

Vi Agroforestry & We Effect Interim Strategy 2020-2021

Approved by the We Effect Board of Directors on the 16th of June 2020.

Approved by the Vi Agroforestry Board of Directors on the 25th of June 2020.

Vi Agroforestry

Vi Agroforestry started in 1983 as a tree-planting project around Lake Victoria in East Africa, initiated by the Swedish magazine Tidningen Vi.

Today, Vi Agroforestry is a development cooperation organisation that supports the strengthening of local **farmers organisations** to reduce poverty, hunger, and deforestation whilst contributing to **increased biodiversity**. Vi Agroforestry is a foundation owned by the Swedish Cooperative Union (KF).

Vi Agroforestry's mission is to fight poverty and **climate change** - together. Our target groups are smallholder farmer families living in poverty, with a special focus on women, youth and children, who are members or potential members of democratic farmers' organisations.

Vi Agroforestry adopts a holistic approach to smallholder agriculture where agroforestry, with **trees in agriculture**, is at the core. Vi Agroforestry applies a rights-based approach in all its work, thereby addressing the root causes of poverty.

Vi Agroforestry works in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

We Effect

We Effect is a development cooperation organisation founded in 1958 by the Swedish cooperative movement with the aim of **fighting poverty**. 70 Swedish cooperative and/or customer-owned companies and organisations are members of We Effect.

We Effect's mission is to enable people living in poverty to improve their living conditions, defend their rights and contribute to a just society. We Effect works in the thematic fields of sustainable **rural development** and **adequate housing** with a strong focus on **women's rights**.

The target groups for our development cooperation are our partner organisations and their existing and potential members. Most of our **partner organisations** are member-based farmer organisations, housing cooperatives or savings and credit associations.

We Effect applies a rights-based approach. This means that our development activities are developed in dialogue with our partner organisations, with strong local ownership, characterized by accountability, transparency, non-discrimination, and meaningful participation.

We Effect works in more than 20 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America.

Our visions

Vi Agroforestry: A sustainable environment that enables women and men living in poverty to improve their lives.

We Effect: A sustainable and just world free of poverty.

Introduction: Shifting focus to meet a new reality

The Covid-19 pandemic is a game-changer. The effects of the crisis are rapidly changing the preconditions for Vi Agroforestry and We Effects development cooperation. It is not possible to continue with business as usual and we therefore need to adapt to the changing context of our partner organisations and the communities in which they live.

This interim strategy is the joint response for Vi Agroforestry and We Effect action for the immediate future and is an amendment to the strategies for 2017-2021. The interim strategy will govern all operations moving forward. However, this strategy will build on previously established strategic goals and existing commitments.

The Boards of Directors of Vi Agroforestry and We Effect believe that there are strong reasons to strengthen and deepen cooperation between the organisations, not least to increase development and cost effectiveness. The decision to develop a joint interim strategy should be seen as a means to support further collaboration between the organisations. It is imperative that the Vi Agroforestry and We Effect pool resources and experiences to maximise the joint response to the effects of the corona crisis.

Context: Increasing inequalities and growing poverty

The economic effects of the corona crisis could push half a billion people into poverty. Structural inequalities based on gender, race and wealth will worsen. The UN warns that the pandemic will double the number of people facing acute hunger and food shortage, from 135 million to 270 million by the end of 2020.

Women and girls will be disproportionately affected through increased exposure to gender-based violence, increased burden of care, and loss of income due to shutdown of the informal sector, where women are overrepresented. Youth unemployment is also increasing.

Previously established international ambitions on climate, resilience and biodiversity are threatened by short-term measures to re-start economies. Another challenge is that governments across the globe use the pandemic as an excuse to further shrink democratic space and exacerbate conflict and tensions. This comes at a time when democracy and human rights were already facing a global backlash

There are also opportunities. Vi Agroforestry and We Effect aim to use this moment in history to become better and even more relevant than before. We want to contribute to a better and more sustainable future and the time to do that is now.

Cooperatives are key

“Cooperatives remain one of the best kept secrets in the Sustainable Development Goal toolbox. Cooperative enterprises are based on ethics, values, and a set of seven fundamental principles that keep people, rather than profit, at the centre of their businesses.”

“Cooperatives can be a self-help tool for people to create their own economic opportunities through the power of the collective and pull themselves out of poverty. They re-invest in the communities in which they operate, securing not only the livelihoods of their members but also increasing the wealth of the community as a whole. By being sources of decent work, spaces for democracy and peace building, and an economic force, cooperatives are truly a partner in transforming our world.”

(UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017)]

Our objective: The right to food and increased resilience

Departing from the economic crisis and the challenges facing our partner organisations, Vi Agroforestry and We Effect will focus on the fundamental human right to food.

The objective of the strategy

Vi Agroforestry and We Effect will support cooperative and other member-based organisations to contribute to the right to food, increased resilience and sustainable livelihoods for their members and communities. This will be done with a strong focus on advancing gender equality, climate justice and tackling corruption.

Beyond the immediate economic effects of the corona crisis, there are many reasons why people's right to food is not fulfilled. Situations are specific to their contexts, but the main root cause is linked to **unjust food production and marketing systems** and lack of government strategies to acknowledge and address the rights of the most vulnerable and marginalised populations. Where these strategies exist, their weak implementation and lack of focus on smallholder farmers are challenges. In our work, we will address both the availability of food and that people have the means to access it.

The right to food

Vi Agroforestry and We Effect adhere to the UN definition of the right to food: The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has the physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement. (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1999)]

From a **farmer's perspective**, challenges include denied right to land and water, limited access to extension and financial services, seeds and other agriculture inputs as well as unreliable and distorted markets. Climate change and decline in biodiversity poses further challenges. Government and trade policies often prioritize large-scale farmers and undermine production by smallholder farmers in general, specifically by female farmers. From a consumer's perspective, the main challenge is often the lack of income to buy food and the lack of access to and knowledge about nutritious food that enables a healthy diet.

Vi Agroforestry and We Effect will work together with our partner organisations to **address the root causes that limit individuals' and communities' right to food**. We will contribute to the following results:

- **Increased access to food:** Increased sustainable agriculture production including agroforestry. Improved access to agricultural, financial, extension and advisory services on sustainable production. Strengthened right to land and habitat and other productive resources. Improved accessibility to food in vulnerable and marginalised communities.
- **Sustainable livelihoods:** Strengthened economic opportunities, purchasing power and sustainable livelihoods of people living in poverty. Strengthened participation of smallholder farmer in agriculture value chains, including post-harvest practices and crop and animal insurance.

- **Stronger organisations.** Improved conditions and an enabling economic and political environment for cooperatives and civil society organisations. Stronger integration of anti-corruption as a strategic development issue in all programming. Strengthened institutional capacity of partner organisations, including access to appropriate information and communication technology.
- **Strengthened resilience.** Strengthened organisations' and their communities' climate and social resilience including disaster risk reduction and early warning systems. Advocate for climate justice.
- **Gender equality.** Transformed gender norms to advance gender equality and women's economic empowerment, including addressing the care work burden and gender-based violence. All work will have a strong focus on the rights of women.

Our focus: Address root causes, not symptoms

Vi Agroforestry and We Effect will pool decades of joint experience from working jointly with partner organisations, implementing programmes on sustainable rural development and the right to adequate housing, with a strong focus on the environment and the rights of women and girls.

In this strategy, we take this one step further, ensuring a **gender transformative approach**, addressing and changing the norms and structures causing inequalities and a strong focus on **climate justice** to ensure that we put the people and communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change at the heart of our work. To reach people living under the most vulnerable and marginalised conditions, it is also imperative that we include young people in our programming.

Corruption poses a serious threat to development and deepens poverty and injustice; Vi Agroforestry and We Effect put strong emphasis on anti-corruption in all aspects of our work. We also know that the risk of corruption increases in times of crisis and particularly when institutions are weak and public trust is low. In the wake of the corona crisis we will therefore strengthen our expertise to work with **anti-corruption** at strategic level within our organisations and with our partner organisations.

By addressing causes and not symptoms, Vi Agroforestry and We Effect work in accordance with the **rights-based approach**. We will seek a balance between partner organisations working to address challenges of their members and communities, i.e. concrete support to ensure the right to food, and advocacy towards policy changes. The focus on the right to food implies an even stronger focus on gender equality, as women carry the main responsibility for food production and access, as well as the burden of care at household and community level. In addition, we will strengthen our focus on climate justice, since the climate crisis is in itself a threat to food security.

In this strategy, we commit to a **stronger focus on the local community**, beyond the members of partner organisations. We do this based on the Agenda 2030 principle of leaving no one behind and the cooperative principle of caring for the community, including promotion of sustainable development and social justice.

The people most vulnerable to hunger are the most marginalised including minority groups, female or child headed households, and indigenous people. In many cases, the most

marginalised are less likely to be active members of an organisation or cooperative. However, in a context of deepened poverty, inequality, injustice and increased hunger, they are the most important to reach. This is not an act of charity, but of justice and based on the important role that partner organisations can play as members of communities.

Member-based organisations, including cooperatives, will continue to be at the heart of our programmes. The right to organise, mobilise and influence towards a common goal is central.

Supported farmers' organisations, cooperatives and commodity associations are already playing a crucial role to address the right to food, both at production level where sustainable practices such as agroforestry and

agroecology will be promoted, and in voicing the interests of their members towards decision-makers and other actors. We seek to support women led organisations. We collaborate with technical partners whose main function is to support member-based organisations.

The right to **adequate housing and habitat**, and the right to food are interconnected. Access to housing and adequate living conditions is key to building resilience to pandemics and other disasters, not only for food security but also for e.g. water and sanitation, safety, and economic opportunities. Partner organisations working for the right to adequate housing are central to affirming the right to food for their members and other marginalised groups, including informal settlements.

Housing and farmers organisations can join forces and create **strategic links between rural and urban areas**, between producers and consumers, to create efficient value chains by cutting the middlemen. The organisations can also advocate together for the needs of marginalised people in rural and urban areas. All partner organisations are important platforms for mutual support and solidarity, especially in times of crisis.

Vi Agroforestry and We Effect recognise that our partner organisations operate in a variety of political contexts, in most cases in countries where governments are increasingly restricting democratic space for civil society organisations. This implies working together with our partner organisations to **defend the right to organisation and freedom of expression**. It also includes taking into account conflicts at all levels, both in terms of their influence on the right to food and in limiting the space for partner organisations to operate. This means it is critical to take a conflict sensitive approach in all programmes.

The Cooperative Principles

1. *Voluntary and Open Membership*
2. *Democratic Member Control*
3. *Member Economic Participation*
4. *Autonomy and Independence*
5. *Education, Training and Information*
6. *Co-operation among Co-operatives*
7. *Concern for Community*

Our influence: A strong voice for a strong future

Vi Agroforestry and We Effect will advocate for the right to food and increased resilience with a strong focus on gender equality, climate justice and anti-corruption. We will develop a joint advocacy plan to ensure a complementary approach and strategic use of our resources. We seek to work together with our member and owner organisations when possible and relevant.

Through our development programmes, we will support our partner organisations to have a strong voice in building back better and more sustainable societies.

Our income: Closer collaboration and more diversification

Vi Agroforestry and We Effect have two main sources of income: **fundraising** from the private sector, member organisations and individuals in Sweden and **resource mobilisation** from institutional donors.

For We Effect, fundraising will primarily be done together with our member organisations, where we aim to form long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships. The aim is to strengthen the member organisations contribution to the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals set out in **Agenda 2030** - and as a result, boost employee engagement and customer satisfaction. For Vi Agroforestry, the main focus will be on creating engagement and raising funds from private donors and small to medium size companies.

Grants from institutional donors such as Sida and the EU, is the main source of income for both organisations and will remain essential for the implementation of the strategy and the scale of our operations. We will use this interim strategy to strengthen and diversify our institutional funding. Likewise, partner organisations will be supported to strengthen their resource mobilisation capacity and efforts.

Strategic alignment to Agenda 2030.

The overall focus on the right to food puts Goal 2. Zero hunger as the main priority. Our continued work with gender equality and climate change and their close relations to the right to food, makes Goal 5. Gender equality, and Goal 13. Climate action equally important. Our work will also contribute to the following Goals: 1. No poverty, 11. Sustainable cities and communities, 13. Climate action, 15. Life on land, and 17. Partnerships for the goals.

