

The Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in Swedish Development Cooperation

Learnings from Sida's Helpdesk for Environment and Climate Change

Delivering effective climate aid is a thematic priority for Swedish development cooperation.¹ Focusing on Sida's partner countries' own priorities as set out in their Nationally Determined Contributions, NDCs, is one way to reach the objectives for an effective climate aid while improving living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression. In 2024-2026, Sida commissioned the Helpdesk for Environment and Climate Change seven assignments related to the NDCs. These are the findings.

What is an NDC?

An NDC is a government plan for how to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and enhance resilience to the effects of climate change. The NDC outlines a country's mitigation and adaptation priorities, targets, and strategies for climate action, and constitutes an important vehicle to implement the Paris agreement.

The Helpdesk assignments

Between 2024 and 2026, Sida commissioned the Helpdesk for Environment and Climate Change seven assignments related to NDCs. These included bilateral and regional portfolios in Africa, Latin America, and Bangladesh, with different purposes and scope, including: Assessing alignment between Sidas portfolios and the NDC priorities, and entry points for Swedish businesses to engage in the implementation.

¹ Bistånd för en ny era. Frihet, egenmakt och hållbar tillväxt (2023). Regeringskansliet, Utrikesdepartementet.

The Helpdesk highlights the following findings:

- **Climate change adaptation is a strong priority in Sida's partner countries' NDCs.** Many of Sida's partner countries are already experiencing severe impacts of climate change while their GHG emissions are relatively low. Adaptation and building resilience is thus a strong priority in their NDCs. For climate action, NDCs can serve as a guide for targeting support where needs are greatest and impact can be maximised.
- **Sida's portfolios are rather well aligned with the NDC priorities, especially for adaptation.** Adaptation action aligns well with agriculture, forestry & land use (AFOLU), water & water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), ecosystems & biodiversity, and renewable energy. Mitigation action aligns mainly with energy, and AFOLU. Gender is frequently integrated, contributing to more gender-responsive climate action.
- **There are also some gaps in the alignment.** Adaptation gaps include tourism, fisheries and wildlife management, industrial development, and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). Mitigation gaps include waste management, low-emission transport systems, and industry.
- **There is potential for co-benefits between adaptation and mitigation in most sectors and NDC priorities.** Many interventions can support both adaptation and mitigation. Climate-smart agriculture can for example reduce emissions while strengthening resilience to droughts and changing weather patterns, while improving livelihoods.

Sida's Helpdesk for Environment and Climate Change

The Helpdesk's key takeaways from the assignments:

- **The NDCs are good entrypoints for development cooperation**

The NDC, provided that it has been developed in a participatory way, offers a good vehicle to understand a country's climate priorities and needs, why it can constitute an important starting point for development cooperation. For Sida, NDCs can be used throughout the programme cycle, during strategic analysis, dialogue with partners, identification of interventions, and follow-up of results. Focusing on the NDCs can contribute to reaching the goal on effective climate aid.

- **Promote integrated approaches across sectors and thematic areas**

The NDCs are useful not only for climate interventions but for most of Sida's work. Cross-sectoral approaches can support climate results while contributing to results in other sectors, as well as generating co-benefits between adaptation and mitigation.

- **Creating enabling environments is critical for effective NDC implementation**

Many contributions that are not labelled as climate aid can be essential for creating the enabling conditions needed for NDC implementation. Good governance and strong institutions are essential to translate climate commitments into tangible results. Support to civil society, institutional capacity, transparency and other good governance principles can contribute to strengthening the ability to plan, implement, and monitor climate actions. When such enabling interventions are considered in addition to those labelled mitigation and adaptation, Sida's portfolios demonstrate an even stronger alignment to the NDC than what is visible at first sight.

- **A combination of market-based financial support and more traditional grant-based support can be effective for supporting the NDC implementation.**

Grant-based sources can help to unlock other sources of finance by de-risking investments. Development actors can support NDC investments in various ways: by supporting the enabling environment, including strengthening markets, capacity building efforts, institutional-, policy-, and regulatory strengthening, as well as development of Monitoring Reporting and Verification (MRV) systems. Further, grant-based finance can be used to support NDC priorities that are not commercially viable activities on their own, such as investments in urban resilience, health facilities, WASH, and other adaptation actions with social welfare benefits.

- **NDCs can support dialogue with a broader set of actors, including Team Sweden.**

NDCs can help identify areas where development cooperation, private sector engagement, technical expertise, and policy dialogue can reinforce each other. This can strengthen coordination across actors and support implementation of partner countries' priorities.



Contact the Helpdesk to learn more

Are you interested in learning more about the Helpdesk's assignments on the NDCs?

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