and processes

As part of the agenda of strengthening agility and accountability, SC aims to:

- Adjust our structure based on learning and changes in the context as we move ahead, to ensure the achievement of the objectives of this strategic plan.
- Align and simplify procedures, aiming at maintaining transparency while allowing flexibility and efficiency.
- Enhance our capacity for integrating cross-cutting themes, including in partnerships.
- Strengthen our resource-mobilisation and donor diversification.

Capturing results and learning from our work

Our monitoring, evaluation and learning framework will be revised to track progress towards results as well as document learning from our work. Together with partner organisations, we will develop procedures for regular monitoring and reporting on programme progress, deviations from targets, community perceptions, impact, lessons learned, innovations and best practices.

A plan will be established for evaluating progress and results as well as for reviewing learning and following-up on the theory of change. Formal management responses will be systematically conducted after each evaluation and review, and procedures will be developed to ensure that project and organisational learning is captured, analysed and scaled, where appropriate.

Regular learning sessions with SC and partner organisations will help to identify best practices, analyse operational challenges, and explore continuous improvement of programme approaches.

Strengthened risk analysis and anti-corruption work

SC will, together with partners, continuously scan and analyse the contexts regarding risks and devise relevant risk prevention and mitigation strategies in annual planning. Over the strategic plan period, we will further develop risk management systems and capacities and delineate clear roles and responsibilities for each area of work, including working in partnerships.

We will adapt our existing approaches and routines for preventing, detecting and addressing corruption across all our work, including working in partnerships and disbursement of funds. We recognise that the process of disbursement of funds is high risk and we will work closely with partner organisations to ensure joint understanding of agreements, including the requirements of all donors, as well as full compliance with requirements of preventing and reporting suspected cases of corruption. SC has an established whistleblowing mechanism available on our website and other platforms that will remain available throughout the lifetime of the strategic plan.

Revisiting our values and how they are practiced

We are driven by our vision, mission and core values as outlined at the beginning of this strategic plan. In addition to our core values, SC as an organisation is further characterised by:

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

Our core values and the above characterisations should permeate not only our contribution to change in Afghanistan, but also SC as an organisation in the way we work together at our offices, with partner organisations and members. This is a significant and challenging obligation that needs to be continuously revisited. ■

