

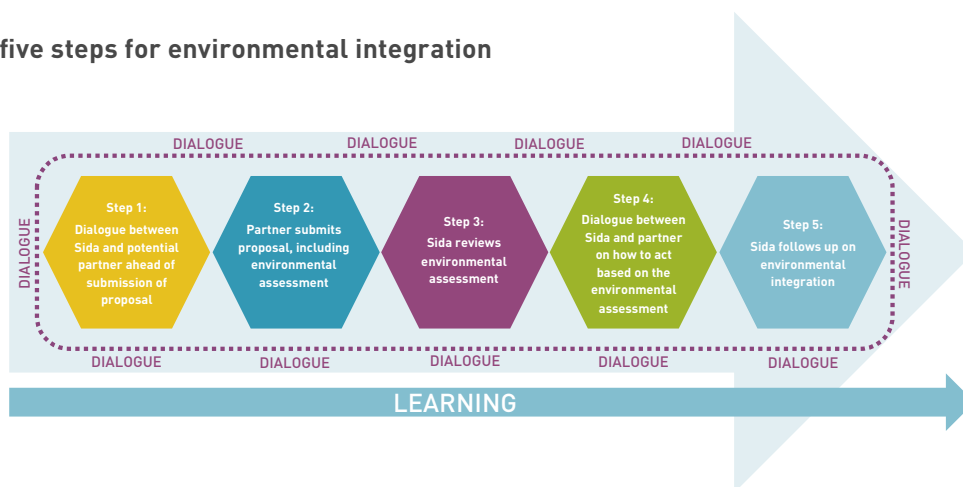
All Sida’s operations must be based on and permeated by a climate change and environment perspective.¹ As a means to achieve this, **all Sida-financed projects and programmes must be based on an environmental assessment**, which identifies entry points for integration of environment, climate change and biodiversity (hereafter referred to as simply environment). **As a partner to Sida, you are required to conduct an environmental assessment** and submit it to Sida as part of your proposal. The environmental assessment should result in strategic action points for you to take within your project/programme and your organisation to ensure that these contribute to environmentally sustainable development. This guide serves as a **practical tool to assist Sida cooperation partners to conduct an environmental assessment**, which constitutes the second step in Sida’s five steps for environmental integration (see step 2 in the figure below).²

Sida works to create prerequisites for better living conditions for people living in poverty and oppression. As the effects of climate change, loss of biodiversity and environmental degradation become increasingly alarming, inequalities, poverty, conflicts and vulnerability in individuals and societies will increase. Therefore, in order to create prerequisites for better living conditions for people living in poverty and oppression, it is crucial to integrate environment into all Sida-financed projects and programmes.

Environmental integration goes **beyond “do no harm”** – it requires you as a partner to adopt the mind-set that sustainable development results cannot be delivered without considering and adhering to the planetary boundaries.³

The environmental assessment serves as the basis for integrating environment into planning, implementation and monitoring of projects and programmes. The environmental assessment is conducted according to **three criteria**. The environmental assessment shall identify: **1)** opportunities for positive environmental impact from the project/programme on the environment; **2)** risks for negative environmental impact from the project/programme that can harm the environment; **3)** risks from environmental degradation, climate change and loss of biodiversity affecting the sustainability of the project/programme.

Figure 1: Sida’s five steps for environmental integration



1 There are multiple international agreements and conventions, policies, regulations, letters of appropriation, special assignments and strategies that Sida is obliged to adhere to and carry out, including [regulation \(2010:1080, SFS 2022:234\) with instruction for Sida](#) and [Sida’s climate and environment policy](#). For more information, see the [e-learning on Sida’s strategic approach to environment and climate, the EMS](#).

2 For information about Sida’s five steps for environmental integration, see the [Step-by-step guide: Environmental integration into Sida’s operations](#).

3 A set of nine planetary boundaries within which humanity can continue to develop and thrive for generations to come. For more information, see [Planetary boundaries - Stockholm Resilience Centre](#).

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR CONDUCTING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

In the environmental assessment, you as the partner need to **analyse the context and conditions, adapt planned activities and suggest measures** in order to:

1) harness opportunities for a positive impact from the project/programme on the environment, including opportunities for longer-term benefits for socio-economic development and transformation to green economies and resilient societies, as well as for contributing to Swedish policies and international commitments on the environment.

What are the potential positive contributions from the project/programme in terms of reduction of pollution and emissions of greenhouse gases, halting loss of biodiversity, and environmental protection, in absolute terms as well as in terms of strengthening legal and institutional capacity to address such issues? How can these positive contributions be ranked (in order)? What measures can be taken to enhance positive contributions? What targets and indicators can be used to monitor these measures?

2) avoid and mitigate negative impacts and risks from the project/programme that can harm the environment

What are potential negative impacts and risks in terms of pollution of land, air, water and soils, climate impact and loss of biodiversity, given the scope of the project/programme and the geographical and environmental context? How can these potential negative impacts and risks be ranked (in order)? What measures can be taken to manage and mitigate these risks? What targets and indicators can be used to monitor the management of these risks?

3) manage risks from environmental degradation, climate change and loss of biodiversity affecting the sustainability of the project/programme (ensuring that the project/programme is resilient to climate change and other environmental changes).

How resilient is the project/programme to these types of risks - what are the potential environment-related risks threatening the sustainability of the project/programme? How can these risks be ranked? What measures can be taken in order to manage and mitigate these risks? What targets and indicators can help monitor the management of these risks?

The assessment must be **context-specific**, meaning that you as the partner need to make the assessment while taking into consideration the geographical and political context where the proposed project/programme is to be implemented, such as the environmental conditions in the specific geographical area and how regional/national legislation may influence the design and implementation of the project/programme.

What does the context look like now and what environmental problems can be foreseen in the future? How does the environmental situation impact the people and their health, well-being, livelihood and security, now and in the future? How are different groups (including women, men, boys and girls) affected by environmental degradation, climate change and loss of biodiversity? How can national, regional and/or international legal mechanisms (e.g. conventions and agreements such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC and the Convention on Biological Diversity, CBD) be taken into account?

The assessment also needs to analyse the internal **capacity** of your organisation to manage identified opportunities and risks, such as staff capacity or environmental management tools (policies, guidelines, environmental management systems). The assessment may also include a description of opportunities to improve these tools.

What is the internal understanding of the context in relation to environment? What is the internal capacity to handle environmental issues? What is the staff capacity to manage environmental opportunities and risks? What are the opportunities to improve staff capacity? What environmental guidelines, policies, audits or wider systems (such as an environmental management system, EMS) are in place? What are the opportunities to improve these tools?

The assessment may be adapted to the scope and focus of the project/programme – it could be a simple exercise that involves a small team for a few hours, to a more extensive process that engages large parts of the organisation over a period of time. To ensure relevance and ownership, partners are encouraged to engage different parts of the organisation and stakeholders in the assessment. The environmental assessment may be conducted in close cooperation between your organisation and Sida. In case you do not have the internal competence within your organisation to conduct an environmental assessment, the cost for a consultant to conduct the environmental assessment can be included in the budget submitted to Sida as part of the proposal. In case you as a partner forward funding to other entities, it is your responsibility as a partner to Sida to ensure that these entities comply with the requirements above.

The result of the assessment can be reflected as a paragraph in the proposal; as an integrated part of the context analysis, description of activities and monitoring system; or even a full document annexed to the proposal. However, in order to ensure that Sida does not finance an unsustainable pathway, the three criteria must be included in the assessment.

If an assessment is not made, this may jeopardise the sustainability and the cost efficiency of the project/programme and – in worst case – generate negative impact from the project/programme on the environment. In case an assessment is missing at the time of submission of a proposal, you as the partner will need to complement the proposal with an environmental assessment.

Once complete, you as the partner submit the proposal, including an environmental assessment, to Sida for review (see step 3 in Figure 1).⁴

⁴ For more information about the overall process of applying for support for a project/programme, see [How an initiative comes about | Sida](#).