# DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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Approving Authority

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SF Board

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Signature                                                                                      Date

## STATEMENT

Strømme Foundation's vision is a world without poverty. Our mission is to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goal 1 – To end poverty in all its forms everywhere, and by 2030, eradicate extreme poverty.

SF believes that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. With our core values of dignity, respect, justice, and solidarity, we strive to approach people with respect and without distinction of any kind, to work for justice through fulfilment of human rights for all, and to promote solidarity between people.

We work to ensure that all, especially those who are most marginalised, excluded or discriminated against, have equal rights to economic resources and get their basic needs met and can live a dignified life.

This Development Policy outlines the key principles underpinning SFs global programmes and is anchored in SF Global Strategy 2030.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the Development Policy is to:

- Outline the key principles of SF's development approach to ensure strategic anchoring of SFs global programmes and fulfil *Organisational Priority number 1: To Increase our impact through quality programmes*.
- Provide a common reference point and terminology for communicating SFs development approach to communities, donors, governments, the general public and other stakeholders. This is in line with *Organisational Priority number 2: To mobilise resources to fight poverty*.
- Define the needs for adequate resource allocation and organisational effectiveness to deliver our global programmes, linked to *Organisational Priority number 3: Build One Organisation*.
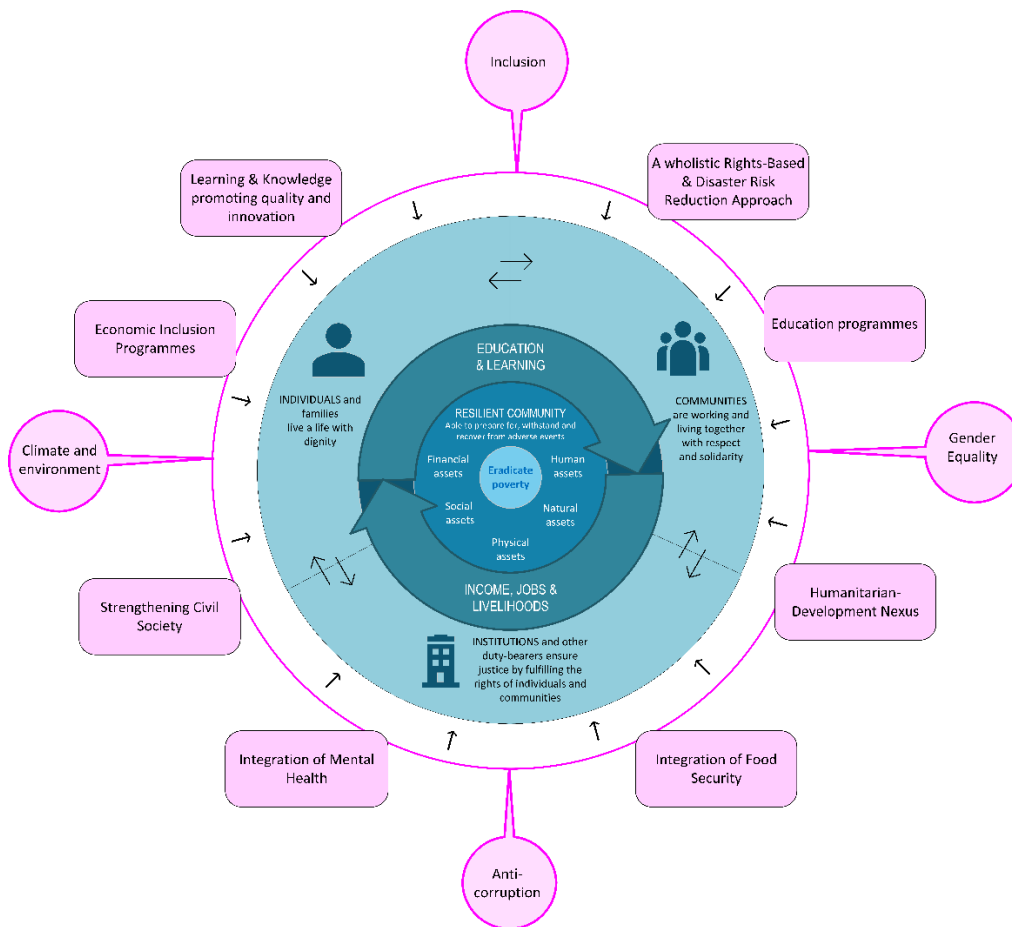
## SCOPE

The Development Policy is the leading reference document for SFs global programmes. All other programme related policies, strategies and guidelines are expected to be fully aligned with the principles of the Policy.

The Policy applies to SF and implementing partners in programme development, implementation and quality assurance.

The Policy also provides a framework for communicating SFs programmes to communities, donors, governments, the general public and other stakeholders.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

### 1. SF PROGRAMMES ARE FIGHTING POVERTY



Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon. Living in poverty means not only experiencing economic deprivation, but also lack of access to basic social services such as education, health, and housing. Availability of key resources, such as food, clean water and sanitation, directly influences poverty levels. Social exclusion and discrimination based on factors such as gender, disabilities, religion, or race, contributes to and amplifies poverty. Poverty also denies people their basic right to participate in the decision-making process that affect their lives. Poor and marginalised people often lack the power and agency to address their situation.

To adequately address the multidimensional aspects of poverty requires a comprehensive solution. SF programmes are designed to fight poverty through a holistic approach that focuses on enhancing communities' resilience. Resilience in this context means communities' access and utilization of physical,

financial, natural, social and human assets combined with their ability to prepare for, withstand and recover from adverse events. A holistic model for programme design contributes to ensuring concentration, resource rationalisation and enhanced impact of SF programmes.

As a value-based organisation, SF sees poverty eradication as a process focused on strengthening people's own efforts to liberate themselves from the strains of poverty and take control of their resources, their communities and their environment in order to live a dignified life.

## 2. SF PROGRAMMES FOLLOW A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

A Rights-Based Approach (RBA) to community development emphasises that all people, regardless of their status or background, are entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms so that they can lead a life with dignity. This approach aims to empower communities to claim their rights and actively participate in their development process, while working with duty-bearers, such as governments and institutions, to support and strengthen them in fulfilling their obligations.

By adopting a right-based approach, SF's development programmes are not simply about delivering services, but provide tools to strengthen the capacities of individuals, communities and all stakeholders to play their part in the development process to ensure the fulfilment of human rights. RBA ensure holistic programming, community resilience and effective and sustainable poverty eradication.

Key components of this approach include:

1. **Empowerment**: The SF rights-based approach seeks to empower individuals and communities to claim their rights, fostering self-sufficiency and resilience.

2. **Participation and ownership**: Active, free, and meaningful participation is a fundamental component of SFs rights-based approach. It requires the involvement and ownership to development processes by all community members and stakeholders at all stages of the programme cycle, starting from the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

3. **Ensure Accountability and Promote Responsibilities**: Governments and other duty-bearers are accountable for fulfilling their obligations. Hence, SF strives to be held accountable to the rights-holders whose rights are denied while supporting the duty-bearers in carrying out their responsibilities.

4. **Non-Discrimination**: All individuals have rights without discrimination of any kind. SF programmes therefore prioritise groups that are particularly affected by vulnerability or marginalisation.

5. **Work in Partnership**: SF promotes building alliances and partnerships with those who offer complementary approaches and research to maximize the impact of our programme.

6. **Sustainable Results**: SF looks for sustainable results by addressing the underlying causes of poverty. Hence, SF will design, implement, monitor, and evaluate its programmes based on the rights-based approach to development. In this process, SF strives to advocate for policy level changes to create wider and lasting changes in the lives of the programme participants.

## 3. SF PROGRAMMES CONTRIBUTE TO DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

People living in poverty are particularly vulnerable to risks and shocks. In high-risk contexts with complex emergencies, SFs will utilise a Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) framework for programming. DRR is compatible with SFs rights-based approach and is a sustainable alternative to short term humanitarian action. A DRR framework can link relief, rehabilitation and development to reinforce the community capacities and resilience that reduce disaster risk in the short, medium and long term. A "disaster" must in

this context be understood as a broad term and not only as large-scale security- or natural hazards. A disaster may be any potential shock or adverse event substantially affecting a community and its households. To strengthen community resilience, participatory identification and addressing of risks should be an integrated part of SF programming. In severe situations, SF may consider hybrid interventions, including both development and humanitarian components. These should be limited in terms of time and geographical area.

### 4. SF PROGRAMMES TARGET WOMEN, CHILDREN AND YOUTH

With a focus on the poor and most marginalised groups, SF programmes targets women, children, and youth. However, while programme outcomes are centred towards these groups, the SF holistic approach encourages family- and household approaches, which in many circumstances will mean working directly with men. In line with our efforts to "leave no one behind", SF strives to promote the inclusion of particularly marginalised groups in programmes and in the community, such as people with disabilities, ethnic minorities or other vulnerable groups.

### 5. SF PROGRAMMES CREATE SYNERGIES BETWEEN EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION

SF's two main interventions in the effort to eradicate poverty are education and economic inclusion for all. In SF programmes, the synergy between education and economic inclusion is pivotal, due to their interdependent relationship and role in sustainable community development.

*Education* is a key driver of economic growth as it provides individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for productive and decent employment and income generation. Education furthers the realisation of all other human rights and is thus a foundation and key driving force for development. Moreover, education contributes to enhanced community resilience as quality inclusive education and knowledge facilitates better utilisation of community assets to counter adverse events.

*Economic inclusion* ensures that individuals and families, regardless of their social status, have equal opportunities to participate in the economy. This includes access to income, decent jobs, financial services, and social protection. Strong livelihoods through economic inclusion are an important prerequisite for families and households' abilities to prioritise education for their children and youth.

Thus, together education and economic inclusion create a virtuous cycle. This synergy is crucial in SF's development programming and in the fight against poverty.

Food insecurity and malnutrition are fundamental barriers to a range of development issues. Food security must therefore be included as a component in both SF's education and economic inclusion programmes, where this is deemed necessary.

Mental health issues can pose substantial barriers to education and economic inclusion, often leading to social isolation and decreased productivity. Promoting mental health not only fosters individual resilience but also strengthens community cohesion and growth, forming an essential element of sustainable development. SF strives to integrate mental health support into our educational and economic inclusion programmes.

### 6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES ARE MAINSTREAMED IN ALL SF PROGRAMMES

Cross-cutting issues (CCIs) are issues or themes that affect multiple aspects of poverty eradication and are considered critical for the overall success of the programmes, as they directly impact the sustainability and effectiveness of programme outcomes. A CCI is generally not a stand-alone programme, rather its mainstreamed across all core SF's programmes.

SF's Cross-Cutting Issues are:

**Gender Equality:** Women and girls often suffer severe poverty and injustice. SF strives to promote equal rights to economic resources, access to basic services with focus on quality inclusive education and mental health as well as empowerment for both genders. SF programmes involve gender mainstreaming, which implies considering the diverse needs and opportunities of women and men, boys and girls in all activities.

**Climate and Environment:** The impacts of climate change and environmental degradation are affecting programme participants across all SF countries of implementation. More severe droughts, floods and storms as well as new pests have negatively impacted infrastructure, agricultural production, livelihoods and food security. Climate change adaptation and environmental conservation aspects are systematically integrated across our programmes to increase community resilience, in particular with regards to incomes, food security, access to education and health facilities. Awareness raising and advocacy, applying ILO's "*Reuse, Reduce, Recycle*' principle, will be essential in SF's effort to empower communities to realise their right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

**Inclusion:** People that experience discrimination due to factors such as disability, ethnicity, caste, race and/or religion are particularly at risk of falling into poverty. SF programmes consistently mainstream the inclusion and empowerment of marginalised groups. SF programmes links with key stakeholders such as Disabled People's Organisations to ensure this. Programmes involve advocacy and awareness initiatives to promote the rights of marginalised groups across community stakeholders.

**Anti-corruption**: SF recognises corruption as a main cause of poverty and inequality and is committed to prevent and eliminate it. SF and its programmes advocate for zero corruption not only within its own staff and partners, but also empowers target communities to actively oppose corruption in society. SF programmes adhere to strict anti-corruption practices and the organisation has in place effective and responsive whistle-blower routines to act upon events of suspected corruption.

7. STRATEGIC AND EMPOWERING PARTNERSHIPS ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO SF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

**Partnerships for locally-led development:** All SF programmes are implemented by national and local civil society organisations, collaborating directly with SF country offices manned by national staff, responsible for follow up on programme implementation and quality assurance. The implementing partners are selected through a participatory process that assesses partners' mission and values and their relative capacity and track record in governance, financial management, human resource management, and programme implementation. The partners assessment process culminates with capacity development plans for the selected partners. By contributing to the capacity building of implementing partners, which is one of the core activities in our work, SF's partnership model and development approach enhance community resilience through building a stronger civil society.

**Strategic partnerships**: Poverty is a multidimension phenomenon and SF's scope and expertise are not able to cover all aspects of poverty. With an ambition to maintain a strong thematic focus, as well

as a desire to be a learning and innovative development organisation, SF strives to develop strong and complementing strategic partnerships with other organisations and stakeholders for knowledge and competence sharing, resource mobilisation and research and innovation. Strategic partners may be from public sector, private sector/businesses, Foundations, research institutions as well as other non-governmental organisations.

## 8. ADVOCACY IS INTEGRATED ACROSS SF PROGRAMMES

In line with the rights-based approach, SF places particular emphasis on advocacy as an integrated part of our programmes. We see advocacy as a deliberate process that influences the attitudes, policies and practices of duty-bearers in ways that will have a positive impact on poor, vulnerable and marginalised people's lives. Our advocacy efforts target local and national governments and other duty-bearers. Our methods for advocacy may take many forms, including lobbying, research, sensitisation of communities on their rights and ways of organising, mobilising for rallies and influencing through mass media.

## 9. SF PROGRAMMES ARE EVIDENCE-BASED, DESIGNED FOR LEARNING AND INNOVATION

Monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL) are integrated into SF's global programmes. SF MERL practices are rights-based, participatory and inclusive.

MERL in Strømme Foundation serves four key purposes:

1. Strengthen accountability towards communities, stakeholders, partners, and donors.
2. Contribute towards results- and evidence-based management and planning and ensure timely decisions.
3. Promote organisational learning to improve programme quality and innovation.
4. Provide evidence-based data to influence the public, decision makers and donors.

SF's programme cycle is designed to facilitate learning, innovation, and adaptation. To ensure relevance of our programmes, SF commits to testing and adopting new technologies and methodologies that promise to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our programs and operations. When piloting new strategies with vulnerable groups, we strictly adhere to 'do-no-harm' ethical standards. Research and impact evaluations form integral parts of SF's programme designs. In this regard, SF partners with multiple actors including businesses/private sector, research institutions and other organisations, as we acknowledge that addressing complex poverty problems demands collective action and mutual solutions.

## 10. SF PROGRAMMES ARE SAFE FOR EVERYONE

SF operations and programmes are rooted in the respect and protection of human dignity. We strive to foster a safe, inclusive and respectful workplace environment and are committed to upholding these principles within our organisation, recognising the importance of organisational culture and accountability.

SF's duty lies in protecting all programme participants, as well as partners' and SF's staff and all other people associated with the organisation, in particular women and children. We continuously strive to prevent sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and uphold a zero-tolerance approach to such acts as

outlined in the Safeguarding and Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy. Any allegations are meticulously investigated, with disciplinary action taken as necessary.

Effective and contextualised whistleblowing and referral systems are implemented across SF. All reports are treated seriously, guided by a survivor-centred approach prioritising the needs and privacy rights of survivors.

### 11. SF PROGRAMMES ARE DESIGNED FOR SUSTAINABLE EXIT AND TRANSITION

SFs intervention in a community is temporary, necessitating the development of clear exit strategies from the outset of any partnership. This process entails SFs gradual withdrawal, paralleled by community, partner, and public sector takeover of interventions.

The exit is operationalised at both community and implementing partner levels. For communities, exit occurs once interventions have yielded desired outcomes, and communities have established mechanisms for sustained development. This is in line with our focus on capacity building, rights-based programming, and interaction with government institutions and key stakeholders.

For implementing partners, SF aims to phase out when the partners have developed the ability to fulfil their mission independently or together with others.

## OPERATIONALISATION

For operations purposes, more detailed and thematic strategies and guidelines are developed to support practical implementation. Relevant documents to Development Policy are listed below.

The following procedures and practices are expected to be followed to ensure effective operationalisation of the Development Policy principles:

- The Development Policy is used as a standard and required reference document to guide and quality assure all processes related to programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluations and research.
- A simplified checklist is developed to ensure programme alignment with the Development Policy.
- A summary of the Development Policy is available to ensure consistency in how SF communicates its programme approaches to different stakeholders.
- The Development Policy and its content is a standing agenda point in internal capacity building systems and activities for SF staff and partners.

## RESOURCES

Adequate resources for l be included in capacity building and other relevant trainings budgets for SF and partner staff. Workshops and conferences for dissemination, advocacy and knowledge sharing will be organised as required.

## POLICY OWNER

The owner of the Development Policy is the International Department of the Strømme Foundation.

## SUPLEMENTARY REFERENCES

MERL policy

Environment and Climate Change policy

Anti-corruption Policy

Gender Equality Policy

Safeguarding and Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy

Education Strategy

Economic Inclusion Strategy

CCI guidelines

SF Global Theory of Change and Global Results Framework