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Sida Decentralised Evaluation

Adam Pain
Jessica Rothman
Monika Lundin

Review of Sida's Support to Afghanistan - Lessons and Conclusions from 7 Evaluations

Final Report

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Adam Pain
Jessica Rothman
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Authors: Adam Pain, Jessica Rothman and Monika Lundin

The views and interpretations expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.

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SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Address: S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Valhallavägen 199, Stockholm

Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64

E-mail: info@sida.se. Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

[name protected 3]	[name protected 3]
ANDS	Afghan National Development Strategy
[name protected]	[name protected]
ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
ASGP	Afghanistan Sub-National Governance Programme
CDC	Community Development Council
DAC	Development Advisory Committee
DDG	Danish Demining Group
EWAV	Elimination of Violence Against Women Law
GIROA	Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HDI	Human Development Index
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
LoA	Letter of Agreement for contract staff
MAB	Municipal Advisory Boards
NAPWA	National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
PC	Provincial Council
RAD	Rehabilitation for Afghans with Disabilities
RAIP	Rural Access Implementation Programme
RBA	Rights Based Approach
RISF	Road Infrastructure Support Fund
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SNG	Sub National Governance
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
[name protected 2]	[name protected 2]

Preface

In February 2015, Sida's Afghanistan Unit at the Department for Asia, North Africa and Humanitarian Assistance commissioned a Review of Sida's support to Afghanistan. The Review was to be based on the lessons drawn from the recent evaluations (2013-2015) of seven projects Sida has funded in the country. Indevalop was contracted to carry out the evaluation under Sida's framework agreement for reviews and evaluations.

The main purpose of the Review is to take a broader look at the Swedish development cooperation in Afghanistan and draw conclusions from a review of the evaluations with respect to the opportunities and challenges and the results achieved or not achieved in the implementation of these projects in Afghanistan.

This Review has been a desk study drawing on existing documentation and has been carried out by Dr Adam Pain (team leader), Monika Lundin (gender/RBA specialist) and Jessica Rothman (evaluator). Quality assurance was provided by Ian Christoplos.

We are grateful for the very open discussions with members of the Sida Afghanistan Unit and Elisabet Hellsten in particular in the preparation of this review.

Executive Summary

This desk review draws from the findings of the earlier evaluations of seven Sida funded projects in Afghanistan. It has sought to determine what more general lessons and conclusions can be drawn from these evaluations for Sweden's development co-operation with the country. It has drawn both on the specific findings of the seven evaluations as well as a wider body of literature on Afghanistan relevant to the core review questions.

The Review has been framed by eight questions related to results, impacts on poverty and gender equity, contributions to anti-corruption, strengthening of local ownership, conflict sensitivity and sustainability. In addition an assessment of potential synergies between the projects has been made, and a comparative analysis of their theories of change.

The Review was undertaken in four steps. First all the seven evaluation reports were read for general content focussing on similarities and differences, strengths and weaknesses as identified by the evaluations and in relation to the review questions. Second an analytical framework was developed for the substantive issues and supporting synthetic analyses undertaken on key issues (see Annexes). Third the evaluations were reassessed against each of the review questions and the dimensions of each issue to be assessed. Fourth project matrices were constructed against the dimensions of each review questions and these provided the basis for the final step, the structuring of the interpretive argument against the eight review questions in the main body of the report.

The major conclusions of the seven evaluations drawn in the Review are as follows:

First while all of the projects have been highly relevant, the interventions with an instrumental focus (i.e. directly influencing change) have been more effective in achieving results. Those trying to create understanding and reframe debates or build capacities and change behaviours have achieved less.

Second while a number of interventions have improved access to public goods, such as education and health, and improved physical security, there have been few food security and income effects, limiting overall poverty reduction impacts.

Third while girls' access to school has improved, project effects on contributing to and strengthening gender equality have been limited, even with respect to gender mainstreaming and empowerment.

Fourth while all projects have to varying degrees used participatory processes, strong evidence on inclusive processes is missing, suggesting rather limited ownership.

Fifth while most projects have operating procedures to ensure transparency and reduce corruption, measures to address corruption beyond these are limited.

Sixth while most projects seek to reduce human security risks, conflict sensitivity is scarcely addressed and there are no assessments of the impact of interventions on conflict.

Seventh there is little evidence of sustainability being incorporated by design into the interventions and progress on nationalisation of organisations has been slow.

Eighth while synergies have not been addressed by design between the projects, there are clear opportunities to build such synergies between them.

It is recommended that:

- Greater attention be given to the theory of change in future project design supported by much greater clarity and analysis of the particular objectives such as poverty reduction or promotion of gender equality that projects seek to address;
- The promotion of human rights through an Islamic value lens should be seriously considered;
- Attention needs to be given to not overburdening projects with ambitions and objectives that may not be complementary;
- However building synergies between Sida funded projects could be actively promoted and supported;
- Finally a key part of the management of Sida funded projects should be about addressing what is being learnt from each project and how together lessons and results from Sida funded projects are building towards achieving Sweden's results strategy for Afghanistan.

1 Introduction

This Review draws from the findings of the evaluations of seven Sida funded projects in Afghanistan, commissioned by Sida's Afghanistan Unit at the Department for Asia, North Africa and Humanitarian Assistance, and undertaken 2013 – 2014 by Indevlop. It seeks to determine what more general lessons and conclusions can be drawn from these evaluations for Sweden's development cooperation with the country. The Review is timely in the sense of exploring the ways in which the lessons drawn might (or might not) speak to a changing political context in Afghanistan and the implementation of the recent Swedish government results strategy for Afghanistan 2014-2019, issued in June 2014. The Review has been a desk study, and has drawn both on the specific findings of the seven evaluations as well as a wider body of literature on Afghanistan relevant to the core review questions.

The Review is framed by eight questions related to results, impacts on poverty and gender equity, contributions to anti-corruption, strengthening of local ownership, conflict sensitivity and sustainability (see section 3). In addition an assessment of potential synergies between the projects is made, and a comparative analysis of their theories of change.

The seven project evaluations that are the basis of the Review are listed by date of the evaluation and the acronym (of the partner organisation or project) used to identify them given in parenthesis:

- Evaluation of the Danish Demining Group, June 5th 2013 (**DDG**)
- Evaluation of the [name protected 3], December 16th 2013 (**[name protected 3]**)
- Evaluation of the [name protected], December 17th 2013 (**[name protected]**)
- Evaluation of [name protected 2]), February 28th 2014 (**[name protected 2]**)
- Evaluation of the UNDP program Afghanistan Sub-National Governance Program Phase II, October 16th 2014 (**ASGP**)
- Evaluation of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, December 5th 2014 (**SCA**)
- Evaluation of the UNOPS program Rural Access Improvement Programme (Phase I-III). Final Report March 25th 2015 (**RAIP**)

These seven interventions evaluated make up a large part, with the addition of the contribution to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARFT) (not included in this Review), of Sweden's aid portfolio in Afghanistan. SCA, ASGP, RAIP and ARTF have been the major programs supported by Sida. In 2014 Sweden provided 708,790,378SEK in aid to Afghanistan, of which 34,6% was allocated to ARFT, 19% to SCA, 13,6% to RAIP and 6,4% to ASGP, making up 73,6% of the budget. The remaining 26,4% of the budget funded [name protected 3], [name protected], [name protected 2] and other programmes.

Table 1 compares these projects in terms of the time period covered by the evaluation (which is not necessarily equivalent to the period of funding by Sweden) and the location or geographical scope of the project. Table 1 also indicates which of the DAC evaluative criterion were assessed and whether or not poverty, gender and conflict sensitivity have been a specific focus of the reviewed evaluations.

Table 1: Comparative aspects of the Afghanistan Projects reviewed

Org/ Project	Time Period	Location of Sida funding	DAC Criteria ¹	Poverty	Gender	Conflict Sensitivity
[name protected 3]	2011 – 2014	National	Not effi- ciency	N/A*	N/A	N/A
[name protected]	2002 – 2013	National	Not effi- ciency	N/A	N/A	N/A
ASGP	2012 – 2014	4 Northern Provinces	All five	N/A	Yes	N/A
DDG	2010 – 2013	Northern	All five	Yes	Yes	Yes
RAIP	2007 – 2015	4 Northern Provinces	All five	Yes	Yes	Yes
SCA	2010 – 2014	North Eastern prov- inces	Sustaina- bility only	Yes	Yes	Yes
[name protected 2]	2008 – 2013	Mazar	Not efficiency	N/A	Yes	N/A

* N/A means that it was not a specific part of the ToR of the evaluation but the evaluation or project may have addressed this aspect in some way.

The comparison of the projects shows that they are diverse in terms of timing, intent, location and scope. This has invited an approach in the Review that is more argumentative and deliberative than assertive and conclusive. This is consistent with the request in the ToR that a comparative approach should be adopted focusing on similarities and differences, on strengths, weaknesses and risks and effects, intended or unintended. However the key lens through which this Review was undertaken is an assessment of the lessons from these evaluations in relation to Sweden's strategies for Afghanistan. Three country strategies by the Swedish Government are relevant to this review: the 2009 Strategy for Development Cooperation covering July 2009 – December 2013, the 2011 Revised Development Cooperation Strategy covering January 2012 – December 2014 and the 2014 Results strategy for the period 2014 – 2019. During the first two strategy periods Sida has a particular focus on the four Northern provinces. This focus was not carried through to the latest results strategy.

¹ DAC's five evaluation criteria include relevance, effectiveness, cost efficiency, impact and sustainability.

2 Methods and Analytical Approach

The Review has been a desk study drawing on the seven evaluation reports and additional sources for key issues. It has proceeded as follows:

As a first step all the seven evaluation reports were read for general content focussing on similarities and differences, strengths and weaknesses as identified by the evaluations and in relation to the review questions.

Following this an analytical framework (Annex 2) was elaborated and reviews of the key substantive issues related to the review questions, i.e. contribution to poverty reduction, anti-corruption, gender equality, etc., were made (Annexes 5-11). These were used to provide both a broader understanding of the dimensions of these problems and challenges in Afghanistan as well as to identify the key dimensions of each theme/ issue that would be explored. For example project effects on poverty were broken down into four dimensions of poverty characterised as physical security, food security, income and access to public goods such as education or health.²

Following this, each of the evaluations were reread and assessed against the dimensions of each issue/ review question and project specific assessments made. These were then compiled on a project by project basis and project matrices prepared. In addition brief portraits of each project (see Annex 3) were developed including an assessment of the theory of change for each project. A comparative review of these theories of change is included in Annex 4 and is drawn on for the discussion and conclusions section of this review. Table 2 below provides an overview of the underlying theories of change of the seven projects which provide the basis for the analysis of this review. More information about the individual projects can be found in Annex 3.

From these seven individual project assessments, comparative matrices for all projects were constructed against the dimensions of each review question and where relevant are included in the Annexes in the relevant issues section. These were used to

² As reflected in Sida's Perspectives on Poverty (2002) there is a wider view of the nature of poverty. The essence of poverty is not only lack of material resources but also lack of power and choice. The four dimensions of poverty defined by Sida are social and economic, political, environmental, peace and conflict resolution. This Review focused on four characteristics of poverty that relate to two of Sida's dimensions: 1. physical security (peace and conflict resolution), 2. food security, 3. income, 4. access to public goods (social and economic).

structure the interpretative argument in the response to the review question (see section 3). The individual project assessments (not included in the report) provide a narrative account of the assessment of each of these dimensions.

For the purposes of analysis in section 3 for some of the review questions, projects were subjectively scored with a graduated scale of one plus to three pluses on the relative degree of strengths or weight (a combination of number and strength) of lessons to be drawn, and a graduated scale of one minus to three minuses on the relative degree of weakness.

Table 2: Overview of the intervention logic of the Afghanistan projects reviewed

Project	Problem/ Need	Causal Theory
[name protected 3]	There is poor understanding of Afghanistan's political context by donors. Improvements might lead to more robust & effective ToC and action	High quality analysis leads donors to improve policies and practices and develop more effective political strategies
[name protected]	Absence of evidence based understanding of development challenges leads to poor policy decisions by Government and donors	Improved evidence & understanding is used in policy making by government and donors
ASGP	Effective, accountable government needed at sub-national levels to deliver equitable, efficient and effective services	Developing capacities of local government will lead to improved services for citizens
DDG	Mines are a physical and economic security threat to rural populations	Mine-cleared land is reclaimed and agricultural land can be used
RAIP	Absence of roads restricts access to public goods and blocks economic development	Greater mobility leads to better access to public goods and roads promote economic development
SCA	The extensive needs in Afghanistan make SCA's experience relevant, and makes them a strategic aid partner to provide service delivery and build capacity	Capacity development, service delivery and advocacy leads to communities influencing their own development
[name protected 2]	Afghanistan has some of the worst conditions globally for women rights. Government is not committed to addressing gender equality	Women, families and duty-bearers will claim and take action to protect women's human rights if they are made aware of the impact and implications of violence

Project portraits and their elaborated Theories of Change can be found in Annex 3.

3 Findings

Annexes 5 – 10 provide a deeper review of the key substantive issues related to each question below which can be read in relation to these findings. The Annexes seek to both broaden the understanding of the dimensions of these problems and challenges in Afghanistan as well as identifies the key dimensions of each theme to be explored.

Q1: What general conclusions can be drawn regarding achieving expected results in the Sida supported interventions?

Results of each of the evaluations have (see Annex 2) for the purpose of analysis been categorised as follows:

1. *Instrumental results*: directly influencing change
2. *Conceptual results*: reframing debates, building understanding, advocacy
3. *Capacity development results*: developing human, organisational and institutional capacities

Table 3: Comparative analysis of results from the seven evaluations³

Results	[n.p. 3]	[n.p.]	ASGP	DDG	RAIP	SCA	[n.p. 2]
Instrumental							
<i>Project focus</i>	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Strengths</i>			+	+++	+++	+++	++
<i>Weaknesses</i>			---	-	--	--	---
<i>Lessons</i>			+++	+	+++	++	+++
Conceptual							
<i>Project focus</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes?	No	No	Yes	Yes?
<i>Strengths</i>	++	+++	-			+++	-
<i>Weaknesses</i>	--	-	---			--	---
<i>Lessons</i>	++	+	+++			++	+++
Capacity Development							
<i>Project focus</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Strengths</i>	+	++	-	++	+	+++	+
<i>Weaknesses</i>	-	--	---	-	--	--	--
<i>Lessons</i>	+	++	+++	+	++	++	+++

³ Scoring is with a graduated scale of 1-3 pluses on the relative degree of strengths or lessons, and a graduated scale of 1-3 minuses on the relative degree of weakness.

Three groups of projects can be identified. Group 1 consists of the two research organisations [name protected 3] and [name protected] that have no instrumental focus but seek to bring about change in understanding of donors and the Government of Afghanistan. One focuses on political dynamics ([name protected 3]) and the other more on developmental issues ([name protected]). Capacity development is a result for both, as it is of all the other seven projects and this is returned to below. Both organisations were seen to have research strengths but had a core challenge of how to link research quality to policy relevance and use. [name protected 3] was seen, because of its political focus, to be of limited direct relevance to development⁴, a criticism to which [name protected] was also subject. Opportunities were identified in both evaluations for the two organisations' research to achieve a wider impact if more was done to address research uptake, advocating government and donors and others to use the research.

The second group of projects (DDG and RAIP) had results that were instrumental and oriented towards capacity development in nature. Both were effective and efficient in achieving the immediate outputs and outcomes, but as noted under the ToC (Annex 4) RAIP was less successful in achieving higher level outcomes.

The third group of projects (ASGP, SCA, [name protected 2]) seek results across all three dimensions – instrumental, conceptual and capacity development. However only one (SCA) has been deliberate in this attempt and the other two were judged as having fallen rather short in their ambitions for conceptual results. Not surprisingly building changes in governance practices and human rights based approaches (HRBA) is challenging.

A significant point that arises from this concerns the ambitions set for projects. Instrumental engagement may be a necessary step to support more conceptual engagement. But the challenge is moving from what could be termed 'technical interventions' to the more communicative and softer type of interventions such as moving into 'good governance' or HRBA in which politics and power is intrinsic. These require behavioural changes promoted through advocacy and social movements, combined with capacity development. UNDP largely takes a technical approach to dealing with political issues. [name protected 2] as a modest organisation in an environment hostile to its objectives and with a service provision ethos has had to carefully negotiate space even to fulfil its basic instrumental role. SCA which could be seen as the most accomplished actor in juggling all three components, struggles to reconcile its instru-

⁴ This judgment by the evaluation is not one which this Review would agree on the grounds that political issues are closely intertwined with developmental issues.

mental role with its developing vision of being an advocate. These are not easy transitions.

These challenges come together in capacity development. All projects had strengths in building individual capacities but there is a common theme of the pace of nationalisation (the proportion of Afghan staff) moving too slowly. However [name protected 2] is wholly staffed in Afghanistan by nationals and around 99% of staff in SCA are Afghans. Similarly capacity development was often seen to happen in parallel rather than work-ing with government structures – e.g. ASGP working with contract rather than established staff. But where projects have been engaged with government (ASGP and RAIP to a degree) there has been limited focus on the organisational and institutional dimensions of capacity change (procedures, incentives and resources). It could be argued that the SCA, as a Swedish organisation, has the greatest possibilities to bring about organisational and institutional change. The lesson that could be drawn from the SCA evaluation is just how difficult and slow it is to do so.

Q2: What general conclusions can be drawn regarding the projects/ programmes contribution to poverty reduction?

Contributions to poverty reduction for each of the evaluations have (see Annex 5, table 5.1 for the assessment) been divided into four dimensions: improved physical security, improved food security, improved income security and improved access to public goods. As discussed in Annex 5, a wider view of the dimensions of poverty reduction could be taken and in part these wider dimensions such as gender equality and participation are addressed elsewhere in this report. However for the purposes of this review we have focussed on what we see to be the core dimensions of poverty.

[name protected 3] and [name protected] focused more on conceptual results and have had no direct instrumental interventions in relation to contribution to poverty reduction. While [name protected] had a poverty perspective, its evaluation found little evidence that it had influenced relevant policies. There is also little evidence from the evaluations of the other five projects that their actions have been informed by [name protected 3] and [name protected] results.

Two of the projects (DDG and [name protected 2]) specifically identified the dimension of poverty that they were focussing on and the target group although this was not explicitly noted in the evaluations; the other three have treated poverty as a generic term with no analysis of its spatial aspects, specific target group or dimensions of poverty to be addressed. With the exception of DDG there has not been an explicit focus on food security, which is notable given the chronic levels of food insecurity. Although interventions (as in RAIP) to improve income are likely to have food security effects, no project theory of change or monitoring has argued or monitored this and RAIP for example failed to pick up the sharp decline in food security in 2008 due to rising food prices.

In the two projects that had a specific income focus (RAIP through direct employment and income generating activities for women and SCA through community de-

velopment) the contribution made was assessed to be limited. The RAIP evaluation concluded that greater employment generation could have been achieved by the project given the acute needs for jobs and in the case of the SCA there were comments on a limited understanding of how markets worked.

Projects mostly focused on public goods provision although the nature of this varies. For ASGP the focus was more on improving delivery of public goods by government and in the case of [name protected 2] the provision related to access to justice systems and protection. RAIP and SCA both provided direct delivery of public goods (roads, schools etc.) with the expectation that these would lead to wider social access.

Key weaknesses seen in relation to the ASGP and [name protected 2] public goods delivery were reported to be that they were largely addressing symptoms rather than addressing deeper causes – for ASGP reflecting a faulty/absent theory of change, for [name protected 2] through a failure to adopt a human rights based approach and challenge deeper roots of violence. For both [name protected 2] and SCA there were challenges in moving into addressing deeper causes of poverty. They both needed a service delivery role to engage but were challenged in managing the tension between this and adopting a more principled and broader scale engagement in relation to the deeper causes of poverty. For RAIP the challenge limiting its contribution to economic development, growth and poverty reduction was that while roads may be a necessary condition for economic development, they are not sufficient in themselves as the broader political preconditions are not in place. This was beyond the scope of RAIP to address.

Q3: What general conclusions can be drawn regarding if, and if so to what extent, the projects/programmes have contributed to and strengthened gender equality?

Each evaluation was assessed in relation to four key dimensions (gender mainstreaming, integration, transformation and rights and advocacy) relevant to increased gender equality (Annex 6).

Gender Mainstreaming is a concept often referred to, but rarely implemented. Instead of being a constant reminder of gender perspectives throughout each stage of a programme cycle, it has become a means of stating importance without fully granting it practical meaning. The [name protected 3] and [name protected] evaluations highlight that both organisations left the gender dimension unaddressed, unless the topic for the study directly concerned a gender “issue”. However [name protected] has been commissioned to strengthen the MoWA to develop tools for gender mainstreaming and carry out gender audits of ministry projects.

Progress in collection of gender disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data was identified in the evaluation of DDG. There was evidence that women and men were equally targeted as respondents in surveys. However, the evaluation could not present any gender disaggregated *responses* from the project’s monitoring, let alone variable action based on the findings. The RAIP evaluation noted that the project attempted to achieve gender mainstreaming through the introduction of gender components. But

project expectations were unrealistic in relation to the context and available skills in RAIP. The overall impact of the RAIP gender mainstreaming activities were modest. The recommendations emphasised that gender mainstreaming needed to be included by design at the start of the project and not added later. The SCA has a clear gender mandate in programming and training has been carried out for senior staff (in 2013). It also has a separate Gender and Human Rights Unit which was reported to have limitations in achieving effective programme gender mainstreaming.

The common trait of gender equality work which claims “integration” and therefore empowerment, is a focus on gender as primarily women’s issues. This fails to fully acknowledge the male dimension in gender programming. Women’s empowerment, as a relatively isolated phenomenon from the surrounding context, was found to be intentionally or unintentionally pursued. Thus it is clear that women’s empowerment is undertaken with women, primarily on “women’s issues”. But it is not possible to assess whether this is considered the best possible or simply the most feasible way to approach women’s empowerment in Afghanistan (with feasibility intentionally avoiding a transformatory agenda on gender equality)

The evaluation of [name protected 3] found the narrow focus on women and enforcement of legal frameworks as problematic. The ASGP had invested in Provincial Council (PC) fe-male networks to improve women’s knowledge and skills, and support women’s participation in local governance. The evaluation found limited focus on non-discrimination, gender equality and women’s empowerment. Decision making roles of the committees and the PC female network was found to be minimal, limited to meetings and seminars. In *shura* meetings women simply represented women’s issues and mediating family issues. DDG applied a so called gender-balanced Mine Risk Education (MRE) teams (one male, one female – relatives or a married couple). Fe-male trainers were considered key to ensuring that women played a key role in reinforcing MRE messages for their children. Women claimed that they were not involved in processes of handing over cleared land and played little part in decision-making about subsequent land use. Only 2% of DDG staff are women and the evaluation did not identify how gender-balanced teams could be ensured with this proportion of female staff.

RAIP’s income-generating interventions for women were seen to have created a good social space for networking and solidarity which had not been fully built upon. Creating space for women, such as separate waiting rooms in health centres, is also an interest of SCA. This can be seen as compensation (without viability considerations) for prevailing patriarchal structures, rather than a challenge towards them. SCA states clearly an ambition to achieve progress based on the Islamic worldview. But the lack of common view in terms of gender and human rights has led to serious internal resistance. As with [name protected 2], SCA needs to handle a multitude of interpretations. [name protected 2] states that women and girls who receive support at the Family Guidance Centre and

Shelter (FGC) are empowered, although the evaluation found that the methods used at the FGC do not lead to a comprehensive empowerment of girls or women.

Transformation addresses structures, traditions and encompasses women and men. For empowerment to be effective it cannot be promoted in isolation from the structures and attitudes responsible for creating the need for empowerment of the discriminated. Such transformative work is extremely rare in Afghanistan. [name protected 2] work consists of providing remedy (or secondary prevention) rather than prevention altogether by eliminating the factors creating the need for remedy among women. All actors acknowledge the challenges posed by socio-cultural factors. The DDG noticed great variation between male and female perceptions, but had no answers to the underlying causes or implications. SCA has initiated work on masculinities. This in itself does not constitute both-genders-encompassing work, but could be a step towards it. Its internal initiative of affirmative action has been heavily challenged, withdrawn and re-introduced in a less challenging form. This indicates a limited understanding of the concept of affirmative action and its' potential. Most evaluations reported that structures and root causes were not addressed.

Rights and advocacy relates to the use of Islamic values and human rights and advocating for change. None of the projects could claim a strong practical emphasis on human rights in Afghanistan, an emphasis which moves beyond ambitious human rights goals in policies and strategies, and into adding more HRBA components to for example, the delivery of basic services. The perceived lack of rights-based advocacy is the most evident gap in this respect. Additional efforts need to be put on moving from "access", to rights "in" and "through" the delivery of services. This rights-based evolution is often illustrated by the right to, 'in' and 'through' education.

When the teachings of Islam are referred to there is no discussion on how these correlate or deviate from "universal" human rights and how this is reflected in programming. These issues are heavily debated by other actors. Some projects (DDG, RAIP) did not directly engage with human rights advocacy. Others have not yet made up their minds about how to engage. Several of them appear to be content with engaging in so called "invited space", rather than "claimed/created space" (see Annex 6 for elaboration). There is a prevailing advocacy-reluctance. There are no clear examples of the evaluated organizations forging strategic partnerships towards this end, in order to share knowledge and risks associated with pushing for change.

Q4: What general conclusions can be drawn regarding if, and if so to what extent, the projects/programmes have contributed to and strengthened local ownership of development processes?

First processes of participation and inclusiveness for individuals and groups of Afghans in project activities were examined (see Annex 7). The notion of 'local' has been regarded as variable according to project, moving from village to national. All projects, directly or indirectly, claim to enhance the voice and lives of poor and marginalised men and women. For most projects (SCA, [name protected 2], ASGP, [name protected] and DDG)

the ways of working depend on the quality of beneficiary interaction. For RAIP, this component was an add-on, with apparently limited effect. The [name protected 3] produced material targeting the internationals and well-educated nationals (products are rarely in Dari and/or Pashtu). The research products of [name protected] are more frequently in Dari and Pashtu, but uptake was crippled by inadequate dissemination strategies.

[name protected] was also recommended to report back to those communities that have been involved in their research, as a means of building accountability and empowerment.

Most projects have failed to reach the most marginalized groups within their thematic and geographic areas. The [name protected 2] evaluation concluded that there was no specific targeting of especially vulnerable women. Women who are capable of seeking help stand the best chance to obtain some. SCA has a strong RAD- programme (Rehabilitation for Afghans with Disabilities) focusing on vocational training which has made a contribution towards largely marginalized and diverse groups and individuals. SCA has also granted access to education for children, many girls and also children belonging to the nomadic Kuchi population and will develop the approach towards more meaningful and child-centred programming, in partnership with Unicef and others. SCA has not yet ensured rights-holder beneficiary input into their strategic planning processes, but a considerable number of staff was involved when the current plan was formulated.

The ASGP has provided support to the PCs. ASGP has engaged extensively in outreach activities to enhance accountability and bring the PCs closer to the people through bottom-up planning, public hearings and meetings. The RAIP evaluation states that all community infrastructure development work and selection of infrastructure works -projects in the RISF component were based on the priorities of Community Development Councils (CDC) and the district and provincial development forums. The basis for prioritisation and selection of interventions appears to be a product of wish lists and horse-trading as to who gets what between various districts and communities – processes which can have exclusion built into them (for example, women heard on women's issues only). Local communities have also been involved in monitoring of works and been provided with basic understanding of essential road building principles. Some improvement, maintenance and repair works have also been organised through community contracts awarded to the CDCs. Participation of local communities has also been promoted for its security enhancing effects.

Development actors who target more or less narrowly defined groups of beneficiaries can create islands of participation and ownership within their programmes. They can create preconditions which are not necessarily upheld by the surrounding context, which may render these initiatives unsustainable. This is why institutionalised structures, which make an effort to clear pathways by removing obstacles, are needed to ensure possibilities for wider participation as a basic service. Such structures are preferably nationally agreed and owned. Development actors' focus on "targeting" are likely to persist and spill-over to be a gapfiller given the continuing lack of equal access, presence and influence in citizen-relevant decision-making.

Second, all evaluations refer to the extent to which the projects have been aligned with national development plans and policies. The research/journalism institutions ([name protected]/[name protected 3]) are in comparison more distinctly made aware of a certain “disconnect with the national policy environment”⁵. [name protected 3] is not specifically requested to align with these by Sida. The other projects demonstrate alignment with national development plans. The ASGP, although aligned, lack the structural preconditions (budget, political representation and accountability, political will) for devolution of decision-making and service delivery. The GIROA, through IDLG, is generally in agreement with ASGP activities, but the ASGP (and UNDP) has limited government engagement. SNGs at a local level are more appreciative of ASGP.

The fact that all three phases of RAIP have been implemented by UNOPS has been interpreted as reflecting a lack of capacity within Government to deal with the state of physical infrastructure in Afghanistan. It has however been broadly aligned with national road building policy even if government has not felt it owned it.

It is not possible to link the level of alignment above with a level of actual ownership. There is also a possibility that actors are likely to align themselves vertically with national plans and policies, while horizontal alignment (and coordination) with peers and other relevant actors is not paid sufficient attention.

Findings in the SCA evaluation indicates that the Rural Development Programme had a historically strong focus on building community capacity to create and maintain infrastructure (including micro-hydropower points). These efforts had been challenged by ineffective planning due to the limited or altogether absent baselines, cost schedules, monitoring, and system for quality management.

There is no evidence in the evaluations examined that the “New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States” has (yet) impacted on these actors and their programmes, apart from references to alignment with the Afghan Compact. (See more in Annex 7)

Q5: What general conclusions can be drawn regarding if, and if so to what extent, the projects/programmes have contributed to and strengthened anti-corruption? In general, corruption is addressed in financial (bribery, etc.) and nepotistic terms. RAIP for example had clearly established procedures in relation to tendering for construction works to ensure that corruption did not occur and other projects, although not commented on in the evaluations, may well have had similar procedures. But the

⁵ Quote from [name protected] evaluation, page 20 – summarises also findings for [name protected 3] in this respect.

prevalence of corruption in Afghanistan is high (see Annex 8), and is largely untargeted in terms of concrete programming. Here the concept of “corruption” is expanded in order to highlight some key findings and conclusions from the evaluations, and explored for two projects – ASGP and [name protected 2] – that had a more deliberate focus on corruption.

The role of oversight institutions (for anti-corruption): State institutions in Afghanistan, on all levels, are subject to a number of democratic deficiencies. ASGP has been trying to compensate for some of these shortcomings and prepare the way for a more decentralised governance in Afghanistan. The ASGP is based in the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), which in turn is under limited legislative and procedural oversight since it is accountable to the President and not to Parliament. Governors on provincial and district levels have been politically appointed and are accountable to the President. This has led to a number of former warlords and current strongmen being given positions. This risks strengthening and legitimising informal power structures.

ASGP has tried to address these democratic deficiencies in a variety of ways. Through ASGP the Provincial Councils and the Municipal Advisory Boards (MABs) have supported informal, yet accessible, accountability mechanisms such as ‘Meet the Governor’ radio programmes, establishment of complaints boxes, PC member visits to districts, and public hearings, have been carried out. These have created points of accountability, where a sense of dialogue with the public has been established. However, these activities are temporary measures and affected by a lack of political commitment and limited legal basis for permanent local representative democratic governance.

Measures to increase accountability and transparency: In the ASGP evaluation, it was found that the Sub-National Governance (SNG) play a very limited role in ensuring service delivery at the provincial and district level. Districts are *consulted* in service delivery planning, but are not extensively involved in the actual planning process. The elected Provincial Council (PC) is invited to take part in the planning process, but has no authority over the service delivery budget. Municipalities have authority to provide very basic services, but have no elected oversight. Instead, basic social services to the women and men in Afghanistan at local level are provided by what the evaluation refers to as deconcentrated units of the line ministries who hold the final budgetary responsibility and authority over the resources together with the governors.

The ASGP “Letter of Agreement” approach (LoA)⁶ is the capacity development approach of the ASGP. The LoA is challenged by what multiple interviewees from Government and SNGs described as low capacities of LoA staff, which according to the same interviewees is a product of IDLG favouritism in the recruitment process. The accusations of favouritism are substantial among interviewees, further documented in previous assessments, questioning the degree of merit-based recruitment. In short, ASGP is itself struggling with what it externally wants to challenge.

Role of civil society (and media in (anti-)corruption): A number of evaluations refer to “getting things done” – implicitly or explicitly. Unfortunately, expediency is often-times prioritized over sustainable outcomes.

One of the objectives examined in the [name protected 2] evaluation was “Provision of legal services (civil and criminal representation) for women in Mazar lead to reduction of convictions, fair sentencing, *elimination of bribery and corruption*, ultimately to the enactment of civil laws protecting women”. The evaluation could not directly assess the elimination of corruption and considered it an implausible expected outcome, considering that the project did not work on the elimination of corruption in particular. However, one of the lawyers highlighted that there is discontent in some courts because fewer bribes are paid since [name protected 2] started its operations. The lawyer said that no bribes were paid in any of his 46 solved cases and observed that solving all these cases without bribes was as an indicator of the situation improving.

Q6 What general conclusions can be drawn regarding if, and if so, to what extent, conflict sensitivity has been applied in the implementation of the interventions?

Assessment of the degree to which conflict sensitivity was evidenced in the implementation of the project as determined by each of the evaluations has (Annex 9, table 9.1) been divided into evidence of (1) Causal analysis; (2) Use of analysis in design; (3) Use of analysis in implementation (which includes identifying and managing risks) and (4) Use of analysis in impact assessment.

Conflict sensitivity was not an explicit focus of most of the evaluations and was only specifically mentioned in the DDG and RAIP evaluations. Rather little can be said about strengths, weakness or lessons to be drawn. In the specific case of [name protected 2] the management of conflict/ security has focused very specifically around issues of gender based violence and again through relationship building ensuring the provision of safety of its clients. Where evident and even in DDG and RAIP, conflict management focussed on identifying and managing risks from an operational perspective rather

⁶ The LoA are contract staff recruited in addition to the existing establishment staff to assist with the capacity development of ASGP

than in relation to identifying deeper causal mechanisms and attuning project design, implementation and impact assessment to these. The mode of risk management has largely related to relationship building with the target group as a means of ensuring security. There is a surprising lack of assessment of the impacts of interventions on conflict.

Q7: To what extent has sustainability been taken into consideration when designing the projects/programmes? In what ways can they be seen as sustainable?

Assessment of the degree to which attention to sustainability was evidenced in the design of the project and the likely sustainability of the projects as determined by each of the evaluations has been analysed (see Annex 10, table 10.1 for assessments) on the basis of three dimensions of sustainability: (1) Integration in design and an exit strategy (to handle the design dimensions); (2) Financial sustainability and (3) Institutional sustainability.

The analysis of sustainability has posed some challenges reflecting both its meaning and how it can be assessed (in the case of [name protected 3] and [name protected]), the fact that Sida has been only one of several donors (in the case of [name protected 3], [name protected], ASGP, DDG, SCA and [name protected 2]) and that the evaluations have primarily focused on financial and institutional dimensions. At first sight it would appear that achieving sustainability by design – and with an exit strategy in place – is glaringly absent in the projects and sustainability concerns rarely appear to be addressed. However reading into the evaluation re-ports suggests that there might be more to the practice of sustainability than is directly provided by the evaluations.

The easiest ones to assess in terms of design intentions are RAIP (Sida as sole funder) and SCA (where Sida is the main funder). In RAIP with a clear completion date the ability for the road investments to be maintained into the future was not explicitly designed for and nor at the time of the evaluation was there an exit strategy in place; DDG may be seen in a similar light. For SCA whose mandate, prompted by Sida, is in transition, shifting from an implementing to an advocacy agency raises complex design questions about sustainability.

For projects for which Sida is one of several funders (e.g. [name protected 3], [name protected]) even where Sida's funding is significant, the history of the organisations in securing other funding suggests both a design element and exit strategy (from Sida financing) is in place. For ASGP and [name protected 2], in which again Sida is one of several funders (but with a specific geographic focus), there is either no design element of sustainability ([name protected 2]) or it has been thought about (ASGP).

Regarding financial and institutional sustainability, which in essence addresses whether the activities can or would be continued after the withdrawal of funding or nationalisation of actors, a distinction can be drawn between three distinct groups. First and exceptionally [name protected 2] is a national organisation that draws on international funding to operate; both its focus and costs may make it relatively easy for it to attract

funds. Second four projects ([name protected 3], [name protected], DDG and SCA) have nationalisation as a key issue; in all four significant weaknesses in nationalisation were found in the evaluations. Third there are two projects (ASGP and RAIP) that have been designed to support specific time bound processes; in both financial and institutional weaknesses with respect to sustainability – i.e. the ability to hand over within the short term were identified. In sum the record on sustainability is not very encouraging.

Q8: What, if any, potential for synergies between different projects/programmes can be identified?

A synergy is achieved where the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts. An assessment of whether or not potential synergies between the seven different projects can be identified has been broken down into two broad issues. First whether or not there have been synergies through the funding of successive phases of the same projects (such as the RAIP phases).

Second whether synergies between parallel projects (e.g. between RAIP and SCA) could have been found and promoted. These are seen to have their instrumental dimensions – e.g., SCA school building programme plus RAIPs road building jointly improving access to public goods. They also have conceptual dimensions which is about building understanding of, for example, power dynamics from [name protected 3] informing RAIP or SCA actions – or [name protected] research on markets and poverty informing RAIP understanding and programme design and monitoring. Thirdly synergies could also be about learning possibilities in approaches to capacity development or gender mainstreaming. Table 3 provides a subjective assessment where such potential synergies might lie both within and between projects.

None of the evaluations addressed issues of synergies and in none of the project reports seen by this review were any specific reference to any of the other projects and what they are doing found. Each of these projects appear to have operated as ‘islands’ of intervention in Afghanistan. These conclusions on synergies therefore are highly speculative but suggests that there is more potential than might at first be seen to encourage cross project exchange. However possibly even more important is the bigger question of what the management of potential synergies might bring to Sida’s overall understanding of its Afghanistan programme as a whole and the extent to which its various projects add up to something more than their individual outputs in contributing towards the country strategy (see section 4). **Table 4:** Comparative (ex-post) analysis of the synergies that might have been possible between dif-

Synergies	[n.p.3]	[n.p]		DDG	RAIP	SCA	[n.p. 2]
Successive Phases within a project	Potential	Yes	Potential	NA	Yes	Yes	Potential
Parallel synergies between projects							
<i>Instrumental</i>	[name protected]	[n.p.3]	RAIP	SCA	ASGP	ASGP	ASGP

			SCA [n.p. 2]		SCA [n.p. 2]	DDG RAIP [n.p. 2]	RAIP [n.p. 2]
Conceptual	[name protected]	[n.p.3]	[name protected]	[n.p.]	[n.p.3] [n.p.]	[n.p.3] [n.p.]	[n.p.]
Learning	ASGP RAIP SCA	ASGP RAIP SCA [n.p. 2]	[n.p.3] [n.p.] SCA	-	[n.p.] SCA	[n.p.] RAIP	[n.p.]

On the question of synergies between successive phases of a project – Sida’s funding of [name protected], RAIP, SCA, etc. indicate that there are lessons to be learnt about the nature of change and its pace. The critical review of ASGP, for example, which is requiring a complete rethink of its ToC for a second potential phase provides lessons about the importance of constructing a robust ToC, how lessons can be constructively learnt and the challenges of technical interventions seeking to bring about behavioural change. That has wider application to Sida’s portfolio. In the case of the SCA the challenges, over several phases of funding of bringing about institutional change for an organisation established to deliver services moving to one where it seeks to fulfil more of an advocacy role has lessons also about managing change processes.

For more deliberate synergies across parallel projects the example of RAIP and SCA both working in the same geographical area point to specific opportunities. ASGP and [name protected 2], through working in the same provinces might also offer such opportunities. Perhaps the most striking observation to draw from this analysis is the apparent ab-sence of cross fertilisation and understanding coming from the work of [name protected 3] and [name protected] informing the work of the other projects. [name protected]’s understanding of markets, rural livelihoods and poverty could have helped sharpen the way that RAIP thought about and engaged in such issues and SCA might have deepened its thinking about markets. Equally the interventions of RAIP and SCA would also provide research sites for [name protected] that would build its understanding. Equally the more political re-search of [name protected 3] has a role to play in building the understanding of RAIP or similar projects with respect to power dynamics and conflict within the regions in which they work.

It is also apparent that there are broader opportunities for learning across the projects. All are involved in capacity development related actions, mostly at the individual and organisational level. Assessment of practices, change processes and monitoring approaches could strengthen the overall capacity development process and provide opportunities for exchange and learning. Equally issues of gender mainstreaming and gender equity are common challenges in Afghanistan which is recognised to be a highly difficult environment with challenges that are unique. Sharing lessons between projects from both successes and failures would provide opportunities for learning and improved programming.

4 Lessons Learnt

This review of existing or recent Sida supported development interventions in Afghanistan has sought to leverage broader lessons from their evaluations to inform future support and its modalities. It has taken place at a time of political transition in Afghanistan. An optimistic scenario would be of a gradual but hard and long path to a better future for the country. It would require a President who is gradually able to assert his/her authority, a functional government, an educated and healthier population willing and able to make demands on its government and gain accountability and a recovering economy, possibly driven by revenue from Afghanistan's mineral resources. However, in order for Afghanistan to gain ownership, and develop a sustainable functioning government it must have domestic resources (revenue) which can only be attained through taxation. Such a process of change is consistent with the focus on democratic governance, education and economic development within a poverty focus that is the thread that connects Sweden's recent results strategies for the country. As the most recent country strategy⁷ puts it 'Sweden intends to support Afghanistan with a focus on *Five E's for Afghan Development: Empowerment, Education, Employment, Enterprise [and] Economic Development* (emphasis in original).

What then have we learnt from recent interventions to support Sweden's aspirational results for the country? None of the evaluations questioned the relevance of the interventions to both Afghanistan and Swedish policy and all emphasised their appropriateness. Where results were of a more instrumental nature – such as building roads (RAIP), schools (SCA), demining (DDG) or specific protection to women ([name protected 2]) there have been noticeable achievements although questions of sustainability can be raised for all of these. Where results have been less strong is where they have been either conceptual or capacity building in nature. The benefits of new understanding or research evidence and the mobilisation of new skills into application require individual and institutional behavioural changes and this is a transformatory agenda. Such changes are driven by more than new knowledge and capacity which cannot easily or quickly change the incentives that drive the ways organisations⁸ perform. While both [name protected 3] and [name protected] have a realistic understanding of what drives policy making practic-

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014. Results Strategy for Sweden's International Development Cooperation with Afghanistan, 2014-2019. Stockholm. P6

⁸ This refers to the 'rules of the game' reflecting values, norms and roles and the deeply social dimensions of organisations.

es and the limited role of evidence based argument, seeking changes in gender equality, for example, is of an order of difficulty greater than improving policy making.

Not surprisingly the outcomes from these projects in terms of contribution to gender equality, ownership and anti-corruption are more meagre, in part as in the case of anti-corruption because it has not been programmatically targeted. Even for more concrete results such as poverty reduction, employment and economic development rather little has been achieved. Why is this? In part it is because these interventions, although at different scales of operation, have been relative ‘islands’ in a broader context which has been inimical to such change. The political and economic market places are characterised by informal networks of patronage and relationships creating what has been termed a ‘government of relationships’⁹ that regulate access to them. Many of the political preconditions for economic growth, for example are not in place.

If then the context is challenging to the changes that Sida seeks in its interventions, this raises the question as to what extent do the designs of its interventions take account of this challenge and complexity and critically examine the means by which the changes that are sought will be achieved. This brings us to examine the theories of change that should inform project design. As Annex 4 makes clear, the ToC of the projects are often not explicit and where present weak in logic and realism. They tend to be generic and carry multiple untested assumptions about pathways of change limiting their plausibility.

While many of the projects have clear instrumental intentions they have also had ambitions to bring about behavioural change which have not always been defined in intended outcomes and therefore not monitored. This suggests that part of the challenge is that interventions are seeking to stimulate too many different changes too quickly and simultaneously. Some are trying to deliver tangible outputs in the short term (DDG, RAIP). Others are trying to contribute to ongoing processes or to broader social and political transformations (ASGP). Yet others are seeking to improve socio-economic welfare, governance or social cohesion (conflict mitigation) through the same intervention at the same time (SCA, [name protected 2]) with a universal theory of change that does not make explicit or explain the assumptions and causal links between these actions. They are trying to achieve too much and the ToCs are not attuned to context, or actual results of the intervention; they also poorly address the sequencing of change processes and assume all can happen at the same time. The design of projects and the elaboration of the ToC need to be improved.

⁹ Nixon, H. (2008) Subnational State-Building in Afghanistan. Kabul: [name protected], p. 26.

One question that this raises is whether or not Sida's interventions are being overburdened with ambition and expectations in relation to contribution to intended outcomes or policy goals. It is one matter to expect a road programme such as RAIP to deliver good results in road delivery, albeit maximising employment and gender mainstreaming in the process, but it is only making one contribution to a broader set of processes that may lead to women's empowerment and economic development. This suggests some careful consideration of what sorts of interventions are needed in relation to what results and what can reasonably be expected from any one intervention. If this is a matter of dismay to Sida, some comfort should be taken from the final evaluation report of the National Solidarity Programme¹⁰. The NSP was established with ambitions to transform village level governance. The evaluation concluded that while it had done much to deliver public goods such as infrastructure to villages these had limited effects on village economies and none on customary structures of authority. Some limited improvements in the representation of women in community development councils formed by NSP was found.

Finally there is the question of the synergies between the projects. These do not seem to have been addressed by design but this review suggests that there are real opportunities that are not being captured. This in turn leads to the even bigger question of what Sida is learning from these projects in relation to the achievement of Sweden's results strategy for Afghanistan. This is not just about whether these country results are being achieved or not, but as much about what are we learning about how we can go about building towards achieving these results. This links to robust and theory informed intervention logics (ToCs), robust monitoring and learning systems and careful consideration of Sida's modalities of funding. The ASGP evaluation highlights the pros and cons with Sida's practice of earmarking funds. Although in line with the Swedish Strategy for Afghanistan, it does run counter Sweden's commitments on Aid-effectiveness (The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States¹¹). Robust learning from projects strategically funded with ear-marked money does need to be balanced with not creating parallel structures that may take ownership away from Afghan institutions.

¹⁰ Beath, A., Christia, F and Enikolopov, F. 2013, Randomised Impact Evaluation of Afghanistan's National Solidarity Programme. Final Report. Washington, World Bank

¹¹ Lead by the G7+ group at the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in November 2011.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The major conclusions drawn from this review can be summarised as follows:

First while all of the projects have been highly relevant, the interventions with a more instrumental focus have been more effective in achieving results. Those focussed more on creating understanding and reframing debates or building capacities and changing behaviours have achieved less.

Second while a number of interventions have improved access to public goods, such as education and health, and improved physical security, there have been few food security and income effects, limiting overall poverty reduction impacts.

Third while girls' access to school has improved, project effects on contributing to and strengthening gender equality have been limited in various ways, even with respect to gender mainstreaming and empowerment. Responding to a transformatory agenda for gender has been particularly challenging and not strongly pursued.

Fourth while all projects have to varying degrees used participatory processes, strong evidence on inclusive processes is missing, suggesting rather limited ownership. Projects have been aligned with government plans and policies but supported through earmarked funding, again indicating rather limited commitments to ensure ownership by government.

Fifth while most projects have operating procedures to ensure transparency and reduce corruption, concrete programme measures to target corruption beyond internal controls are limited. Further operational needs have in some cases led to practices in relation to recruitment that could be seen as counter to the principles of anti-corruption.

Sixth while most projects have measures to reduce human security risks, conflict sensitivity is scarcely addressed and there are no assessments of the impact of interventions on conflict.

Seventh there is little evidence of sustainability being incorporated by design into the interventions and progress on nationalisation of organisations has been slow.

Eighth and finally, while synergies have not been addressed by design between the projects, there are clear opportunities to build such synergies between them.

Drawing from these conclusions and the discussion in section 4 the following recommendations are made:

1. Greater attention needs to be given, both by Sida and the organisations it supports, to the theory of change in the design of projects. This has to be well informed by relevant theory and analysis of context, specifically linking the causal pathways and the time frame between intervention and intended outcomes, as well as built on informed assumptions. Sustainability elements have to be built into the project design, and issues of ownership made explicit. This must be an integral part of the monitoring and learning framework for the project.
2. Linked to this, Sida and the organisations it supports, need to ensure much greater clarity and analysis of the particular dimensions of conflict, poverty and gender inequalities that projects seek to address. These need to be incorporated in the design, implementation and monitoring. This has to be built on a good understanding of local context, constraints and opportunities for change.
3. Sida should more deeply explore the prospects (and possible challenges) in human rights promotion through the Islamic values lens. What interpretations exist and how do different actors perceive their possibilities and ambitions in relation to this? This could ideally be done by supporting and closely following a smaller scale pilot project with this goal, in a strategically selected location.¹²
4. Attention must be given by Sida to not overburden projects in the design with ambitions and objectives that may not be complementary. It is unrealistic to expect that one project can deliver results that are instrumental, conceptual and capacity development all at the same time.
5. The potential for synergies between Sida funded projects that are complementary should be identified and developed. However synergies between Sida funded projects need to be managed and built. In particular, the support that Sida gives to [name protected 3] and [name protected] should be used specifically to inform its other projects. Thus Sida should play a more active and facilitative role vis-à-vis its Afghan partners to ensure that synergies are sought and built upon between and beyond projects (according to relevance).
6. A key part of the management of Sida funded projects in Afghanistan should not just be about whether or not results are being achieved. Sida should focus much more on what is being learnt from each project and how together lessons and results from Sida funded projects are building towards achieving Sweden's results strategy for Afghanistan.

¹² This is consistent with the recommendation made in the SCA evaluation as it is an actor equipped to do this, and it is in line with SCA's HRBA-priorities.

Annex 1 – Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for the Review of Sida's support to Afghanistan

Date: 2015-02-06

1. Background

A new Results Strategy for Afghanistan for 2014-2019 was adopted by the Swedish government in July 2014. In line with Sweden's commitment at the 2012 Tokyo Conference, development support to Afghanistan will increase during this period, and will in total amount to SEK 4,87 billion.

At the same time, Afghanistan as an independent state enters a new phase, as the international forces (ISAF) have handed over the responsibility for security to the national forces, and started their gradual withdrawal from the country. This transition creates opportunities as well as threats to current and future international development cooperation.

Afghanistan also enters a new phase with the new government of Dr Ashraf Ghani as President committed to, among others, decentralisation reforms, with increased allocations to sub-national governance and the provinces.

In this context, it is relevant and well-timed for Sida to take a somewhat broader look at its support to Afghanistan. A number of independent evaluations have been made of separate projects and programmes during the past year. These evaluations will constitute the basis for a review as outlined in this Terms of Reference.

2. Purpose and Objective of the Review

The purpose of the review is to take a broader look at the Swedish development cooperation with Afghanistan, through the evaluations that were conducted during the past year, in order to analyse which general conclusions can be drawn regarding opportunities and challenges, as well as results achieved or not achieved, in the implementation of development interventions in Afghanistan. The results of the review may at a later (and separate) stage be presented and discussed at a Development Talks event or similar at Sida HQ. The consultant should be prepared to present the findings at the event.

3. Scope and Delimitations

- 1) The review shall be carried out in the form of a desk study, in which the findings and recommendations of the following evaluation reports will be synthesised and analysed:
 - i. Evaluation of Danish Demining Group (DDG), Final Report, Indevelop AB, 2013-06-05
 - ii. Evaluation of [name protected 3] ([name protected 3]), Final Report, Indevelop AB, 2013-12-16
 - iii. ([name protected]), Final Re-port, Indevelop AB, 2013-12-17
 - iv. Evaluation of [name protected 2] Final Report, Indevelop AB, 2014-02-28
 - v. Evaluation of the UNDP program Afghanistan Sub-National Governance Program (ASGP) phase II, Final Report, Indevelop AB, 2014-10-16
 - vi. Organisational Evaluation of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), Final Report, Indevelop AB 5 December 2014
 - vii. UNOPS draft evaluation report, Indevelop AB, 2014-01-19. Final Report, Indevelop AB, 2015-03-31.
- 2) The findings of the review shall be presented in a draft written report, submitted to Sida not later than 3 weeks after the signing of the contract, and a final written report, submitted to Sida not later than 5 weeks after the signing of the contract.
- 3) The findings of the review shall furthermore be presented to Sida Stockholm and on video link the Embassy in Kabul in a seminar held at Sida not later than 2 weeks after the submitting of the final report.
- 4) The findings of the review may at a later (and separate) stage be presented and discussed at a Development Talks event or similar at Sida HQ. The consultant should be prepared to present the findings at the event.

4. Organisation, Management and Stakeholders

The main purpose of the review is internal learning within Sida, and Sida is thus the main recipient of the review report. The final report may however be shared with development partners and other relevant stakeholders.

5. Evaluation Questions and Criteria

Focus of the review is to analytically and critically assess the selected interventions and identify lessons learned from the previous cooperation, as identified in the evaluation reports.

The main issues for the review should be the following:

- 1) What general conclusions can be drawn regarding achieving expected results in the Sida supported interventions?
- 2) What general conclusions can be drawn regarding the projects/programmes contribution to poverty reduction?
- 3) What general conclusions can be drawn regarding if, and if so to what extent, the projects/programmes have contributed to and strengthened local ownership of development processes?
- 4) What general conclusions can be drawn regarding if, and if so to what extent, the projects/programmes have contributed to and strengthened gender equality?
- 5) What general conclusions can be drawn regarding if, and if so to what extent, the projects/programmes have contributed to and strengthened anti-corruption?
- 6) What general conclusions can be drawn regarding if, and if so to what extent, conflict sensitivity has been applied in the implementation of the interventions?
- 7) What, if any, potential for synergies between different projects/programmes can be identified?
- 8) To what extent has sustainability been taken into consideration when designing the programs/projects? In what way can they be seen as sustainable?

All issues should be approached in terms of similarities as well as of differences, and focus should be on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks identified. Unintended effects should also be identified and captured in the review.

6. Conclusions, Recommendation and Lessons Learned

Conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned should focus on the issues mentioned under para 5 above.

7. Approach and Methodology

Approach and methodology should be specified by the consultant in the proposal and agreed with Sida prior to the signing of the contract.

8. Time Schedule

- 1) A draft report shall be submitted to Sida for factual review not later than 3 weeks after the signing of the contract. Sida will provide comments within 7 days.
- 2) A final report shall be submitted not later than 5 weeks after the signing of the contract.
- 3) A seminar in which the findings of the review are presented will be held at Sida within 2 weeks after the submittal of the final report.

9. Reporting and Communication

The report shall be in English and maximum 20 pages, including an executive summary but excluding attachments.

The report shall be analytical in approach; present an assessment of findings and lessons learnt; and include conclusions and recommendations to Sida.

10. Resources

Sida assesses that the assignment requires one consultant. The budget for the review is maximum 250 000SEK.

11. Evaluation Team Qualification

Required competences of the consultant are:

- i. Academic degree in Development Studies and/or Political science or equivalent.
- ii. Experience in working with long term development cooperation in a conflict or post conflict context.
- iii. Minimum 5 years of experience of evaluation of international development work.
- iv. Fully professionally proficient in English.
- v. Good understanding on the Afghan context.

Curriculum Vitae must contain full description of the consultant's theoretical qualifications and professional work experience. The CV must be signed by the person proposed.

Tenders must submit two written specifications of previously performed similar projects by the proposed person.

The specifications must contain information according to the annexed form "Reference for Project Performed by an Individual", Appendix 2.1, and relate to projects performed and concluded within the past three years.

The proposal must include:

- i. A description in the form of Curriculum Vitae for the personnel who is/are to participate in the performance of the project. The CV must contain a full description of the person's or persons' theoretical qualifications and professional work experience.
- ii. The working methods employed in order to complete the assignment and secure the quality of the completed work; use a participatory approach and if possible a gender based team including local consultants;
- iii. State the total cost of the assignment, specified as fee per hour for each category of personnel, any reimbursable costs, any other costs and any discounts (all types of costs in SEK and exclusive of VAT);
- iv. A proposal for time and working schedules according to the Assignment, including suggestions and criteria for selecting countries/programmes to be examined.

Annex 2 - Analytical Framework

The review questions seek comparative learning from the results of the 7 projects under evaluation, their effects on poverty reduction, contributions to gender equality, strengthening of anti-corruption measures, levels of conflict sensitivity in their implementation, the building of ownership and sustainability. In addition there is an interest in exploring what potential synergies there might have been between the 7 projects and the extent to which these were realised or not. The ToR emphasize that the focus should be on similarities and differences between the 7 projects, as well as on the lessons with respects to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, risks and unintended effects found in the evaluations of the projects.

As noted in the introduction the 7 projects are diverse both in terms of timing, intent or nature of results, location and scope and this has lead to rather different evaluations in terms of their coverage, their application of the five DAC criteria and the extent to which they explicitly addressed the issues identified in the eight review questions. Given this diversity of projects, the variability in scope of the evaluations, the nature of the review questions and the request for a short report reflecting the synthetic nature of this exercise, an entirely inductive approach to the analysis arguing from the detail of the project evaluations is not realistic. Rather a more deductive framework is needed in which an *a priori* structure is used to review and extract relevant understanding and lessons from the project evaluations.

The development of this framework has been based on a reading of the 7 evaluations and wider literature and it has been structured by the eight review questions. But how does one compare the results, for example, between a demining project (DDG), a research organisation ([name protected]) or organisational development (SCA)? At one level of detail or specific results they are clearly not comparable. However at a more generic level one can distinguish between results that are instrumental in effect (seeking to bring about the development of policy, practice or service provision etc), results that are conceptual in their intended impacts (contributing to understanding of policy is-sues, reframing debates, advocacy) and results that are capacity building in nature. There are some issues, such as actions in relation to support for gender equality that may of course cross the boundaries between conceptual (advocacy type action) and capacity building. Reframing the dimensions of results in this way allows a direct comparison to be made between the 7 evaluations in terms of asking the questions:

- what do we learn from each of these evaluations in terms of if, how and with what degree of success they have contributed to the improvement of practice, reframing debates or capacity building;

- have some been more successful or unsuccessful in achieving their effects and if so why and what might this be due to (i.e. design, implementation, thematic area etc.)?
- what does this tell us more generally about interventions that have sought instrumental change, conceptual change or capacity changes? In the context of Afghanistan?

By framing the analysis in this way it is possible to engage the lessons from the review with the Sweden's results strategy for Afghanistan which seeks to support specific processes and changes in relation to identified outcomes. The question that arises here, and will be addressed in the discussion and the recommendations is the extent to which the project portfolio, represented by these seven specific cases, can be seen to be contributing to that strategy and to what degree and if not what might be the implications of this?

The analytical framework that is presented below essentially has three components organised in a matrix form each of which are discussed in turn. The first component listed in the first column contains what are termed the themes of the review (e.g. results, poverty, etc.) and the dimensions or parameters of each of these themes that we think capture the key relevant comparative aspects of the themes in the 7 projects. Thus for the results theme the key dimensions that we are interested in are those related to the nature of the results – are they instrumental, conceptual or capacity building in nature.

Two of the themes of the review – results and ownership – essentially have abstract dimensions for the purposes of comparison: the dimensions of 'instrumental', 'conceptual' and 'capacity building' in relation to results cannot easily be grounded in Afghanistan specifics in the ways that poverty, gender equality or conflict-sensitivity might be. The concept of 'ownership' reflects as is discussed in Annex 7 dimensions of participation and processes of inclusion as well as alignment with national policies and plans.

For the other six issues the dimensions of poverty, gender equality etc have a specific Afghan content and accordingly the dimensions of interest to this review are elaborated for these themes in separate Annexes. Each Annex provides a summary analysis of our understanding of poverty, gender equality etc in Afghanistan drawing on the available literature. This leads to an identification of the key comparative dimensions of each issue for reviewing the 7 evaluations.

Against the themes and their dimensions each of the project evaluations were reviewed as follows:

- Column 2 provides an assessment of whether or not the project address the theme and its various dimensions;
- Column 3 provides a brief summary of the key project features in relation to the theme/ dimension;

- Column 4-6 draw on the key points made in the evaluation in relation to the strengths, weaknesses and lessons/ recommendations of the project in relation to these and the reasons for this.

Based on this analytical framework each of the evaluation reports were assessed against the themes and dimensions and summary project portraits developed. These provided the basis for the comparative analysis in the main body of the report (Section 3).

An additional analysis was done of the theories of change (ToC) of each project looking at the definition of the problem or need to which the intervention responded, the causal theory about connections between the intervention and stated purpose or goal, an assessment of the visibility of the ToC in the project design and an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. These are summarised in the project portraits in Annex 3 and compared and contrasted in Annex 4.

Analytical Matrix

	Focus	Features	Strengths	Weaknesses	Lessons / Recommendations
Results					
- instrumental					
- conceptual					
- capacity building					
Poverty					
- physical security					
- food security					
- income					
- health/ education					
Gender					
-mainstreaming					
-integration					
-transformation					
-rights and advocacy					
Ownership					
-participatory processes					
- alignment with national policies					
Anti-corruption					
-oversight institutions					
-accountability & transparency					
-civil society					
Conflict sensitivity					
- causal analysis					
- CS in planning					
- CS in implementation					
- CS in impact					
- identifying & managing risks					
Sustainability					
- financial					
- institutional					
- sustainability integrated in design					
- exit strategy in place					

Annex 3 - Project Portraits and Theories of Change

1. Afghanistan Analyst Network ([name protected 3])	
Partner organisation	Afghanistan Analyst Network ([name protected 3])
National counterpart	N/A
Time period evaluated	2011-2014
Location	National
Financing	Sweden, Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands
Target groups	The international community inside and outside Afghanistan, and decision-makers, academia and media in Afghanistan
Project description	The programme aims (1) to provide independent, timely, detailed and in-depth political analysis and policy research, on Afghanistan, to a wide range of policy makers and researchers, as well as to the general public; and in doing so (2) contribute to greater understanding of the country and its region and to (3) contribute to the formulation of policy interventions that contribute to long-term stability in Afghanistan. Key research areas have been identified as political developments in Afghanistan (and increasingly the region), security and governance/rule of law. By research and documentation, [name protected 3] hopes to influence the agenda by injecting information and knowledge into the discussion, rather than actively influencing decision-makers.
Theory of Change	
Problem/Need	There is a lack of understanding (or unwillingness to admit to) of the political, cultural and economic context of Afghanistan which leads to unfavourable decision-making and rights violations, which could have been avoided if decision-makers were properly informed
Causal Theory	High quality analysis prompts Government of Afghanistan and international community to revise policies and practices and improve the political, development and rights situation in the country
Assumptions	The research disseminated by [name protected 3] is relevant and used by the international community, decision-makers, academia and media
Assessment of visibility/ of Toc	Implicit but not explicitly evidenced and monitored
Assessment of evi-	Lack of use by Government of Afghanistan indicate gaps in the

dence of strength/ weaknesses ToC	theory of change
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2. [name protected] ([name protected])	
Partner organisation	[name protected] ([name protected])
National counterpart	N/A
Time period evaluated	2002-2013
Location	National
Financing	Sweden, Switzerland, UNAMA, UK, EC
Target groups	International and national stakeholders (government, civil society and media)
Project description	[name protected] 's work in Afghanistan is guided by its mission which is “to inform policy and practice by conducting high-quality, relevant research and actively disseminating the results, and to promote a culture of research and learning”. It identifies four research themes: Gender, Natural resource management and sustainable livelihoods, Political economy and governance, Social sector and protection. The main rationale for creating [name protected] was to help address the lack of reliable data and analysis as well as the need for an independent voice to comment on Afghanistan’s reconstruction and development. [name protected] has developed a number of tools to carry out its work. These include briefing papers, case studies, policy papers and also a library/resource centre as well as events and trainings.
Theory of Change	
Problem/Need	Lack of informed policy formulation and solid independent data affects poor policy decisions by Government of Afghanistan and international community.
Causal Theory	Strong national research capacities and quality research on Afghanistan is used by decision-makers, CSOs, donors and GoA provides improved understanding of Afghanistan to allow for better policies and decisions.
Assumptions	[name protected] research is used by relevant stakeholders to inform policy
Assessment of visibility/ of ToC	Implicit
Assessment of evidence of strength/ weaknesses ToC	Limited achievement of objective regarding use of produced research by Government of Afghanistan points to weaknesses in the ToC.

3. Afghanistan Sub-National Governance Programme	
Partner organisation	UNDP
National counterpart	Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG)
Time period evaluated	2012-2014

ated	
Location	4 Northern provinces
Financing	European Union, Italy, Japan, DFID, SDC (Switzerland), Sida (Sweden), UNDP (CCF), UNDP (Core Fund), Finland, and France
Target groups	Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) and local level sub-national governments
Project description	The programme aims at scaling up existing interventions in policy development and implementation, national capacity development of IDLG, assistance to provincial, district and municipal administrations and respective councils; and support to local coordination mechanisms at the provincial and district levels. Its overall objective was defined to contribute to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework on building local institutions and providing service delivery to the populations with emphasis on the most vulnerable and having greater oversight capacity. The activities of the ASGP may be divided into four main areas: 1. Assisting in drafting of new legislation for sub-national governance. 2. Capacity development of national level institutions (primarily the IDLG) to perform tasks related to Sub-national government 3. Capacity development of local level SNGs with emphasis on provinces and municipalities and some activities at district level as well, including improved revenue generation in municipalities. 4. Promotion of outreach and accountability mechanisms of SNGs vis-à-vis its constituency.
Theory of Change	
Problem/Need	An effective, accountable and representative public administration is needed at the national and sub-national levels to deliver equitable, efficient and effective services.
Causal Theory	Developing capacities of the established local governance structure will lead to effective and representative accountable services to the people.
Assumptions	1) Laws and frameworks established enhance local level accountable service delivery, 2) political will exists to implement policies and laws favouring accountable and local service delivery, 3) needed resources exist and capacities can be developed, 4) the people of Afghanistan have an interest in engaging in participatory local governance.
Assessment of visibility/ of ToC	Somewhat explicit ToC exists with a myriad of partly complementary and overlapping objectives.
Assessment of evidence of strength/ weaknesses ToC	Meeting the overall objective is not feasible given the weakness of the design, lack of legal foundation and political will to promote devolved decentralised service delivery which is accountable.

4. Humanitarian Mine Action Support to the National Strategy through Clearance and Enhanced Quality Project	
Partner organisation	The Danish Demining Group (DDG)
National counterpart	Department of Mine Clearance, Government of Afghanistan (and UN Mine Action Coordinating Committee for Afghanistan)
Time period evaluated	October 2010 – September 2013 (3 years)
Location	Central and Northern regions of Afghanistan
Financing	Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Germany, Japan, Canada, UN-OPS
Target groups	Mine-affected populations
Project description	The goal of the project is to assist the Government of Afghanistan in achieving the aims of the Afghanistan Compact and compliance with the Ottawa Convention (Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention). The project works with clearing landmines from 1,495,000 m ² of contaminated land. It also develops capacities of national staff in mine clearance and provides Mines Risk Education. DDG's Theory of Change is based on their Armed Violence Reduction Framework which underpins DDG's operations as well as entry and exit strategies.
Theory of Change	
Problem/Need	Remnants of armed violence poses security threats to population.
Causal Theory	Mine-cleared land is reclaimed and used to improve livelihoods of individuals and communities.
Assumptions	Mine clearance continues to be a priority of the government and donors.
Assessment of visibility/ of ToC	Implicit but not fully monitored and reflecting learning.
Assessment of evidence of strength/ weaknesses ToC	Mine-cleared land does not automatically result in full land use and productivity.

5. Rural Access Improvement Programme	
Partner organisation	United Nations Department for Project Services (UNOPS)
National counterpart	Transition Support Team
Time period evaluated	2007-2015
Location	4 Northern provinces
Financing	Sweden
Target groups	Rural households, women, Government
Project description	The Rural Access Improvement Programme (RAIP) was initiated in late 2007 and implemented in three phases. RAIP was designed to support the expansion of a rural roads network in Northern Afghani-

	stan. The core content of the three phases of RAIP has been infrastructure works, primarily of rural roads and bridges. In Phase II and III a small scale infrastructure works component (RISF Projects) at village level was added. These included projects to promote women's economic activity. A consistent overall objective of the programme has been to contribute to poverty reduction and support economic development of the region.
Theory of Change	
Problem/Need	Absence of roads restricts access to public goods and blocks economic development.
Causal Theory	Greater mobility leads to better access to public goods and roads promote economic development
Assumptions	Roads are the key driver of economic development.
Assessment of visibility/ of ToC	Implicit but not explicitly evidenced and monitored.
Assessment of evidence of strength/ weaknesses ToC	Limited achievement of goal identifies that road are necessary but not sufficient for economic development and public good access. The political preconditions for growth are not present.

6. Swedish Committee for Afghanistan	
Partner organisation	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
National counterpart	N/A
Time period evaluated	2010-2014
Location	North Eastern
Financing	Sweden
Target groups	Vulnerable individuals, communities and local organisations in rural areas
Project description	SCA has a long history in Afghanistan and has operated through periods of great instability. SCA's Mission Statement is ' <i>to empower individuals...so that they may participate fully in society and influence their own development</i> '. In the past they were structured to deliver basic services directly, but under its new strategic plan they aim to become more of a catalytic agent of change based on a human rights based approach. The primary programmes include education, rural development and rehabilitation of Afghans with disabilities.
Theory of Change	
Problem/Need	The needs in Afghanistan are extensive and SCA's experience, backing from Sida, Swedish public and Government of Afghanistan makes them a strategic aid partner to fulfil service delivery

	and build capacity.
Causal Theory	Capacity development, service delivery and advocacy leads to communities influencing their own development.
Assumptions	The SCA service delivery approach is effective, time-tested and socially acceptable. Capable of evolving from a humanitarian orientation to being an agent of change. Islamic precepts are compatible with a human rights-based approach
Assessment of visibility/ of ToC	Newly developed ToC exists which integrates conflict sensitivity and a human rights based approach in line with Sweden's strategy for Afghanistan but not fully visible.
Assessment of evidence of strength/ weaknesses ToC	Ownership is weak among target groups and right holders while alignment with government programs is strong.

7. [name protected 2]	
Partner organisation	[name protected 2]
National counterpart	N/A
Time period evaluated	2008-2013
Location	Mazar
Financing	Sweden
Target groups	Women and girls, including their families
Project description	[name protected 2] runs "frontline programmes" and embraces a community-based approach fighting for women's rights according to rights in Islam, the national constitution and laws and international human rights instruments signed by Afghanistan. [name protected 2] combines service delivery with awareness and advocacy work. [name protected 2] strives to enable the women to return to their families and only in limited cases searches for other alternatives. [name protected 2] ToC is a multi-layered approach towards addressing the issue of violence against women. At a broader level it seeks to develop an understanding of society about the harmful impact of violence on the lives of children, women and society. It positions the issue as a human rights violation and deliberately works within the societal norms to be able to operate in the conservative Afghan society. At another level, it addresses the need for laws, policies, systems and structures that can help prevent and/or address such violations more effectively. It is the belief that when women and children are in an environment which is safe, sensitive, providing justice, and works with them closely to develop skills, knowledge and attitude that is empowering, they will be able to bring about sustainable changes for the better. It understands the cultural and social context of society and thus involves the family of women to also educate them about the impact and implications of violence. All these efforts thus contribute towards the overall objective that seeks to empower women and fulfil their human rights.

Theory of Change	
Problem/Need	Afghanistan has some of the worst indicators globally for the situation of women and their rights and the government lacks a real commitment to ratify international and national laws to implement gender equality.
Causal Theory	Women, families and duty-bearers will claim and take action to protect women's human rights if they are made aware of the impact and implications of violence.
Assumptions	The rights, status and living conditions of vulnerable women and girls in conflict with conservative culture in Afghanistan must be addressed through a multi-layered approach towards addressing the issue of violence against women.
Assessment of visibility/ of ToC	Implicit but not explicitly evidenced and monitored.
Assessment of evidence of strength/ weaknesses ToC	Focus on activity levels in planning, monitoring and reporting.

Annex 4 - Comparative Review of Project Theories of Change

Although the ToR for the review did not request a comparative analysis of the Theories of Change (ToC) for each project, this was undertaken (Table 4.1) to inform the review. A ToC should be the foundation of project design, implementation and evaluation. Individually and collectively they should be consistent with and contribute to the achievement of Sweden's Results Strategy for Afghanistan.

The review of the project ToC looked at four key dimensions. First a definition of the problem or need to which the project would respond. Second an identification of a causal theory explicitly linking interventions to outputs and desired outcomes. Third evidence of visibility of the ToC in the evaluation and fourth identification by the evaluation of emerging issues. A number of observations can be made.

It is clear that the ToC of the projects are generally weak. In some cases it was because they were not explicitly present in the project and the evaluation had to reconstruct what they might have been (as in [name protected 3], [name protected], ASGP, [name protected 2]). In these and other projects they tend to be generic and carry multiple assumptions limiting the plausibility of the ToC and its logical pathways. The two research organisation ([name protected 3], [name protected]) appear to have been unclear about how their outputs would be used and their degree of responsibility for actively influencing if and how their research was used. Even in the most instrumental of interventions (DDG) the expectations of behavioural change (communities using mine-cleared land) was largely assumed.

The more general observation can be made that while many of the projects had clear instrumental intentions (see Q1) they have also had ambitions to bring about behavioural change which have not always been defined in intended outcomes and therefore not monitored. This suggests that part of the challenge is that interventions are seeking to stimulate different changes simultaneously. Some are trying to deliver tangible outputs in the short term (DDG, RAIP). Others are trying to contribute to ongoing processes or to broader social and political transformations (ASGP). Yet others are seeking to improve socioeconomic welfare, governance or social cohesion (conflict mitigation) through the same intervention at the same time (SCA, [name protected 2]) with a universal theory of change that does not make explicit or explain the assumptions and causal links between these actions.

Thus there are problems in the ToC. They are trying to achieve too much and are not attuned to context, let alone specific objectives and outcomes; they poorly address the sequencing of change processes and assume all can happen at the same time.

Table 4.1: Comparative Analysis of Theories of Change (ToC) of the 7 Projects

Project	Problem/ Need	Causal Theory	ToC Visibility	Emerging Issues
[name protected 3]	There is poor understanding of Afghanistan's political context by donors. Improvements might lead to more robust & effective ToC and action.	High quality analysis leads donors to improve policies and practices and develop more effective political strategies.	Implicit ToC but not explicitly evidenced and monitored	Lack of use by Government of Afghanistan indicate gaps in the ToC
[n.p.]	Absence of evidence based understanding of development challenges leads to poor policy decisions by Government and donors	Improved evidence & understanding is used in policy making by government and donors	Implicit ToC with some monitoring	Limited evidence that policy making is evidence driven
ASGP	Effective, accountable government needed at sub-national levels to deliver equitable, efficient and effective services	Developing capacities of local government will lead to improved services for citizens	Somewhat explicit ToC exists with a myriad of partly complementary and overlapping objectives. Lacks coherence.	ToC irrelevant given weak design, lack of legal basis and political interest in supporting accountable decentralised service delivery
DDG	Mines are a security threat to rural populations	Mine-cleared land is reclaimed and agricultural land can be used	Implicit ToC but not fully monitored and reflecting learning	Mine-cleared land does not necessarily lead to increased land use
RAIP	Absence of roads restricts access to public goods and blocks economic development	Greater mobility leads to better access to public goods and roads promote economic development	Implicit ToC but not explicitly evidenced and monitored	Limited goal achievements shows that roads are necessary but not sufficient for economic development & public good access. The political preconditions for growth are not present.
SCA	The extensive needs in Afghanistan make SCA's experience relevant, and makes them a strategic aid partner to provide service delivery and build capacity	Capacity development, service delivery and advocacy leads to communities influencing their own development	Recent ToC exists which integrates conflict sensitivity and a human rights based approach in line with Sweden's strategy for Afghanistan	Alignment with government programs is strong

<i>[name protected 2]</i>	Afghanistan has some of the worst indicators globally for women rights. Government is not committed to addressing gender equality	Women, families and duty-bearers will claim and take action to protect women's human rights if they are made aware of the impact and implications of violence	Implicit ToC but not explicitly evidenced and monitored	Focus on activity levels in planning, monitoring and reporting
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Annex 5 - Issues on Poverty Levels and Poverty Reduction in Afghanistan

The fourth National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA, 2011-2012) is the most recent assessment of poverty levels in Afghanistan and points to a further decline in food security since the third NRVA undertaken in 2007-8. Both are based on a representative household data set. However the most recent NRVA (2011-12) does not provide the disaggregation by terrain provided by the analysis of the 3rd NRVA by the Ministry of Economy and World Bank (2012). Accordingly for the purpose of comment here the 3rd NRVA data set is reported on. It was estimated¹³ that in 2007-8 the national poverty rate was 36 per cent with about 9 million Afghans not able to meet their basic needs¹⁴. It collected data on food consumption and dietary diversity in both the summer and winter, and its findings point to key regional and seasonal differences in poverty and food security levels. Table 1 summarizes the data on food security outcomes as reported for per capita daily calorie intake, (as a measure of access to food), per capita protein intake and dietary diversity.

Table 5.1. Food Security outcomes in Afghanistan in 2007-8

	All	Rural-Urban		Terrain Type			Poor/Non-Poor	
		Urban	Rural	Plain	Plateau	Mountain	Non-Poor	Poor
Calorie Deficiency (%)	29	24	30	24	31	33	16	54
Protein Deficiency (%)	17	17	17	15	18	20	8	35
Poor Dietary Diversity (%)	20	14	22	16	26	21	14	32

Source: the Ministry of Economy and World Bank 2012: 4

Overall some 29 per cent of the population were found to be calorie deficient, 20 per cent had poor dietary diversity linked in part to the major contribution from wheat in the diet. There are also seasonal dimensions to this with higher levels of calorie deficiency (33 per cent) in the lean spring season. Spatial or locational effects are also significant. There are differences between urban and rural populations, with higher levels of calorie deficiency and poorer levels of dietary diversity in rural areas. There are also differences between plain, middle alti-

¹³ Ministry of Economy and World Bank, 2010 Poverty Status in Afghanistan. A Profile based on National Risk Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) 2007/08. Kabul: Ministry of Economy and World Bank

¹⁴ The 2011-12 NRVA reported that this had increased slightly to 36.5 % (Central Statistics Organization (2014), National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-12. Afghanistan Living Condition Survey. Kabul, CSO.

tude and mountains with high altitude populations suffering significantly poorer food security outcomes.

There are also major food security differences¹⁵ between the poor and non-poor, with the poor defined as a household whose total value of food consumption is less than the poverty line. Over half of the poor are calorie deficient and about a third have diets that are poor in diversity and protein deficient. The significance of the different experience of food insecurity between the poor and non-poor can be found in their response to the rise in food prices in 2008. The third NRVA caught the impact of this and found that a doubling of wheat flour prices led to a 43 per cent drop in food consumption, although calorie intake and dietary diversity showed a smaller decline (18 per cent and 19 per cent respectively) suggesting quality was traded for quantity. However there were significant differences between households, with better off households reducing quantity more than quality while poor households (those on the bottom 25th percentile of distribution of real food consumption) with little scope to reduce quantity suffering major changes in the quality of their diet.

Finally, the levels of child malnutrition need to be noted. Some 54 per cent of Afghan children under age 5 experience chronic malnutrition, a level which is one of the highest in the world. About 72 per cent of children under age 5 also suffer from the deficiency of key micro-nutrients.

The evidence points to a lack of improvement in livelihood security in Afghanistan over the past 10 years fuelled by poor harvests and rising food costs. Agricultural and rural development policies pushed by donors have prioritised market-led agricultural growth. Yet the evidence is not kind to assumptions that agriculturally based market-led growth and rural livelihood diversification will be the route to livelihood security for many. In areas closely connected to markets and well-endowed with natural resources, market drive agriculture may be viable although the distributional benefits of the growth outcomes remain unclear. But for the many households that are already grain deficit, shrinking farm sizes, poor natural resources, market remoteness and drought risks make agriculture a poverty trap. The evidence from household trajectories¹⁶ points to greater relative prosperity for rural households being achieved through non-rural and urban routes rather than through farm and rural-based ones. Of the 44 percent of rural households that reported agriculture as a primary income source in the NRVA, 54 percent of these cultivate solely for household consumption¹⁷ and many are net purchasers of grain. Equally the strong evidence on high levels of diversification into nonfarm employment¹⁸ suggests that this is distress diversification rather than diversification promoted by prosperity, with limited returns from farm and non-farm employment.

In contrast with the limited changes in household food security levels, evidence can be found of improvements in access to basic services funded by aid money, and measurable progress has been made in access to basic health and education although delivery have been uneven

¹⁵ For a more elaborated discussion of Food Insecurity in Afghanistan see Adam Pain, 2014 'Food Security and Insecurity in Afghanistan' in Christoplos, I and Pain, A (Eds), *New Challenge to Food Insecurity: From climate change to fragile states*. Abingdon, Routledge, p258-278

¹⁶ Kantor, P and Pain, A 2011. *Running out of Options: Tracing Rural Afghan Livelihoods*. Synthesis Paper Series. Kabul: [name protected]

¹⁷ Ministry of Economy and World Bank, 2010

¹⁸ Kantor and Pain, 2011 op.cit

across the country. The quality of health provision has measurably improved, albeit from a lower level and the number of children going to school, both girls and boys has increased. But there are major concerns over education quality. Programmes such as the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) have brought a level of funding and provision of public goods to villages that they have never experienced before.

In sum there is little evidence on the basis of these metrics for poverty reduction in Afghanistan with respect to food security and income. Further the nature of poverty and the differences between the very poor and not so poor have to be taken account of and this has both geographical as well as socio-economic dimensions. In addition the lack of physical security can be a key dimension of poverty – both instrumentally, as well as indirectly through the uncertainty it creates.

One could of course take a wide assessment and view of the nature of poverty and define it to include lack of power, choices and resources. This is reflected in Sida's 2002 Perspectives on Poverty¹⁹. To some extent aspects of these dimensions on poverty in relation to gender, participation and accountability are covered in response to some of the other evaluation questions. While the value of a rights based approach to poverty is acknowledged, the fact remains that this broader view has not been a visible dimension with some specific exceptions (for example SCA programming activities in relation to disability rights) of most of the projects under review. Further assessment of these broader poverty dimensions at a national level are not available. Given the fundamental role of food security and income poverty to poverty understanding and the fact that national level data is available, this review has confined itself to what it would argue are the necessary dimensions of these more limited of poverty reduction even if they are not sufficient to encompass all the dimensions of poverty.

Accordingly in assessing the extent to which the seven projects have been evaluated as contributing to poverty reduction attention will be paid to the extent to which there is an analysis of the poverty dimensions in the project areas and the ways in which project interventions respond to these (theory of change). Poverty will be considered in relation to four of its dimensions:

- Insecurity/ Security
- Income poverty
- Food Security
- Public Good provision (health/ education)

Table 5.2 Comparative analysis of contribution to poverty reduction from the seven evaluations

Poverty	[n.p.3]	[n.p.]	ASGP	DDG	RAIP	SCA	[n.p. 2]
Insecurity/ Security							
Project focus	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes?
Strengths				+++			
Weaknesses							

¹⁹ Sida, 2002 Perspectives on Poverty, Stockholm

Lessons				+			
Food Security							
Project focus	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Strengths				++			
Weaknesses				-			
Lessons				+			
Income poverty							
Project focus	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Strengths					++	++	
Weaknesses					--	--	
Lessons					++	++	
Public Good Provision							
Project focus	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Strengths			-		+++	+++	+++
Weaknesses			---		--	-	---
Lessons			+++		++	+	+++

Annex 6 – Issues of Gender Equality in Afghanistan

The first formal reference to gender equality in Afghanistan dates back to the Constitution of 1923 when King Amanullah decreed “personal freedom” to all “subjects”, male or female, living in the country.²⁰ Afghanistan’s history of women’s emancipation has since been a case of one step forward, two steps back reflecting the country’s chronic instability. The Islamic State of Afghanistan that followed the 80s civil wars, was followed by the Taliban rule between 1996 -2001. Women’s rights, although not at the core of the power struggles, have been and are still often central to political positions.

The US invasion in 2001 was carried out in a frame of international rhetoric emphasizing the situation for women in Afghanistan. The fact that Afghanistan has still one of the most extreme cases of gender inequality in the world (in 2012, the country was ranked 147 out of 148 in the United Nations Development Programme’s Gender Inequality Index.²¹) raises question about the efforts made during the earliest phases of the reconstruction of post-Taliban Afghanistan.

The legal system of Afghanistan combines Islamic (Sharia), statutory and customary rules.²² The supreme law of the land is the Constitution of the Islamic Republic Afghanistan from 2004. It provides that all Afghan citizens have equal rights and duties before the law. In practice, implementation of legislation reflects the view of women as “secondary” and their subordinated role under male domination from the cradle to the grave. Islamic tenets continue to be widely cited as the ideological justification for gender discrimination. However, other interpretations have argued that discrimination against women has little basis in the Qur’an or Sharia law and are essentially customary.²³ Significant variations in women’s status exist which are governed by, among other things, region, rural/urban location, ethnicity, age, status, education and specific community or household practice.

²⁰ *British and foreign state papers. 1923, Part II, Vol. CXVIII* (London: HMSO, 1926), 1-6. Available at <http://www.hoelseth.com/royalty/afghanistan/afghcode19230409.html> (accessed 10 January 2012) in [name protected] “Equal Rights, Unequal Opportunities”, 2012, page 5

²¹ UNDP, Human Development Report, Gender Inequality Index 2012

²² Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (n.d)

²³ For examinations of these competing positions in the Afghan context, see “Women and Political Leadership: The Problems Facing Women Leaders in Afghanistan” (Kabul: Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium, 2010), 22-31; and “Silence is Violence,” 29. For a more general view of the debate, see “Women in Islam: Between Oppression and (Self-) Empowerment” (Berlin: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2008).

The 2008 National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) sets out an operational framework for furthering women's empowerment and gender equality under the government's overarching Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS).

The 2009 Elimination of Violence Against Women law (EWAV), included 22 “act of violence” that ought to be considered unlawful and aimed at ensuring more protection for women. This law was enacted by former president Karzai by decree, but needed to pass parliament approval to obtain more legal weight. Instead of approval, it has been heavily contested and its' implementation remains weak. In this respect opponents to the EWAV law have claimed that only acts of violence which are contrary to Islamic law will stand the chance of being implemented. This position is sometimes also held by women rights defenders in Afghanistan. Development in Afghanistan is by definition undertaken in an Islamic context. Whether this means that it can only encompass women's rights according to Islam (and its' interpretations) is surprisingly little explored, let alone the implications thoroughly analysed.

Women have nonetheless experienced significant gains in the decade since the 2001 international intervention. In 2003, Afghanistan ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. While still heavily disadvantaged compared to men, women have experienced a marked improvement in access to services such as education and healthcare compared to before 2001.²⁴ In terms of education, in the past decade there has been a considerable increase in school enrolment, with approximately 7 million children now in school. These include around 2.5 million girls which is a considerable improvement compared to 2001, when approximately 5,000 girls were in school.²⁵ Boys in schools still greatly outnumber girls, a gap which increases in secondary education.

This review's analysis is grounded in an understanding of gender as a social construct that influences all aspects of daily life.²⁶ Many efforts to address gender inequality through development programs focus on identifying gender gaps in access to resources and services, such as education, microcredit, technologies or land, and work to enhance the *availability* of these items so women have the same *access* as men. This will be called the **integrative approach** to gender equality and is presumably the most applied approach to gender equality in development programmes in Afghanistan. It consists primarily of advancement of individual women's status (empowerment) and alleviating the symptoms of gender inequality.²⁷

²⁴ For data on a range of indicators in this respect, see “National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007/08: A Profile of Afghanistan” (Kabul: EU/Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2008).

²⁵ Afghanistan: Women's Rights are Non-Negotiable, Amnesty Activist Guide, page 6

²⁶ Kabeer 1994

²⁷ Norad report, which also distinguishes between mainstreamed and targeted, but this report does not

Gender **transformative approaches**, on the other hand, see the institutional context as a key barrier to gender equality and seek to change it by creating more equitable systems and structures. A transformative approach aims at expanding the type and quality of life choices, by including both men and women in addressing unequal power dynamics. The challenge lies in striving towards women being able “to afford” to pursue life choices and challenge traditions. For the time being, not only are alternatives limited in theory, but even more so in practice due to the related social costs (stigma, exclusion from society, separation from family etc). A transformative approach shares a common ground with rights-based approaches and emphasises advocacy. A power analysis is needed to explore the types of spaces, places and forms of power in Afghanistan, and subsequently the space for participation and how it can be expanded. In terms of advocacy, these spaces determine the terms of engagement, which can change over time. In short, different actors can be “invited” to take part in different fora with, they can “claim” space in these fora and/or they can “create” space themselves to ensure some extent of influence.²⁸

In assessing the extent to which the seven projects have been evaluated as contributing to improved gender equality, this report puts specific emphasis on the following gender dimensions:

- Mainstreaming (extent of gender dimension in all projects)
- Level of integrative approach (empowerment)
- Level of transformative approach (equality, encompassing men and women)
- Pursuit of rights and use of advocacy (including rights according to Islam)

²⁸ Extract of “spaces” from Gaventa’s “Power Cube” as presented in “Finding the Spaces for Change. A Power Analysis”, Gaventa, John, IDS Bulletin, vol 37, November 2006

Annex 7 – Issues of Ownership and Participation

Issues related to ownership of and participation are seen to be intertwined and lie at the core of “the internationalised state-building project” in Afghanistan.²⁹ Afghanistan’s democratic state-building was resumed with the Bonn Agreement in 2001, which all parties to the conflict (except the Taliban) attended but it was not a peace agreement. Many warlords, accused of massive human rights violations during the past two decades, secured a transition to power. Since 2001 several agreements³⁰ have been signed to ensure international commitment for Afghanistan’s democratic path.

However, political authority has remained fragmented between external and internal actors, each with their own interests and agendas. The “light footprint approach” of the international community may have contributed to the lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities, allowing international and domestic actors to shift responsibility and even escape accountability altogether. From the onset, the “project” has struggled with the reconciliation of democratic political outcomes and international counter-terror objectives. The War on Terror has heavily dominated the agenda at the expense of focus on stabilisation, reconstruction and development of democratic institutions.

A very high proportion of Afghanistan’s GDP (an estimated 97% in 2012³¹) stems from international military and development aid and spending in the country by foreign troops. Out of the total development aid directed to Afghanistan, only some 30% has been channelled through the Government of Afghanistan budget. This limited control of national development has implications in particular for the Afghan government’s own sense of ownership and possibilities to drive development according to its perceived priorities.

Development and democratic evolution are intertwined. The current structure of government in Afghanistan is based on the Constitution from 2004. This is typically described as one of the most centralised models in the world because of the concentration of power in the presi-

²⁹ Understanding “Local Ownership” in Peacebuilding Operations in Afghanistan, Marika Theros, December 2012

³⁰ London in 2006 “Afghanistan Compact” This partnership framework renewed in the Afghan National Development Strategy, the Paris Conference of June 2009, the Afghanistan Conferences in London in January 2010 and in Kabul in June 2010, and the Bonn Conference of December 2011.

³¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/21/opinion/afghanistans-economic-challenges.html>

dency.³² The 2004 constitution provides for advisory provincial councils, as well as elected bodies at the district level and in municipalities. Legislation adopted since 2004 has kept the advisory provincial councils relatively powerless and opportunities for locally elected officials have so far not been pursued.

The idea that decentralisation (if not federalism, at least devolution of powers³³) could contribute to stabilisation of Afghanistan has been advocated, not least by non-Afghans who have seen the approach used to good effect in other multi-ethnic societies. Afghanistan has well-defined provinces and regional identities³⁴. These could be used as a basis to accommodate conflicting interest groups within decentralised structures, with improved accountability to local populations who have long been resistant to the influence of a central state. However principles of centralism and a unitary state have been cornerstones of the country's constitutional history. There is a long tradition of equating questioning of the unitary state to treason.³⁵

Among Afghans, Pashtuns are perceived as the winners in a centralized system. A decentralized system, apart from breaking this power monopoly, might shift the control of provincial/local appointments away from the centre. This could increase the accountability of public servants towards the constituencies they serve. Decentralisation could go either way, depending on the ability of the central state to regulate local power holders. It might offer a chance to bring greater accountability of local leader or it might allow them to consolidate power. Afghanistan while culturally diverse is religiously homogenous. Locally appointed officials, are more likely to accommodate local practices. On the other hand, they may also be more likely to disregard external influences which are considered inappropriate to their contexts.

The Independent Directorate for Local Government (IDLG) is the government body charged with overseeing the development of sub-national structures, within the existing constitutional framework. IDLG has embraced the idea that Afghanistan functions best when communities are enabled to exercise a high degree of self-government with limited interaction with the formal state. It has instructed administrators to shift to a more consultative approach towards informal community structures (mainly *shuras* or *jirgas*) and to favour approaches to service delivery and even security in which community organisations take much of the responsibility.

³² Power to the periphery, 2012, page 6,

³³ Federalism: sovereignty is shared between the national government and sub-national units and the allocation of responsibility between them is governed by a compact which the centre is not free to abrogate unilaterally.

Devolution: preserves the notion of a unitary state, with sovereignty exercised exclusively by the central government, which can choose, to pass administrative functions and decisions to sub-national tiers of government.

³⁴ Thomas Barfield, 2010, Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History, Princeton, Princeton University Press

³⁵ Power to the periphery, 2012, page 15

The IDLG policy endorses much of the spirit of the bottom-up proposals although there is scant evidence that this endorsement has been reflected in administrative practices.

The National Solidarity Programme (NSP), operational since 2003 was designed to promote local governance and decision-making. But as the final report of the Impact evaluation of NSP noted, reflecting the ambitions of some for NSP to reorder village government, the creation of CDCs by NSP has few lasting effects on the identity or affiliation of customary village leaders³⁶ although it may have had more enduring effects for representation of women. In general external efforts to steer reform and reconstruction process, involve local actors, donors have created a number of parallel structures that threaten the fiscal sustainability of the state and have created opportunities for corruption.³⁷

Afghanistan belongs to the 70% of fragile states that have experienced conflict at least since 1989.³⁸ Despite commitments (Paris 2005, Accra 2008) international partners have continued bypassing national interests and actors and generally failed to develop capacities and systems. The initiators of the so called “New Deal of engagement in fragile” was the g7+ group of 19 fragile and conflict-affected countries, development partners, and international organisations. In Busan (2011) these actors agreed to use Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs) as a foundation, to focus on supporting country-led and country-owned transitions out of fragility and build mutual trust by providing aid and managing resources more effectively and aligning these resources for results.

Afghanistan is one of seven countries which have nominated themselves as “pilot”-countries in making the “New Deal” the centre-piece of all their development partnerships. The “Afghanistan Compact” was a result of the process in 2012. The design of compacts is still work in progress and most of them undermine the ability of government and donors to match policy and programme action to the drivers of conflict and fragility. Most compacts contain too many, and too ambitious priorities given the limited time and resources available.³⁹

In assessing the extent to which extent the seven projects have been evaluated in terms of the approach undertaken to enhance Afghan ownership on and promote inclusive participation of communities, this report will put specific emphasis on the following dimensions:

- Promotion of inclusive, participatory processes
- Alignment with local and national development plans and policies

³⁶ Beath, A., Christia, F and Enikolopov, F. 2013, Randomised Impact Evaluation of Afghanistan's National Solidarity Programme. Final Report. Washington, World Bank

³⁷ Understanding “Local Ownership” in Peacebuilding Operations in Afghanistan, Marika Theros, December 2012

³⁸ A New Deal for engagement in fragile states, International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, Building peaceful states

³⁹ Progress since Busan: Supporting transitions towards resilience, Preliminary results of global monitoring of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, April 2014, page 3

Annex 8 – Issues of Anti-corruption

Corruption is widely understood to be the improper use of a public or official position for private gain.⁴⁰ However, different nations, cultures and groups place different meanings on “corruption”.

Afghanistan remains one of the worst performing countries in Transparency International’s Corruption Perception index, ranking in the bottom four with Sudan, North Korea and Somalia in 2014.⁴¹ The levels of corruption are extreme. In a recent Asia Foundation Study from 2014, 62,4% of Afghans reported that corruption was a major problem in their daily lives.⁴² Political, high-level, corruption often receives the greatest attention, but the devastating impact of administrative corruption on the everyday lives of ordinary Afghan citizens receives far less publicity. By limiting and undermining the right to access essential public services, hindering chances of economic development and eroding trust in government, justice and the rule of law - it is administrative corruption that is most keenly felt for a vast majority of Afghans.⁴³ Corruption and bribery are not exclusive to employees of the public sector. Numerous different individuals, groups, entities and organizations external to the public administration of Afghanistan, such as the private business sector, foreign military or consulate personnel, religious authorities or insurgent groups may also demand illicit payments in return for certain favours, preferential treatment or the provision of services.

It is widely recognized that data on the perception of corruption do not measure *de facto* corruption, but measure instead the psychological impact of corruption on the population. Perceptions of high levels of corruption may foster further corruption. The numbers below provide insights into the prevailing perceptions on corruption in Afghanistan:

- In 2012, half of Afghan citizens paid a bribe while requesting a public service and the total cost of bribes paid to public officials amounted to an estimated US\$ 3.9 billion.
- 68 % of citizens interviewed considered it acceptable for a civil servant to top up a low salary by accepting small bribes from service users.
- 67 % of citizens considered it sometimes acceptable for a civil servant to be recruited on the basis of family ties and friendship networks.
- The frequency of bribery has increased from 4.7 bribes to 5.6 bribes per bribe-payer and the average cost of a bribe has risen from US\$ 158 to US\$ 214.

⁴⁰ Transparency International’s definition

⁴¹ Transparency International, “Corruption Perceptions Index 2014”, <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/results/>

⁴² Asia Foundation, “Afghanistan in 2014”, <http://www.asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Afghanistanin2014final.pdf>

⁴³ *ibid*

- Education has emerged as one of the sectors most vulnerable to corruption, with the percentage of those paying a bribe to a teacher jumping from 16 per cent in 2009 to 51 per cent in 2012.
- Considerable difference in average amounts paid by male and female citizens (US\$ 265 vs. US\$ 131).
- Less than one in five (19 %) secured a public job without assistance from a relative, friend or member of their own community and without paying a bribe.⁴⁴

Effective anti-corruption policies are dependent upon an understanding whether certain corrupt practices are deemed acceptable or unacceptable by citizens. The survey referred to above (both in 2009 and the 2012) therefore asked Afghan citizens about their opinions regarding a series of dishonest practices and to what extent they considered those practices acceptable. The 2012 survey results indicate a growing tolerance of corruption in Afghanistan, which the survey report finds “alarming”.⁴⁵

Reports on the prevalence of corruption indicate that Afghans tend to think of corruption as a relatively new problem for their country. Notably, the former President Karzai intentionally chose to define corruption as a problem brought into Afghanistan by foreigners. This opinion has since carried a lot of weight in terms of local perceptions of the intervention, not least due to Karzai’s influence over media.⁴⁶ Western donors on the other hand, and almost equally single-mindedly, blame the Afghans for corruption. Many of them seemed to adopt an approach in which corruption was seen as an inevitable part of the context in which their mission had to operate. This led not only to passivity and limited action against corruption on behalf in the international community. More importantly, there were clear indications that the way development was being done in Afghanistan enabled and even boosted corruption. The deteriorating security situation after 2005 allowed these other accounts to emerge about the roots of instability, and the idea that corruption was feeding the insurgency led to research on the links between the two. Several anti-corruption mechanisms were established, such as the High-Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption (HOOAC) and Independent joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC). These have in their turn been accused of poor implementation as well as outright corruption.

According to the report “Corruption lessons learnt from the International Mission in Afghanistan” the initial weakness of Afghan civil society organisations was an additional reason why the international community was slow to recognise and address the corruption threats. The core logic had depended on the idea of anti-corruption benefits emanating from more civil society engagement with government. Civil society was expected to play a role in external oversight and bring transparency and accountability into the provision of government services. This was however not a role that the Afghan civil society was in the position to play,

⁴⁴ Population survey (6 700 individuals + between 2-3000 sector civil servants) on the extent of bribery and four sector-specific integrity surveys of public officials undertaken by UNODC and the Government of Afghanistan in 2011/2012

⁴⁵ General Population Survey 2012, UNODC, page 27

⁴⁶ Corruption lessons from Afghanistan, 2015, page 25

and is still likely to struggle with the task. Moreover, civil society are in no way immune to the pervasive levels of corruption, but rather seen as some of the main culprits. In a country such as Afghanistan successful anti-corruption work will require the turning of a massive acceptance for and use of corrupt means, into the opposite.

In assessing the extent to which the seven projects have been evaluated in terms of the approach undertaken against corruption, this report will put specific emphasis on the following dimensions:

- oversight institutions for anti-corruption
- measures for increased accountability and transparency
- role of civil society and media in (anti-)corruption

Annex 9 – Issues of Conflict Sensitivity

Conflict is pervasive, multi-layered and complex in Afghanistan, and it operates at multiple interlinked scales and is dynamic. As PRDU⁴⁷ has put it:

‘[it] emerges from a combination of several inter-related sub-conflicts. It is neither a singular conflict nor a phenomenon of anti versus pro-government elements. In short, it involves:

- An insurgency comprised of armed opposition groups (AOGs) led by or loosely affiliated with the Taliban;
- A narcotics-oriented conflict which, as in any organised criminal pursuit, has few aims beyond the protection, continuation and expansion of its illicit enterprise;
- Localised disputes motivated by opposition to local officials and public administrations which are controlled by long-standing local rivals; these are reputedly responsible for up to half of attacks against the Afghan government; and,
- A *potential* intra-state war between re-mobilising militias in northern and southern Afghanistan due to the inflammation of regional tensions caused, in part, by the international intervention.’

The challenges it poses for project and NGOs are summed up well by SCA⁴⁸ (2011: 2), “By all measures Afghanistan is now a more insecure and violent country that it was in 2009 and the number of security incidents against NGOs has increased through collateral damage and criminality. It is apparent that NGOs operate in Afghanistan are not being systematically targeted by insurgent elements; in fact it appears that it is not what an NGO implements, or even who funds it that matters, but instead it is how an organisation implements projects or how they are perceived by the beneficiaries”

As an institutional player, SCA is an additional factor in the confused web of relations connecting communities to various government institutions, the international community (and by extension the military, civil society organisation and opposition groups, whether armed or not. In addition SCA represents a financial and material resource to Afghan communities, bringing with it the considerable support of international donors, which is potentially subject to ‘capture’ by local power brokers and those who can persuade by threat of violence. In such a complex and unstable environment, understanding the shifting social, political and economic factors behind the conflicts, particularly at the local level, ‘negotiating’ between the various actors and forces involved, as well as keeping abreast of changing power relations, is becoming increasingly difficult’ (p7)

⁴⁷ Post-war and Reconstruction and Development Unit 2008 A Strategic Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan. DFID Understanding Afghanistan. Final Report, PRDU, University of York, UK

⁴⁸ Devlin, L., S.Darwich and S.Darwish 2011. Conflict Analysis of SCA Activities in Afghanistan.

An understanding of the local dynamics of conflict is therefore necessary. While a full conflict analysis is not necessarily required for all projects, given the way in which projects in themselves can be used or inadvertently generate conflict, conflict sensitivity analysis is required. This is also specifically relevant to Sweden's broader strategic objectives of building peace and security in Afghanistan.

Four metrics will be used to assess the degree to which conflict sensitivity has been built into project design and implementation:

Step 1: Causal analysis of conflicts (identifying sources of conflict, key actors and their resources, divisions and cooperation⁴⁹)

Step 2: Linking causal analysis to project design and its potential impacts

Step 3: Linking causal analysis to project implementation, including risk management

Step 4: Linking causal analysis to assessment of project results or impact

Table 9.1: Comparative analysis of the degree to which conflict sensitivity was applied to the implementation in projects as assessed by the seven evaluations

Poverty	[n.p.3]	[n.p.]	ASGP	DDG	RAIP	SCA	[n.p.2]
Causal Analysis							
Project focus	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Strengths	+++						
Weaknesses	--						
Lessons	++						
Causal analysis & design							
Project focus	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Strengths							
Weaknesses							
Lessons							
Causal analysis & implementation							
Project focus	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Strengths		+		+++	+++		
Weaknesses					--		
Lessons							
Causal analysis & impact assessment							
Project focus	No		No	Yes		No	No
Strengths				+++			
Weaknesses							
Lessons							

⁴⁹ See also Sida (2006) Manual for Conflict Analysis. Methods Document

Annex 10 - Issues of Sustainability

The analysis of sustainability needs to be adapted to the circumstances of each intervention, paying attention to the local context and specific results of each intervention. The following statistics provide us with an overview of the aid dependency and the challenging development context in Afghanistan:

- Afghanistan was the largest recipient country of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) in 2013, ranking highest in both net total and per capita. The ODA net total received was \$5,267M, while the ODA net per capita was \$172.4.⁵⁰
- Afghanistan's Human Development Index (HDI) shows an annual average increase of about 1.8 percent between 1980 and 2012. The index measures long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. Afghanistan's HDI value ranks 175 out of 187 countries and territories.⁵¹
- Although development has increased steadily since 2000, relative to Nepal and Bangladesh (comparable geographical locations and human development index value) the degree of progress is slower.⁵²

These numbers indicate the challenges in regards to the sustainability of the development results achieved by foreign aid in Afghanistan. DFID's country programme evaluation for Afghanistan in 2009 concluded that sustainable impact of the combined results of their development programmes was impaired by the inability of the government to establish national unity linked to political settlement, something that cannot be addressed by donor support.⁵³

[name protected] working paper, "Livelihoods, basic services and social protection in Afghanistan"⁵⁴ argues that the overwhelming weight of non-ODA resource flows into Afghanistan, the significant flows of funding outside government control and the presence of multiple donors within sectors often working to different theories or change and models of programme practice raise intrinsic difficulties in determining the nature of interventions and assessing aid effects.

⁵⁰ OECD data lab statistics

⁵¹ UNDP Human Development Report 2013

⁵² *ibid*

⁵³ DFID, Country Programme Evaluation Afghanistan, May 2009 ⁵⁴ Adam Pain, [name protected], working paper 3, July 2012

The factors below are recognised as determining whether or not the results of an intervention will be sustained into the future⁵⁵, reviewed in relation to the context in Afghanistan (evaluators' assessment):

Factors leading to sustainability:	The Afghan context:
1. Partner country priorities: interventions reflecting partner country priorities are more likely to be sustained	Donors have competing and sometimes contradictory objectives and practices that make it difficult for coherent country priorities to be established,
2. Partner country ownership and participation: sustainability is more likely if there is strong ownership of the intervention and its results which is best stimulated by inclusion in the planning, implementation and follow-up	Country ownership is problematic given limited authority and control over resource flows, let alone programme objectives
3. Institutional and cultural factors: integration into the local institutional context that are in tune with local norms are often a prerequisite for sustainability of development interventions	Normative views on development are challenged by different norms and practices and different cultural attitudes
4. Financial factors: in certain interventions financial capacity to maintain results is needed to ensure sustainability (i.e. government revenue, user fees, etc.)	The Government struggles to raise internal revenue and collect taxes and are therefore primarily dependent on foreign aid
5. Management and organisation: strong capacities increases the likelihood that results will be sustained	Strong institutional and human capacities are limited
6. Exit strategy: a plan for sustainability should be integrated into the programme design from the onset	This responsibility rests on the joint shoulders of the donors, partner organisations and stakeholders

In summary, most of these factors pose a challenge in the Afghan context and questions are raised in relation to how realistic it is to achieve sustainable development in Afghanistan, and therefore indicates the importance of understanding how interventions can address them in their theories of change.

The evaluation criteria of sustainability refers to the results obtained through the intervention, not the sustainability of the intervention itself.⁵⁶ When assessing sustainability of an ongoing intervention, evidence has to be sought in regards to the *potential* of sustained results after donor funding ceases and the likelihood of continued positive effects of the intervention.

⁵⁵ Sida Evaluation Manual Looking Back, Moving Forward, 2nd revised edition

⁵⁶ *ibid*

In assessing the extent to which the results of the seven evaluated projects are, or have the potential to be sustainable, attention has been paid to how sustainability was integrated in the project design and if exit strategies were integrated in the theory of change. The ways in which project interventions responded to emerging challenges and opportunities in regards to sustainability, specifically looking at financial and institutional sustainability are also assessed. Sustainability is considered in relation to four dimensions, with a possibility to capture other additional factors:

- Financial
- Institutional
- Sustainability integrated in design
- Exit strategy in place
- Other

Table 10.1 Comparative analysis of the degree to which sustainability was taken into account in design and likely sustainability of the projects.

Sustainability	[n.p.3]	[n.p.]	ASGP	DDG	RAIP	SCA	[n.p. 2]
Integrated in design							
Project focus	No	No	No	Yes	No	No?	No
Strengths							
Weaknesses				--			
Lessons				++		++	+++
Exit strategy in place							
Project focus	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Strengths			+			+	
Weaknesses			---				
Lessons			++	++	++		
Financial							
Project focus	Yes?	Yes?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes?	Yes?
Strengths	++	+		+			++
Weaknesses	--	--	--	--	---	--	
Lessons	-	++		++	+++	++	
Institutional							
Project focus	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Strengths	++	++		++	+	++	++
Weaknesses	--	--	---	--	---	--	
Lessons	++	++	+++	++	+++	++	++

Annex 11 - Assessing Synergies

The review ToR asks the question, “what, if any, potential for synergies between different projects/ programme can be identified?”. This begs the question as to what exactly one might mean by ‘synergies’ and how these might be identified in a useful way.

By definition a synergy is where the whole is something that is greater than the sum of the individual parts. At its simplest this could be through the funding of successive phases of a projects that build on each phase and achieves greater impact and efficiency as a result. Thus where there have been more than one phase to a project the question could be asked whether or not there were synergies between the phases and if the overall effect of the multi-phase project was more than simply additive. This might apply for example in the case of the RAIP project, [name protected] or SCA.

A second dimension of synergy would be to consider where there are parallel projects and whether or not they complement each other in terms of efficiency and results. This could be seen as an instrumental synergy where results from two different projects are more than additive e.g. results from the SCA in terms of school construction linked to RAIPs roads programme leading to improved access to public goods more than could have been achieved by one project alone. This probably requires geographical overlap in the project mandate areas as with those projects implemented in the four Northern provinces.

There may also be conceptual synergies – RAIP’s conflict sensitivity drawing from learning from AAN or [name protected] research on power relations in these areas. Equally the work of AAN and [name protected] could be seen as in general contributing to improved understanding of Afghani-stan. There can also be synergies in questions of learning – from monitoring practices, ap-proaches to gender equality, modalities of capacity building or policy engagement and sus-tainability.

All the above are essentially an ex-post evaluation of what synergies have been or might have been achieved. But for the purposes of this review it is also important to ask the question as to whether or not the opportunities to build synergies between the projects have been fully engaged with in the Afghanistan country programme and three distinct levels can be identified:

- At a strategic level with an awareness and understanding of the opportunities offered by the different projects to Sweden’s country strategy;
- In the development of work programme and work plans including the choice of priorities, specific objectives, types of actions and beneficiaries on the basis of an analysis of the needs – e.g. the intervention logic or theory of change;
- In the set up of the implementation mechanisms, project selection processes, monitoring of the implementation, etc.

Finally in relation to the above point one might also look at failure to achieve potential synergies – at worst through the duplication of funding for similar activities – or substituting Swedish funds when other fund sources or national programmes might have been available to undertake efficiently the same actions. These last two points are addressed in the discussion in section 4.

In assessing the 7 evaluations therefore points of difference as well as opportunities to assess potential synergies will be considered in relation to the following dimensions:

- Successive Phases of a project
- Parallel Projects
 - Instrumental synergies
 - Conceptual synergies
 - Learning synergies



Review of Sida's Support to Afghanistan - Lessons and Conclusions from 7 Evaluations

This review of the evaluations of seven Sida funded project in Afghanistan has assessed the general lessons and conclusions that can be drawn from a comparative analysis of the project evaluations. The review has among other aspects, evaluated the overall results, effects on poverty, gender equality, participatory processes and sustainability. While all the projects have been highly relevant those with a more instrumental focus have been more effective in achieving results. Impacts on poverty, gender equality and other dimensions have been more limited. This raises important questions for project ambitions and design in Afghanistan.

SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Address: S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Valhallavägen 199, Stockholm

Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64

E-mail: info@sida.se. Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>

