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Evaluation of Sida's Trainee Programme and the Leadership Development Programme for working in Fragile Environments (PULS)

Final Report

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**Final Report
March 2022**

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Table of contents

Table of contents	1
Abbreviations and Acronyms	3
Executive Summary.....	4
The Trainee Program.....	5
The PULS program.....	6
1 Introduction.....	9
1.1 Rationale/background.....	9
1.2 Subject of the Evaluation	10
1.3 Evaluation purpose and scope.....	11
1.4 Intended users of the evaluation.....	12
2 Evaluation approach and methods of work.....	13
2.1 Evaluation Design.....	13
2.2 Limitations of data collection methods and mitigation strategies	16
2.3 Structure of the Report	16
3 Findings – Evaluation of the Trainee Program.....	17
3.1 Introduction	17
3.2 Relevance.....	17
3.2.1 Sida staff's perspectives on relevance	17
3.2.2 Trainees' perspectives on relevance	18
3.2.3 Heads of Units and mentors' perspectives on relevance	20
3.3 Effectiveness	21
3.3.1 Overall Program Results: Aggregated Outcomes, planning, implementation	21
3.3.2 RESULTS ON OBJECTIVE 1: Conflict context competence	24
3.3.3 RESULTS ON OBJECTIVE 2: More diversity.....	26
3.3.4 RESULTS ON OBJECTIVES 3 & 4: New ways of working+wider role for Sida-staff	30
3.4 Efficiency.....	33
4 Conclusions – Evaluation of the Trainee Program	38
5 Recommendations - Evaluation of the Trainee Program.....	39
6 Findings – Evaluation of the PULS Program	40

6.1 introduction	40
6.2 relevance	40
6.3 effectiveness	43
6.4 EFFICIENCY	49
7 Recommendations – Evaluation of the PULS Program	53
8 Overall conclusions and recommendations for both programs	57
9 Overall Recommendations	58
Annex 1. Evaluation matrix	59
Annex 2. List of interviewed persons	62
Annex 3. Survey questionnaires	65
Annex 4. List of documents.....	75

Abbreviations and Acronyms

BBE	Assistant Bilateral Expert (acronym in Swedish, "Biträdande Bilateral Expert")
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (part of OECD)
ELO	Unit for Learning and Organisational Development
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GNI	Gross National Income
HEAT	Hostile Environment Awareness Training
HRKOM	Human Resource and Communications department
JPO	Junior Professional Official
KOMPFOR	Unit for Competence Development
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PULS	The Leadership Development Program for Working in Fragile Environments
QA	Quality Assurance
TL	Team Leader
UM	Utlandsmyndigheter
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
VP	Sida's Operational Plan

Executive Summary

The executive summary covers both the evaluations of the Trainee and PULS programs and briefly recaps the rationale and methods that were used.

i. Program rationale and objectives

The Trainee and PULS programs were two new innovative recruitment programs at Sida, and, as such, both had a pilot character. The **Trainee program 2020-2021 aimed to** contribute to Sida's strategic long-term staff resourcing, by recruiting and introducing a group of employees with great potential to become driven and skilled program managers and controllers in future development cooperation. The Trainee program was implemented from September 2020 to December 2021.

The purpose of the PULS program was to prepare employees to work in conflict and post-conflict environments or environments with special safety/security challenges. The goal was to ensure that employees who completed the program should feel equipped and ready to apply for positions in challenging contexts, within a one-to-three-year timeframe after finishing the program. The PULS program began in April 2020 and was finalized at the end of 2021.

ii. Evaluation purpose and methods

The rationale of the evaluation was to provide Sida with an external review of the extent to which the two programs had achieved the objectives and expected results. The evaluation assessed the relevance of the two programs when compared to Sida's long-term strengthening of its staff resource base and long-term staff resourcing. The evaluation also looked at efficiency, more specifically the extent to which the input of human and financial resources at Sida could be justified about the achieved results. The evaluations are expected to support Sida in making informed recruitment decisions and to gauge whether similar programs are to be considered in the future.

The evaluators applied a mixed data collection method, including remote semi-structured interviews with key informants, online surveys, and a review of documents as the main data collection tools. A total of seventy people were interviewed, including forty-five from the Trainee program and twenty-five from the PULS program. The participants in the interviews were compiled from the two training, Staff in different departments and units in Stockholm and staff from Sweden's embassies that are engaged in development cooperation. The collected data was analyzed through qualitative text analysis and the interview replies were used to establish patterns of findings and sub-findings, linked to the pre-established evaluation matrix. The interviews and survey responses were quite similar; therefore, findings and conclusions are considered to be robust and, consequently, so is the reliability of the evaluation.

iii. Findings

The Trainee program

RELEVANCE: Considering the three different aspects of relevance that are pertinent to the trainee program, there is evidence of high relevance for Sida's recruitment efforts (strategy) and staffing as a whole. The trainees brought new energy, and new relevant experiences, and resolved (in a few cases) embassy recruitment issues. The program was launched with short notice, which meant that not all units at Sida became aware of its existence until later on and this resulted in a lower recognition of the relevance of the program for their specific units. Another critical aspect related to relevance – which is also part of the recommendations – is that (in the invitation to apply) the required profiles could have been more specific when employing concepts, such as diversity.

EFFECTIVENESS: The first conclusive observation is that the program lacked a result framework with measurable results - such as qualitative and/or quantitative indicators for output or outcome results. For example, it was never set out how many trainees were going to apply and be selected for positions at embassies in countries with high levels of conflict and where Sida has had recruitment difficulties for many years. The specific results for this topic will not be revealed until three to five years from now, and maybe even later. Leaving this fact aside, the program achieved most of its objectives both in general and specific terms. The trainees provided Sida with diversity, in terms of functional competencies language skills, and experience in conflict contexts - such as countries in the Middle East. Also, Sida received an influx of competent young people with technical backgrounds in contrast to the ones dominating at Sida, professionals in humanities. More people at Sida now have direct experience in conflict areas. The least tangible result was in the ambition to contribute to innovative ways of work and take on new roles at Sida and in Embassies. Several interviewees - trainees, mentors, and unit/department/embassy staff - witnessed a bit of a clash between ambitions to change ways of working and the fact that Sida staff as public employees are bound to comply with several laws and regulations. The weakness in this part of the program objective is in part due to vagueness or lack of specification: what does it mean to be a “change agent at Sida”.

EFFICIENCY: Efficiency is understood as the relationship of inputs (funds, expertise, time), and results in the main finding, which is that it is too early to measure or make a conclusion. The lack of a clear definition, method, and understanding of how to measure efficiency contributes to the absence of a comprehensive finding and conclusion. One factor of the cost-effectiveness is how many of the trainees will stay at Sida and for how long time. In the short-term, 5-6 trainees are already working at embassies in post-conflict regions. This is also a positive outcome on efficiency, considering that the three phases of planning, recruitment and implementation of the program are in a difficult situation, due to the prevalence of COVID-19. All involved, Sida staff and trainees, adapted well to the situation and there were no major deviations from the planning. Selecting nineteen trainees from 1301 applicants appeared to be done quickly and efficiently.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TRAINEE PROGRAM: The training program achieved most of its objectives, with a contribution to making the staffing situation more stable. There is widespread recognition that Sida made a positive and significant investment, as the program delivered 19 highly qualified people, also young, and diverse in language skills and experiences, from complex places for development cooperation. It was fully in line with the gap analysis made regularly by the human resources and communication department. Group recruitment and training is now seen, more than previously, as an effective method. Having said this, it is difficult to draw major conclusions about the program about its impact on Sida's strategic recruitment goals, as the evaluation does not consider the entire scope of recruitment efforts and program. The evaluator's most important conclusions are 1) Make recruitment more goal-oriented, by specifying and detailing the competence requirements, 2) Change the name of the program, so that it focuses less on trainees and more on "from trainees to young experts", 3) Improve anchoring of the program at embassies and all Sida units, and 4) Clarify the definition of the role as "change agents", by providing examples of what this can or should mean.

The PULS program

RELEVANCE: In terms of knowledge development – as the concept of a need and in practice – the PULS program's relevance was high, for both Sida and the recruited participants. It is also clear that PULS was aligned with and contributed to Sida's Operational Plan 2019-2021 and in particular the two strategic goals 4: Operate in conflict environments and 5: Learning. PULS offered a training package with a mix of themes and approaches, that were deemed relevant and interesting to the participants. The focus on networking, both as an idea and in practice during the program, added to its relevance. A critical dimension to the relevance related to a general disappointment among participants about the choice of themes was the fact that they were often treated too superficially, and also the fact that the program is not seen as a supporting factor in their career steps. The program initially envisaged 20% of working hours allocation for the PULS training participants to be used for learning. However, the operationalisation of this time allocation was not possible, which affected the utility of the program as well.

EFFECTIVENESS: The program was relatively effective. Despite the wide promotion, the course eventually enrolled twelve permanent employees, i.e., program managers and controllers with a wide range of experience and skills, some of whom also had experience in the field. Stakeholder interviews and survey responses reveal that Sida could have done more to promote and explain the training package better, both to prospective PULS training participants and their Unit managers. More junior staff members found the training package interesting, both from the learning perspective and also from the potential for future employment perspectives. However, the PULS training participants also noted that the training program syllabus was too broad and circled generally useful themes, applicable in all lines of work, but in fewer hands for actual work in conflict settings.

The individual learning segment of the program was affected by the failure to ensure that 20 of allotted working hours for learning is utilized. Apart from that, COVID-19

affected the extent to which planned placements or face-to-face training could materialize, which narrowed participants' learning window. This resulted in partial success of the training to increase the skills and deepen understanding of different dimensions of working in conflict contexts. On the other side, the networking component provided an excellent opportunity for Sida staff from different departments and sections, but also different levels of experience, to meet and work together. This resulted in strengthened links between participants.

The evaluation did not find ample evidence of the direct contribution of the PULS capacity strengthening interventions towards observable changes, in terms of increased readiness of Sida staff to work in conflict or fragile environments. Besides, the evaluation found that the program did not eventually serve as a leverage for increased employability chances and was a disappointment for many participants as per feedback received within the framework of this evaluation.

EFFICIENCY: The overall financial and time allocation for the training was generous and, if the coverage and targeting were adequate, it would have provided for a strong and beneficial program. However, the COVID-19 restriction, turnover of coordinators, suboptimal conceptualisation of the program and selection of themes, heavy reliance on external consultants and time constraints for other Sida departments contributing to the program were adverse factors affecting efficiency in the delivery of output level results.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PULS PROGRAM: The program's effectiveness was modest, due to training design and operationalization challenges and also COVID-19. Evaluation findings and conclusions point to two alternatives to the design of a fully-fledged PULS program, based on the results of this pilot. The alternatives and related recommendations are the following:

Alternative 1: Design a targeted PULS program for those Sida staff who are selected for deployment in a conflict setting

R1.1: The PULS program should serve as a mechanism to prepare Sida staff for field deployment.

R1.2: Divide the training into two segments: 1) Training in preparation for deployment; and 2) Hands-on training during deployment.

Alternative 2. Design a more general PULS program for Sida staff considering deployment in conflict settings in the near future

R2.1: Focus on specific themes and methodological approaches that envisage, and nurture hands-on tools, learning and exchange be promoted and sustained across the program.

R2.2: Fully operationalize all program's conceptual elements to ensure that the program fulfils its potential.

R2.3: Communicate and promote such training programs with clear messages to ensure that prospective participants make informed decisions to apply and raise realistic expectations.

Recommendations that intersect and apply to both the two alternatives:

R3.1: Certify the training.

R3.2: Base the program on a clear intervention logic of what is desired to be achieved and **how**.

R3.3: Develop strong measures for institutional memory and knowledge management to be established for all learning programs implemented by Sida.

Overall, strategic recommendations

This evaluation also derived a number of strategic recommendations for Sida's future efforts to build human resource capacity for work in conflict and fragile contexts, as follows:

OR 1. Sida should continue investing in capacity strengthening of its human resources, to be better prepared for working in field operations or engaging in/on issues of conflict and fragility.

OR 2. Such investments should be based on careful consideration of ways in which already employed Sida staff members can benefit from training programs, without disruption, to ensure the cost-effectiveness of such efforts. The working time allocation for individual learning, in particular, if applied – needs to be fully operationalized in close liaison with Unit managers.

OR 3. Such training programs need to be designed carefully to ensure the full scope of themes and their deeper investigation is envisaged, to avoid superficial coverage of themes that can prove crucial for adequate deployment. Experiences and best practices from such programs within Sida or other development agencies should be explored and integrated in new Sida programs.

1 Introduction

1.1 RATIONALE/BACKGROUND

Sida commissioned the evaluation of two training programs, i.e., “*Sida Trainee Program*” and “*The Leadership Development Program for Working in Fragile Environments (PULS)*”, as an opportunity to benefit from an independent assessment of activities implemented within the two programs. The timing will enable Sida to use the evaluation evidence on the performance of the programs in the design of the new cycle of these two, or other, similar training programs, to support Sida’s operations in fragile contexts. This report, hence, covers the evaluation of each program individual, using the same approach and evaluation questions, but they have been analysed separately in their respective Sections. In such a way, this report serves as an umbrella, under which two individual evaluation studies with their distinct analyses and presentations of findings.

Sweden is the world’s largest donor in proportion to the size of its economy, spending 1.14% of its gross national income (GNI) on official development assistance (ODA) in 2020. During the last 45 years, Sweden exceeded the United Nations’ 0.7% target for the ratio of ODA to GNI.¹ Sida, being Sweden’s key public authority for managing the largest part of the financial resources for foreign aid, contributes to an effective implementation of Sweden’s Policy for Global Development.

Sida’s staff comprises approximately 800 full-time employees (number of positions converted to full-time positions). The majority of Sida’s employees are based at the head office in Stockholm and the offices in the towns Visby and Härnösand, both in Sweden. Between 20% and 25% of the staff work at Sweden’s “utlandsmyndigheter” (UM), which refers mainly to embassies and general consulates, most of them located in partner countries.

As with any other country, Sweden and Sida are in constant need to develop, maintain and strengthen the development cooperation human resource base. Historically, Sida has always had high ambitions to develop and maintain in-depth knowledge of the political, social, economic, and cultural contexts in those countries and regions where their development cooperation is carried out, combined with expertise in thematic and sectorial areas. Theories and practices of capacity building are another key knowledge field, as it is the base for many development theories.

¹ Source: <https://donortracker.org/>

Recent events with repercussions for democracy and human rights, in many parts of the world, have increased the need to explore new approaches to development cooperation. As the ToR states:

Sida's mission has become increasingly more complex over time. More and more private, public, and non-profit actors are contributing to achieving the Global Goals for Sustainable Development. New global forms of cooperation for sustainable development are emerging, and Sida encounters the need to adapt to a rapidly changing world.

Sida's Operational Plan (VP) for 2019-2021 includes measures to strengthen Sida's capacity to operate in conflict environments. The need for increased capacity of Sida to operate in conflict environment is evermore needed in recent years, and will probably continue to grow due to climate change and its effects on natural resources and people's livelihoods. However, Sida faces challenges in recruiting staff willing to work in conflict areas, where safety and security are major concerns, which calls for investment in developing training programs, which would help build relevant skills and expertise for deployment in conflict environments. The ToR also refers to this issue.

1.2 SUBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation focuses on two training programs, i.e., the *Sida Trainee Program* and *The Leadership Development Program for working in Fragile Environments (PULS)*, focusing on Sida's prospective employees, to contribute to Sida's strategic long-term staff resourcing.

Training program

The Sida Trainee Program started in September 2020 and ended in December 2021. Through this program, Sida expects to recruit and introduce a group of employees, with a large potential to become driven and skilled program staff, specialists, and controllers in future development cooperation.

A total of 1,301 applications were received, out of which 19 candidates were accepted into the trainee program. The trainee program was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and measures were taken to compensate for the sessions and approaches that subsequently were cancelled. For example, instead of the initial approach of the trainees rotating among units, the trainees performed 'projects' to allow for some experience working across departments. The trainees' joint learning sessions on Fridays were kept intact and implemented as planned.

The Leadership Development Program in Fragile Environments (PULS)

The PULS started in April 2020 and was planned to finalise in March 2021, but because of the COVID-19 situation, some individual activities were extended until the end of 2021. The objective is to "prepare employees in the very best way to work in conflict and post-conflict environments or environments with special safety/security challenges" (ToR). An expressed ambition is also to have the participants applying

for positions at embassies and Sida offices in countries where Sida faces recruitment challenges. Some of these countries are Afghanistan, Iraq, South Sudan, and Mali. In the PULS program, 15 participants were foreseen; finally, 12 permanent employees were admitted. Participation in the program entailed that 20% of participants' working time was supposed to be dedicated to new learning within the PULS. The capacity building component included mandatory sessions on e.g., conflict analysis, triple nexus approach, self-leadership, and networking. These modules were supplemented with allocated time and funds for training, based on participants' individual needs. The participants were both program managers and controllers.

Up to this point (January 2022), four participants have applied for UM positions. Although none of them were offered a position yet, the objective of the PULS program is for the participants to apply for UM positions within a five-year timeframe. Nevertheless, the assessment of an internal audit report² states that “the PULS did not fulfil the pragmatic needs” of recruiting (the in-house) senior program managers to be able to cope with security and hardship environments.

1.3 EVALUATION PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The evaluation aims to provide Sida with an understanding of to what extent the two programs have reached their intended purposes and, if so, why, or if not so, why not, as well as their effects and general results fulfilment: in addition, on an overarching level, their relevance in contributing to Sida's goals for long-term strengthening of its staff resource base and long-term staff resourcing. From that perspective, the ToR stipulates the following evaluation purposes:

- Provide Sida with an understanding of whether the objectives of the programs have been reached.
- Provide Sida with in-depth knowledge of the results fulfilment of the programs, the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of program design and set-up, as well as used methodology to reach the intended overall outcome of the program.
- Inform Sida of what has worked well and less so, on how the program implementation may be adjusted and improved.
- Help Sida assess if the program concept is a relevant choice of intervention to address the competence gaps and long-term competence needs identified.
- Serve as input for Sida to make an informed decision on if and how to continue the programs.

The evaluation addresses both training programs in their entirety covering the period of 2020 to December 2021. It is guided by the Organisation for Economic Co-

² Internrevisionsrapport 20/08

operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the two training programs. Gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE), and other cross-cutting aspects of the implementation of the two programs, will also be examined as explained below.

During the inception phase, Sida and the evaluation team reviewed the evaluation questions and agreed on the final list of evaluation questions that were then further elaborated through a set of assessment indicators, which provide a comprehensive framework for the evaluation (See Annex 1: Evaluation Matrix). The evaluation matrix presents a framework for the individual assessment of the performance of each of the two training programs.

1.4 INTENDED USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The primary user of this evaluation is the management group, the HRKOM department (in particular the heads of unit for ELO - the Unit for Learning and Organisational Development) and KOMPFOR (Unit for Competence Development), and the program coordinators. They will use the evaluation for ongoing programming and feed into the design of similar training programs in the future. Other users of this evaluation include the Human Resources Council (“HR-rådet »), consisting of Heads of Departments and acting Heads of Departments, as well as other relevant staff within Sida (See Annex 2). Beneficiaries of the training programs include 12 Sida staff and 19 trainees participating in the training activities of the PULS and the trainee program respectively.

2 Evaluation approach and methods of work

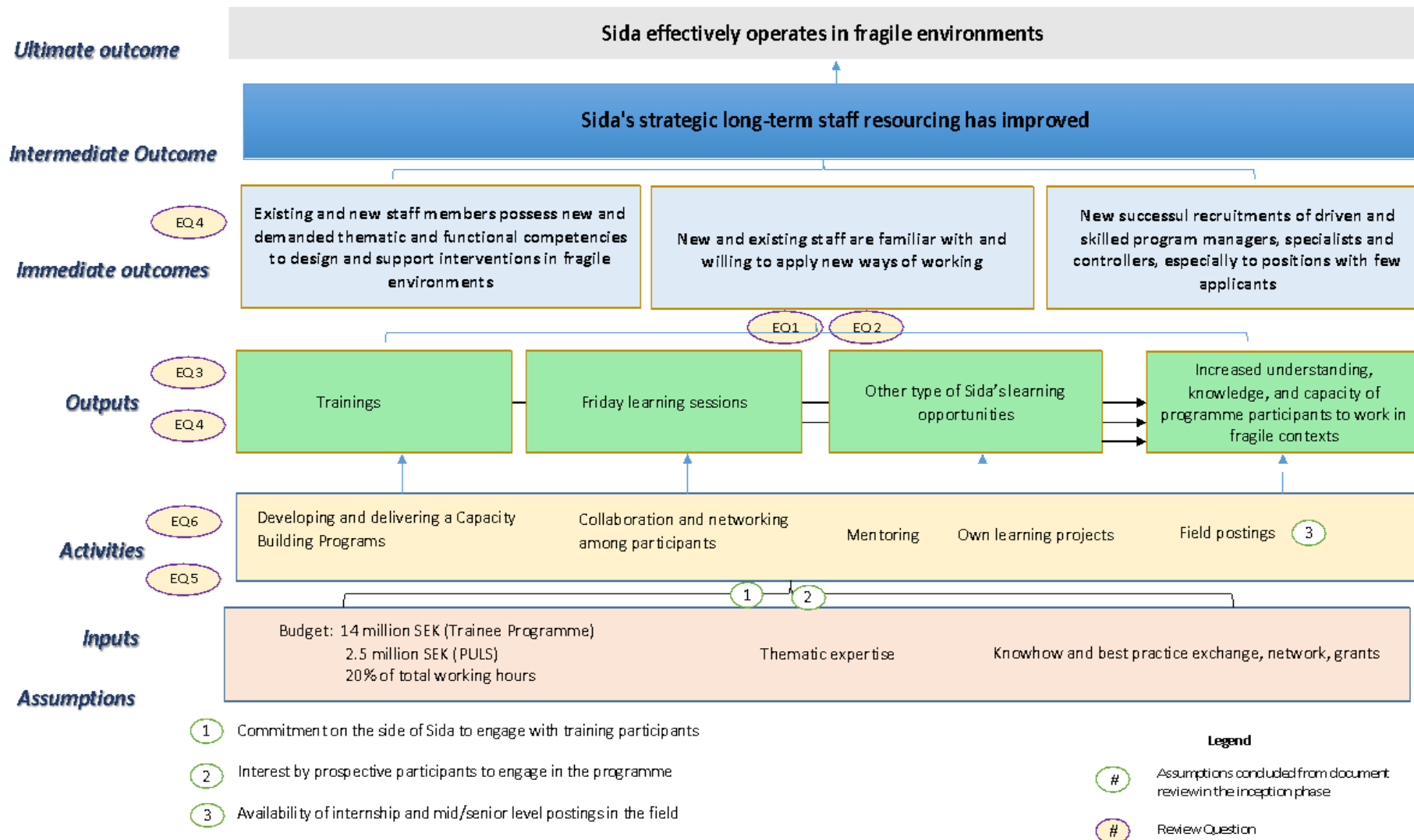
2.1 EVALUATION DESIGN

This evaluation was designed as utilization-focused and consultative, maximizing the value of the evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations for the intended users and supporting lessons learning for current and future interventions.

This evaluation employed a theory-based approach, whereby the primary focus of the assessment was on understanding cause-effect interactions between the Project support and the desired outcomes. The theory-based approach aimed to generate both an understanding of **what** has worked, but also an understanding of **why** it has worked (or not). The evaluation applied a mixed methods approach for data collection and analysis. The Evaluation Team (ET) combined the use of qualitative and quantitative data from primary and secondary data sources.

In line with this approach, the ET reconstructed the intervention logic of the two training programs, as presented in Figure 1 below. The reconstructed intervention logic served as the foundation for the qualitative and quantitative research, and a framework for analysis of the training programs' relevance, performance, and results. Hence, the responses to the evaluation questions were defined in line with the links in the chain of results, as presented in the intervention logic.

Figure 1: INTERVENTION LOGIC



The evaluation applied a mixed methods approach, combining the use of qualitative and quantitative data to derive findings, conclusions, and recommendations. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and related travel and meeting restrictions, the ET conducted the data collection process remotely, using online tools such as Zoom for interviews with key informants and other meetings.

The data was collected through three main phases: inception and desk phase, primary data collection phase, and analysis and synthesis phase. The evaluation findings were disseminated to support learning and the buy-in for the evaluation findings.

Inception and desk review phase

The ET carried out a comprehensive documentation review of a total of 21 documents shared by Sida on the two programs. The review of documentation helped grasp the main conceptual ideas and their operationalization for the two training programs, as well as an overview of the programs' performance through a review of training reports and other monitoring data. The full list of reviewed documents is found in Annex 4.

Interviews

A bulk of primary data collection from a selection of priority stakeholders took place in December 2021 and January 2022 for each program. In both cases, semi-structured interviews were carried out via Zoom.

In the case of the Trainee program, data was collected from the trainees by both semi-structured interviews and surveys. The data collection approach was similar to the units where Heads of units were interviewed, and mentors/coaches provided inputs through surveys. The Trainee program informants included: i) participants, ii) the Sida HQ steering group, including staff at Sida's human resources department, iii) embassy stakeholders, iv) Heads of units/supervisors. A total of 45 interviews were conducted for the evaluation of the Trainee program.

The PULS Program key informants included: i) participants, ii) the Sida HQ steering group, including staff at Sida's human resources department and Sida Resource persons, iii) external consultants. A total of 25 key informants were interviewed within the framework of the PULS program.

Online survey

The online survey served as a tool to collect additional quantitative primary information to complement other data sources. The survey yielded insights into the relevance of the two programs and their main results. The online survey was directed to training participants and for mentors/coaches (the questionnaire is enclosed in Annex 3). A total of eight (8) out of eleven (11) PULS training participants responded to the survey. A total of 13 out of 19 trainees and 15 out of 23 trainee mentors/coaches responded to the survey. Their responses are integrated in the analysis of the PULS- and Trainee program respectively.

Analysis and Synthesis Phase

Once the primary data collection was finalized, the ET embarked on a fully-fledged analysis and synthesis of evidence and findings. The ET internally reviewed interview notes, as a basis for reflection on main assessment areas through descriptive and comparative quantitative analysis, thematic narrative analysis, qualitative iterative data analysis, and contribution analysis. All methods were triangulated, both internally and across methods as feasible.

2.2 LIMITATIONS OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

A major limitation that was encountered related to the lack of feedback from the Heads of the unit in charge of the five hardship countries, who recruit staff members to be deployed to these hardship contexts. The ET managed to reach out to and interview most other stakeholders that were prioritised for the evaluation. The evaluation was conducted remotely, so issues relating to connectivity were envisaged. It never became a problem. The fact that the primary data collection phase was left intentionally longer helped to ensure wider outreach and coverage with interviews for both training programs. A lack of clear definition and understanding of the concept of efficiency could be considered as a limitation.

2.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

As agreed with Sida, the two Programs were assessed individually, under the umbrella of the evaluation with a single ToR embracing both programs. Therefore, evaluations of the two programs are included in a single report. Hence, Chapter 3 presents the Evaluation of the Training program, where the main evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations, are elaborated.

Chapter 4 presents the Evaluation of the PULS Program, including the main findings, conclusions and recommendations.

3 Findings – Evaluation of the Trainee Program

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the assessment of Sida's Trainee Program. The assessment was conducted against the key evaluation questions. The responses result from documentary evidence and replies from various stakeholders during interviews. The findings present the basis for conclusions and recommendations about this particular program.

3.2 RELEVANCE

3.2.1 SIDA STAFF'S PERSPECTIVES ON RELEVANCE

Three interconnected relevance questions guided interpretation and analysis: i) if the program and its design responded to Sida's needs as defined in Sida's recruitment strategies and competence gap analysis and other policy documents, ii) the level of relevance for mostly, but not only, the operational/geographical departments, and iii) was the relevance theory in line with expectations and outcome from the participant's perspective?

The first basic finding on relevance is that the trainee program was an initiative from the highest possible staff level at Sida, emerging from the General Director's office and the Human Resources/Communication Department. This is the perception expressed by most of the interviewees. One representative quote from the interviews is the following:

“The Trainee Program was seen as a flagship program within Sida's recruitment strategy, with expectations to contribute to solutions for a variety of challenges our agency faces.”

The relevance needs to be placed in a context related to Sida's mandate and capacity to deliver all sorts of results and do so efficiently with a perspective of sustainability, as expected by the government and the taxpayers. 30-40 years ago, the development agenda seemed to be more straightforward, compared to the most recent decades. New and more complex challenges for Sida and other development cooperation stakeholders have arisen. Climate change mitigation and consequences, the negative repercussions for democracy, and corruption are three. Issues often mentioned by interviewees during the evaluation were how to broaden or overcome Sida's role as being only a development cooperation donor, with a staff role perceived by many as “donor representatives”. There is a great need to change this role; the concept of “partnership broker” was frequently used by interviewees.

This means putting more emphasis on Sida's capacity to promote, find, and connect a variety of stakeholders who are important for development outcomes, similar to the private business sector and researchers. Innovation requires looking beyond Sida's budgets, programs, and projects, and relating them to efforts made by many other stakeholders. This perspective is not new, but clearly, it should be given higher priority and deliver more tangible results.

Interviewees from both the human resources departments and the operational/geographic departments agree on the high relevance of the programs when addressing the two objectives of facilitating Sida's new ways of working and taking a wider role in innovative and adaptive approaches. However, the relevance of giving the trainees a role as change agents was often questioned, as we further discuss in the effectiveness section of this report.

There is total consensus among the interviewees about the relevance of striving for more diversity, specified as having more knowledge and experience of working in conflict environments and languages that are in short supply at Sida: French, Arabic but also Spanish. The need to get more young people into Sida was also recognised. Diversity also included what was referred to as "functional competence", which supposedly is to have focuses on performance in the work, for example being a successful partnership broker and delivering innovative ways of working with development cooperation.

Among the geographic departments, the Africa department the relevance stands out as very high. The matching of the trainee's competencies and the recruitment needs was seen as being perfect. During the autumn of 2021, six participants of the trainee program were working at embassies in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kongo-Kinshasa, Liberia and Uganda, which are all categorised as conflict or post-conflict countries. Summarised by one Sida employee in the following terms:

"The Trainee Program has been extremely relevant for our department staffing needs. The trainees, as a group, possess a mix of pertinent thematic and functional competencies shown to be very useful."

3.2.2 TRAINEES' PERSPECTIVES ON RELEVANCE

The trainees were well aware of the program objectives and viewed the trainee program as very relevant to Sida's organizational strategies and goals. They assessed its contribution especially towards diversifying staffs' educational background (e.g., engineering, health, economics) and work experience coming from other parts of society than the public sector. The age factor (i.e., trainees being relatively young) was also perceived as relevant since Sida is an organization with a relatively high age average among staff. Although an absolute majority of the trainees perceived their profile to be a natural fit with the program objectives, some trainees reflected on whether the recruitment tools were sharp enough to capture diversity concerning

experience, as some trainees were relatively newly graduated, and others had several years of conflict- and work experience.

Several trainees mentioned the positive support of the trainee program coming from the higher management levels at Sida and welcomed the ambition of the program. A fundamental relevance aspect of the trainee program was however the need for additional anchoring of the program at the units and at embassies. One interviewee stated:

“The problem was not the ambition, but rather the implementation. The trainee program did not turn out as intended. This was mainly due to the inadequate anchoring of the program with the units.”

The relatively weak anchoring of the trainee program at the units – resulted in different levels of adequate job responsibilities in almost a third of the trainees. The knowledge gaps at these units resulted in confusing the traineeship with internship (i.e., “watch and learn” rather than “learning by doing”) and, in some cases, subsequently overlooking years of expertise. The situation caused a feeling among these trainees of being merely interns. Several of the trainees suggested changing the name of the trainee program from “trainee” to “young experts” or “program officers” to raise the profile of the trainees and indicate their ability to provide expertise.

The culture and work environment at respective units had an impact on whether the capacity of the trainee was absorbed and utilized. To which extent the trainee practised self-leadership could also have been a contributing factor. These factors combined created uncertainty among some trainees and had an impact on their willingness to rotate among units and do a traineeship at an embassy. However, almost all trainees received adequate job responsibilities at the embassies, but the relatively short time period of 3 months could have been another challenging factor.

“The intention of rotating is good, but there is also a risk of not receiving adequate job responsibilities if the time period at a unit is only a few weeks. However, rotating along the lines of the Diplomat program, the rotating process would have been good for receiving unique insights and understanding the job and the organization. Perhaps be assigned to one “home-unit” and from there be seconded to other units.”

The trainee program, at large, was perceived to be relevant by the trainees. The Introduction, Friday learning sessions, and traineeship at the embassies stand out as highly appreciated and relevant. The introduction week was well organized and the trainees appreciated and found it important to meet in person. The Friday learning sessions did not only build the capacity of trainees but also provided a platform for networking and sharing information and insights across units, which most trainees found very supportive in their new role. The traineeship at the embassies was an eye-opener for some and an essential basis to understand the work with partners, etc., in a tangible way.

“It has worked well and it was smart. Accept people with potential as officers, train them, and have them working instantly.”

“To have the back-up and strength in the group and to have a forum to ventilate and compare your experiences have been positive for many – if it has been difficult, it was possible with the help of other trainees to identify where the problem lies and help people stay on the trainee program.”

“The project” received some positive remarks especially, with regards to the networking opportunity it provided with Sida staff and partners. However, most trainees were highly critical of “the project” and perceived it to be a “waste of time” and even a cause of friction with colleagues.

The trainees occasionally mentioned the knowledge gap that existed on what could be expected from a government official, especially among the trainees from other parts of society than international development cooperation. Information dissemination on jobs and responsibilities in a government agency in general, and on salary processes in particular, would likely have smoothened the onboarding process of the trainees at the end and could have been a relevant session for the trainee program.

3.2.3 HEADS OF UNITS AND MENTORS' PERSPECTIVES ON RELEVANCE

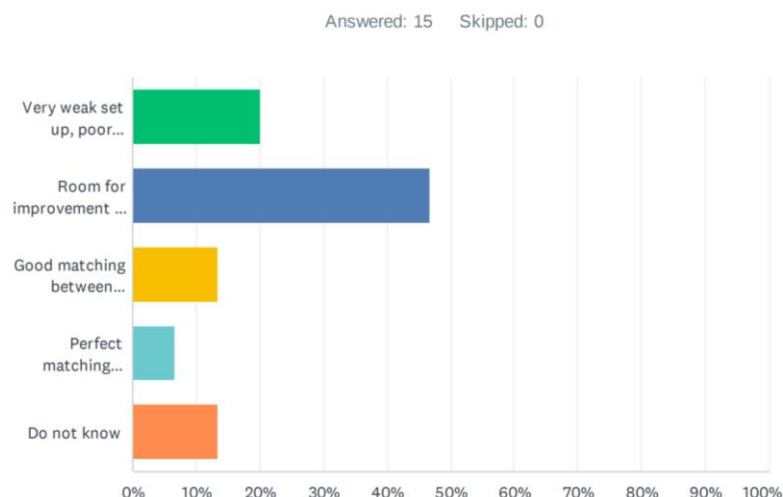
There was a consensus that the trainee program is very relevant for Sida as a whole and for the units. The trainees have come in with energy and with relevant experience. Bringing in trainees on the basis of diversity was a good thing as Heads of Units may not be aware of the ‘big picture’ and Sida’s needs overall when recruiting staff for the unit themselves.

In the view of several interviewees, the instructions on trainees’ roles and responsibilities during their work at units were unclear. It was also evident that it was easier to assign tasks to trainees with experience compared to newly graduated trainees, as there were differences in autonomy and maturity. Subsequently, some of the trainees were indeed treated as interns. The trainee program could have been better anchored with some of the units’ needs and strategies: This could have been achieved with long-range planning. Heads of Units would then have had the opportunity to make inputs into what experience was in demand. Also, the mentors at the units felt there was room for improvement in the program design.

“The trainees themselves did a fantastic job and Sida is very lucky to have them onboard! It seems they also really appreciated the program, even though it was conducted in very challenging times. For the next round, the idea behind the program should be better anchored throughout our organization before implementing it.”

Figure 2: Question 3 from the online survey presenting the aggregated results from trainee mentors/coaches,

Q3 How would you assess - as a mentor - the design or the setup of the trainee program in relation to the program objectives?



3.3 EFFECTIVENESS

3.3.1 OVERALL PROGRAM RESULTS: AGGREGATED OUTCOMES, PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION

Sida staff's perspectives

The trainee program did not have a results framework, but four general objectives. For this evaluation, we have termed them outcomes. It meant that neither the Trainee nor the PULS-program had measurable goals, or in other terms, expected results broken down into outputs and outcomes with attached indicators, which is standard in a majority of the supported Sida interventions. (At the same time, it is not common for Sida-supported Swedish public agencies and CSOs apply results-based management principles and tools in a detailed way on their domestic operations in contrast to international development work, which is based on projects and programs.

As reproduced in Box 1 the four objectives were to 1) Increase the number Sida staff with competence to work in conflict- and post-conflict environments; 2) increase diversity of competence and experience; 3) facilitate Sida's new ways of working and 4) take on a wider role and enable the innovative and adaptive approaches. An observation by the evaluators is that the two last objectives were similar, although not the same.

As recognised by several interviewees, the result achievements were expected to be long-term:

“The real progress of the trainee program will be revealed if the trainees have decided to stay at Sida or not.”

However, and maybe sounding like a contradiction to the above, a few months after the finalisation of the program, there were many opinions from the interviewees about a positive result accomplishment, if the four outcomes-level results are aggregated. Below, are a few representative quotes supporting a positive and conclusive statement on aggregated results:

“Absolutely, the objectives have been achieved. We have raised the bar when it comes to recruitment. We managed to build an entire recruitment program during the pandemic. It was well received by most staff at Sida. Everyone is aware that we have there are great challenges in working in conflict environments.”

“The trainee program has increased the functional and demographic diversity at Sida. We gained more knowledge about issues related to racism and post-colonialism. We got an even gender distribution among those admitted.”

“It has been an extremely important program for Sida. We have added resources in all possible areas, functional and thematic competence, language, and age.”

“More diversity? Yes! More younger employees? Yes! More knowledge of needed languages like Arabic and French? Yes! And also, a clear yes on a new supply of people with needed skills, for example chemical engineers and energy experts.”

“The program has produced very good results with a direct positive impact on our department. We have six trainees on positions at embassies and several of them have extended the time for the internships.”

“We have brought in an exciting group of people with mixed experiences with thematic and functional skills.”

However, there are also critical voices, as the below quotes show

“The program had a level of ambiguity from the beginning, which affected the quality of those who were recruited. A number of trainees did not have development cooperation experience; they also lacked practice from public authorities. This fact created a matching gap, actual experiences versus needed experiences. If unit directors would had been involved from the beginning, it would have made a difference, improved conditions for the supervisors to support the trainees.”

“It is too early to have an opinion about the result outcome, even conducting an external evaluation.”

“The required profiles in the advertisement of the trainee program should had been more precise on experiences from conflict and post-conflict contexts. It would have

created better conditions for Sida's recruitment to such places where we currently have difficulties finding the right people."

There is a widespread opinion among the interviewed Sida staff that the planning and launching of the program happened too quickly. All tasks had to be implemented with short notice. The word "sprint" is used by many interviewees. The speedy process took a negative toll on the need for anchoring the program with a level of detail and communicating mutual expectations among involved stakeholders: from the trainees to department and unit directors, supervisors at Sida headquarters to embassy staff. One consulted person suggested:

"A year of planning would have been needed to get a better foothold of the program within the agency, including planning and decisions about which embassies they would be placed at."

Notwithstanding, in general implementation of the program proceeded as it was planned with a few exceptions. There is consensus that planned rotations of the trainees between different departments and units did not happen in many, if not most cases. With COVID-19 and consequently, trainees working from home, it became difficult to plan, execute, and monitor specific timebound tasks for trainees' supervisors. Also, several supervisors and managers were doubtful about the idea of spending a short time – 2-3 months – at one unit and then moving to another, also in the view that trainees were part-time due to other program activities. For some departments with interns working at the same time as the trainees, the idea of rotation made the planning of tasks complicated.

The group recruitment as a strategy was welcomed by the vast majority of the interviewees, as we discuss further in the section on efficiency. One is that a new resource pool is made visible in all Sida departments and units, with the result that efforts to close staffing gaps are easier and faster.

Trainees' perspectives

Although the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible to run the trainee program as planned, all trainees were still satisfied with how the trainee program was implemented, given the circumstances. The trainee program manager was highly praised among the trainees for providing outstanding availability and support in tailoring the program to individual needs. Indeed, the importance of self-leadership was emphasized during the program, and trainees have had opportunities to find individual solutions e.g., initiating Friday learning sessions, rotating or not rotating among units, or being deployed to UM or not.

3.3.2 RESULTS ON OBJECTIVE 1: CONFLICT CONTEXT COMPETENCE

Sida staff's perspectives

To bring in more staff resources willing and able to apply for positions in countries with high and complex levels of conflict was a key purpose of establishing both the Trainee and PULS programs. There is widespread awareness in the entire agency of a long-standing and difficult task to recruit mission directors and program officers to places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Mali and South Sudan. Being “non-family allowed positions” and requiring people with a lot of experience the number of potential candidates is reduced. Over the years, the Foreign Ministry and Sida have elaborated different benefit packages to ease hardship conditions but recruitment has remained a challenge. Over the last decade conflict and post-conflict countries have been added to the list where development cooperation has become more complex and difficult and with this also worsening working and living conditions.

A majority of interviewees believes that the trainee program has already succeeded in making a difference for at least some recruiters and even has a great potential to address recruitment problem in the medium and long term. A few interviewees also provided evidence. Quotes from interviews:

“For us, the trainee program has been a jackpot! We have seen more interest in working in our embassy. We have also recruited one participant with the perfect profile and this person is now supporting us to improve development cooperation on environment.”

“We see a clear interest from the trainees to work in conflict countries. They apply for published positions at embassies in conflict contexts where we have a low number of applicants.”

“The trainee program saved us from the need to search for external candidates. If it had not existed, there would have been five staff, and all were recruited externally from Sida. Now we have two trainees who fit very well into our embassy's needs.”

Not everything was a straightforward success, in terms of quick recruitment outcomes, particularly conflict, post-conflict areas and/or what is labelled fragile contexts. 17 (out of 19) trainees applied for regular embassy positions (not internships) in 2021 while the trainee program was still ongoing. Six were selected to work in Burkina Faso (2 positions), the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia (2 positions) and South Africa, which is considered as not being a bad result. Recruitment to start work in autumn 2022 has so far been less successful: Of the remaining 12 trainees working at Sida HQ, four applied to work at embassies and one of them got a combined homebased/field position in Bagdad, according to the information the given to the evaluators by HR KOM department. It is probably too

early to conclude how well the trainee program managed to deliver successful candidates to positions at embassies in highly conflictive countries. One person explained:

“We never expected or had as an objective that all or most trainees would end up in embassies in conflict, post-conflict, or fragile contexts immediately after the training program. Rather the idea was to have one-third of them out in the first year, another third the second year and the last third recruited three years after.”

What is clear is that the trainees have shown considerable interest in working in places where Sida has recruitment problems. Several interviewees also mentioned challenges or, even in the short term, conflicting goals related to this particular objective. One source stated:

“We should not recruit young trainees to places like Afghanistan and there and other places where you need to represent Sweden and Sida in complex and high-level multi-donor diplomatic coordination mechanisms and groups. It would be irresponsible. Such positions require senior staff with a lot of experience.”

Trainees’ perspectives

The variety of conflict-, country-, and work experience levels among the trainees indicates that the group was highly heterogenous, but at times treated as a homogenous group, especially in situations with the internal recruitment unit and deployment of staff to conflict countries. Several trainees witnessed they had been misinformed about the possibility of being deployed to countries with particular hardship environments. The initial information and encouragement were for the trainees to apply for such postings, but the internal recruitment unit did not call any of the trainees for an interview based on the rationale that the trainees were too junior for such positions. In retrospect, the trainees felt this was a reasonable standpoint. Indeed, some trainees did not have any prior experience of conflict contexts while others did have relevant and even relatively qualified experience. Nevertheless, a substantial number of trainees have been deployed to post-conflict countries, which given Sida’s difficulties in filling these positions, must be viewed as an accomplishment.

“Almost all trainees applied for positions in P5 countries, which implies that Sida did manage to recruit the right kind of people – even though deployments were made to countries with difficult contexts.”

“Thanks to the trainee program, some embassies have managed to fill their positions. Perhaps this is a good enough purpose of the trainee program – very much like the Diplomat program.”

Although a couple of trainees had some feelings of disappointment for not ending up in a conflict-context country, the overall perception concerning their final placements

were very much positive. In addition, the vast majority of the trainees felt they now could work in conflict contexts, although a couple of the trainees would wish for additional training, both in theory and practice (i.e., to deepen their knowledge in peace and triple nexus and make the Hostile Environment Awareness Training - course (HEAT) a mandatory element on the trainee program).

Heads of Units perspectives

The initial information on the trainees being deployed to conflict countries and later on changing the approach was picked up on by the Heads of Units. Some of the interviewees did not agree that it was a wise decision. Again, the group of trainees had different levels of experience and an individual assessment on a case-by-case basis should have been done. The Diplomatic program was used as an example, where relatively young people are being sent to conflict countries based on having had proper training beforehand. The HEAT course was mentioned as one example that should be a mandatory element in the trainee program.

Summarising our findings on the objective of conflict competence, the program delivered a new pool of staff prepared and willing to work in places where Sida has faced long-term recruitment difficulties. The full outcome will be shown in another three to four years, as the plan was not to have all trainees working in countries with severe conflicts soon after the training period.

3.3.3 RESULTS ON OBJECTIVE 2: MORE DIVERSITY

Sida staff's perspectives

This objective is related to the competence gap analysis found through a study on strategic recruitment needs done in 2018. It is updated every year. It contributed to raising awareness among staff of the need for more diversity within Sida.

Two categories of diversity have been defined by the HRKOM department:

1. Diversity is understood as increased functional competence. It includes both knowledge and skills related to languages and professions linked to technology, like energy, engineering, biology, environment, digitalisation, and artificial intelligence (AI), but also equipped with specific know-how that would strengthen Sida's role as a "partnership broker". It was said to include skills on finding and developing dialogue with many sorts of development actors, and even to promote co-funding of programs and projects by private businesses and their interest organizations. One interviewee stated:

"The competence gap study showed there was a need to bring in experience on issues like how to advocate for a change of norms and universal values, to promote dialogue with other donors, the business sector, researchers, and CSOs. These capabilities are more and more urgent for Sida."

2. Diversity is defined as demographic diversity where characteristics as age, gender, cultural background and also experiences from specific political and geographical contexts are important.

A typical Sida manager and senior program officer was profiled by several interviewees as “white, female, 47 years old with a master’s degree in political science, human rights or international relations”.

The achievement of the objective has been good, according to the majority of the staff the evaluators consulted. The need to always keep diversity as a recruitment policy or guiding principle was established or significantly confirmed by the program. Sida now has a pool of young talent or capable people, which has contributed to lowering the average age at the authority. There is also agreement that a majority of the trainees brought new competencies and new perspectives, although the latter with a few exceptions (see quotes below) was often expressed in general terms.

The fact that 50% of the trainees were men is an example that it is possible to break the pattern of women constituting a large majority at Sida, (71%, data from September 2021). There were also specific examples of concrete contributions expanding the other types of diversity, given by the interviewees:

“It made a large difference for us at the embassy to have a trainee with skills in subjects related to prioritized technical cooperation sectors. This recruitment increased our tempo to manage an important environmental project.”

“We received trainees with very relevant backgrounds and experiences. As they were trained by Sida for a full year, their entry into the embassy was very smooth. They are now part of a strong team.”

“There are now definitely more people at Sida with competence about and experience from the Middle East and also with additional languages we need.”

“The trainees brought in more awareness about postcolonial perspectives in our development cooperation.”

Trainees’ perspectives

All trainees highly appreciate the opportunity the Trainee program provided. Without Sida’s focus on diversity in the selection criteria, some might not have had the chance for a position - and even more unlikely a permanent position at Sida. As mentioned in the relevance section, a few trainees were surprised to see newly graduated people in the group and posed the question if Sida should have been stricter in their selection criteria to bring in even more niche knowledge. One source stated:

“The program could have been effective. To bring in young people and employ them is good, but perhaps better to bring in even more niche people and scale down some projects to set up ad-hoc projects with senior staff. The trainees are not generalists but are treated as such.”

The trainees had different opinions on whether their competence had been utilized at Sida or not. Some trainees felt they had already contributed during the training year and were sure to contribute even more in the future once they were admitted to working in the way they wanted. Quote:

“I have received a lot of responsibilities and been assigned to where I was needed and been flexible in job responsibilities. It is a good thing that responsibilities can be shared, despite coming from other sectors.”

Other trainees felt that the trainee program did not absorb their competence adequately. Several trainees referred to organizational structures and age hierarchies as a contributing factor to this weakness:

“The program was not interested in capturing the competence that came in, but it was merely about producing officers.”

“Most part of the job was not adapted to capture the competence of junior staff, but for staff with 30 years of experience. Sida does not want any hierarchies, but there are hierarchies anyway. In other parts of the private sector, there are clear roles in a team with junior and senior staff which complement each other and provides support and clarity in responsibilities at the same time.”

All trainees were positive about how their profile and expertise have been matched with Sida departments and units, although additional information concerning the rationale of the placement could have been valuable information for the trainees. Quote:

“What was the idea behind the unit placements? What was it that the units wanted from the trainee? There was not much rationale concerning the unit placements. Why was I placed at this particular unit when I could have worked at other units as well? It would have given clarity if Sida had articulated what it is they want in order to maximize a trainees output.”

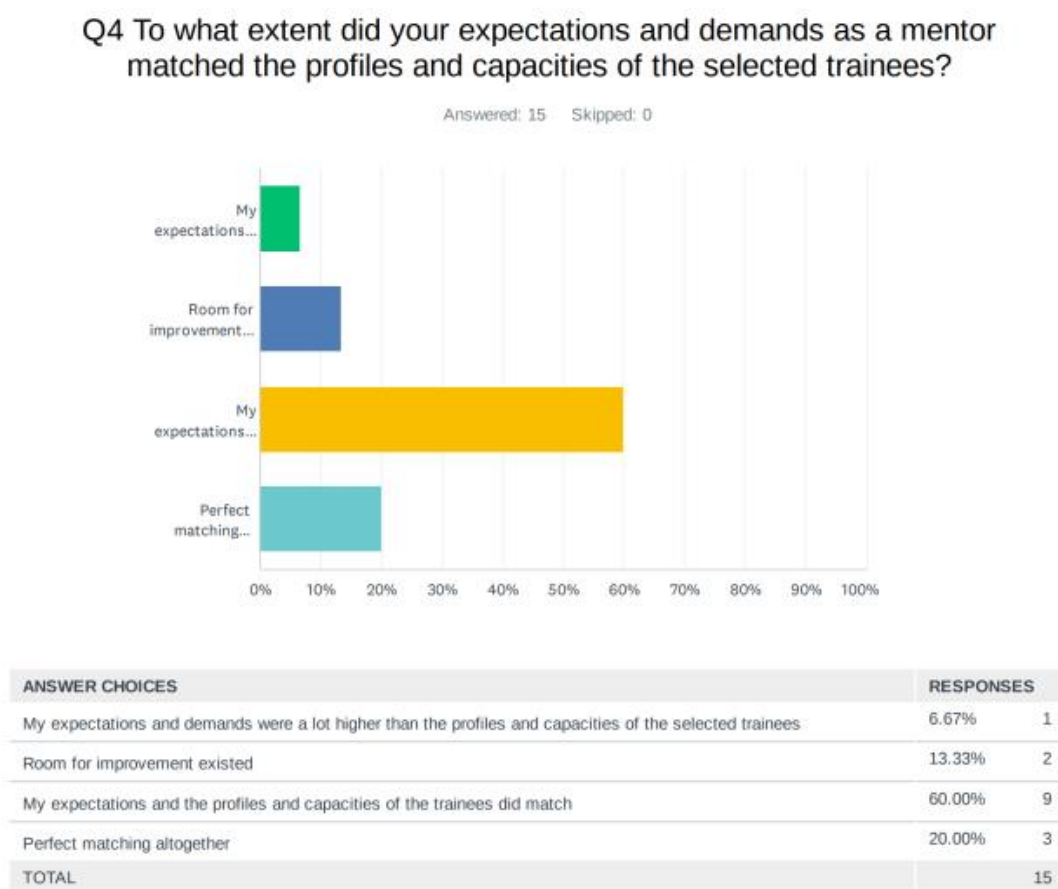
Summarizing our findings on objective of more diversity, the program successfully provided Sida with new and multiple forms of functional competence. Technical professionals and languages like Arabic and French dominate. It also clear that the trainees appreciated they were selected and got job positions due to their educational and working merits, not because of cultural or ethnic background. The issue of diversity can easily be misinterpreted.

Heads of Units perspectives

Heads of Units were impressed by some of the trainees' experience and educational background and found the recruitment process to have resulted in very qualified candidates. The differences in experience required the Heads of Units to tailor the

tasks, based on the trainee's ability. The expectations of the trainees varied, where some trainees had qualified tasks and others were to 'watch and learn'. Some trainees had a profile that was very relevant to the unit strategy, while other trainees were not as relevant. Depending on the expectations of the trainee, this might have caused challenges for some trainees in finding their roles. Also, the mentors found the trainees to have relevant experience, as noted in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Question from the online survey presenting the aggregated results from trainee mentors/coaches.



3.3.4 RESULTS ON OBJECTIVES 3 & 4: NEW WAYS OF WORKING + WIDER ROLE FOR SIDA-STAFF

Sida staff's perspectives

New ways of working and expecting trainees to take a wider role than the traditional one program officers most often have, were stated as two separate objectives (see Box 1). The evaluators have chosen to treat them as interconnected and analyzed them together. The logic of this treatment is that innovative ways of working also mean a need to broaden the traditional program officer role. The partnership broker role (mentioned by several during the interviews) and stepping out of the position as a public donor representative are examples.

First a background of the reasons for the two objectives:

Sida is under constant pressure to improve the delivery and presentation of evidenced-based results of its development cooperation. Several small and large events or even trends at the global level and in the shifting Swedish political landscape contribute to more demands being made on Sida than was previously the case. They range from the backlash for democracy and human rights, the emergence of new development issues like climate change, to the rise of populist and right-wing parties questioning development cooperation or at least the current size of it in financial terms (53 billion SEK in 2022). Sida staff also mentioned a critical ongoing study³ by the National Auditors Office (Swedish: Riksrevisionen) on the effectiveness of Sida's choice of partners and forms of development cooperation, which also affects the issue of result analysis and reporting.

Objectives 3 and 4 were either unknown to the interviewees in comparison to the other objectives, or found to be too vague in definition and generally seen as over-ambitious. They were also said to be contradictory to the role of a public officer tied to the compliance of laws and regulations. All these aspects prevail in the consultations by the evaluators.

The resulting achievement of the two objectives is logically weak. One reason is time-bound; trainees have just started to work at Sida and embassies. In most cases, they are in a process to get more experience and skills to manage ordinary and more bureaucratic but necessary procedures, tasks and tools. There is a general questioning of the trainee's eagerness to quickly take on change roles without first learning the basic tasks on planning, implementation, and evaluation procedures.

³ <https://www.riksrevisionen.se/nu-granskas/pagaende-granskningar/sidas-val-av-samarbetspartner-och-bistandsform.html>. The final study, which also includes how the Government's steering of Sida, will be presented in May 2022. (National Audits Office has already mentioned criticism on transparency and uncertainties on choice of partners and forms of cooperation.)

Another contradiction often mentioned was the need for stronger experiences and diplomatic seniority to successfully represent Sweden in complex and high-level fora, such as international governmental organisations (INGOS), national governments, and donor agencies. An example mentioned was Sida's largest financial commitment in Afghanistan, the support to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), a big multi-donor initiative coordinating international aid led by the World Bank. As someone said:

“We should not dream of placing a recently ‘graduated’ trainee in this type of positions.”

But in line with low knowledge among the Sida staff about the actual objective when the program was launched and trainees arrived at the units, another source stated:

“New viewpoints and becoming change agents have probably not been emphasized enough. Also due to the nature of a government agency, radical change is difficult to implement. The goal of the traineeship was maybe in this sense too ambitious. The program rather contributed to a certain direction.”

Other sources remembered:

“In our unit, our role is mainly to advise and instruct others how to work and apply certain tools. Then it becomes difficult for a trainee to take on a role as a change agent.”

In short, the trainee program is not a quick fix for more innovative approaches, and neither is it the first intention to change working methods. Some observers would say that Sida launches new approaches, concepts tools quite frequently and they can sometimes be perceived as nothing new in in content and ways of working.

Trainees' perspectives

For the trainees, the program included an ambition to take on a role as change agent. It was communicated to them and that mindset followed some of them. Several trainees witnessed that the age hierarchy at Sida was the main impediment for them to be driving change, combined with the fact that Sida is a government agency with certain structures in place. A few quotes:

“The challenge has been when trainees are to fit in, in the everyday work at Sida. The age average is very high at Sida and it is noticeable, with age comes a lot of expertise and a certain way of working. It is hard for new colleagues to come in and they feel very junior, despite previous work experience. Ways of working are already established.”

“The vision of change agents is not compatible with Sida’s structure and culture. To create change through trainees is not sensible.”

However, due to different cultures and work environments at respective units, there were a couple of trainees who did have the opportunity to share their expertise and suggest new ways of working. Units welcomed such initiatives.

Sida revised the ambition of trainees to become change agents and subsequently revised the change project in becoming just a “project” with little practical use. Many of the trainees agreed it was too early for them to drive change during their first year, but there could be other ways to promote their role as change agents:

“There are other ways, such as the trainees becoming mentors to senior staff, since it was in dialogue with the supervisor that most learnings were made. It is also a possibility for staff to be involved in the trainee program and be part of an innovation-project.”

“We got to meet with the change leaders and it was interesting to know what they were up to, but there was no interaction on what the trainees had observed or a follow-up meeting, which was surprising. A close dialogue with the change leaders would have been preferred.”

Although the trainees may not have contributed towards new ways of working, as initially intended during their first year, the trainees feel confident that their diversity in expertise will drive change in the years to come. Selected quotes on this topic:

“Change agent is not about changing things from day 1 – it is about having another background and over time provide input and steer in a different direction.”

“The change driving process has not happened during the trainee program, but 19 people have been recruited on the basis of it and they will probably contribute to change – achieving the objective in the long-run.”

A slow change driving process in harmony with reality has been achieved. To drive your own projects is very important to build the network, to anchor, and let the change take its time. To initiate the content in the trainee program yourself is how it is in life and is a good foundation for the trainee program to stand on.

Summarizing objective 3 and 4 on innovation and taking on wider roles, a good number of experienced Sida-staff reacted negatively when young inexperienced newcomers arrived with a 'change mandate', without specifying what should be done differently, also why and how. The problems emerged because of vague definitions on innovation, lack of concrete examples, and absence of specific needs related to different categories of units at Sida.

Heads of Units' perspectives

There were challenges in the Trainee program having the initial ambition of trainees becoming change agents. As some trainees had little or no experience from working in a government agency, there were a couple of unfortunate situations where the trainees caused a stir with colleagues and external partners and created a bit of friction. Some units already applied agile working methods which allowed for innovation, change and perspective, and where trainees were invited to have a 'strong voice'. In these situations, the trainees would have benefited from some guidance on what was expected from them as change agents.

3.4 EFFICIENCY

Sida staff's perspectives

As expected, efficiency – understood as a measurement of how resources/inputs (funds, human resources, time) are converted to results – was the most difficult task for the evaluators.

More or less half of the consulted persons understood that efficiency outcomes should be based on numeric calculations, for example, the relationship between the total cost of the trainee program (considering financial and time inputs by all Sida staff) and recruitment outputs. The latter can be measured in many ways, for example, the recruitment cost/per trainee, in this particular recruitment program, compared to recruitment costs for a single JPO or BBE. Other ways to measure would be recruitment costs related to the length of time the trainees remain at Sida. Logically, many interviewees stated that it was too complex to provide an opinion about the efficiency of the trainee program. Still, there are several useful and relevant reflections on how to look at the program's general efficiency, both in short- and long-term recruitment, and staffing perspectives

Selected quotes:

"It would be good for Sida to get a suggestions how to measure cost effectiveness or efficiency. How to structure such information and how to narrow down the number of parameters."

"Reflections dealt with facts like if activities took place as they were planned, and how big burden or working load the program had on those involved, without considering an exact number of hours as an input. Others noted a key aspect like how long-time trainees are about to stay at Sida, considering the total investment cost of the trainee program."

More interview quotes with mostly pros and some cons on efficiency:

"I perceive efficiency as being good. Everyone involved pulled in the same direction all the time and worked hard. The actual recruitment work could have been more

efficient, as reviewed applications manually. This task could be supported by automatic tools.”

“Efficiency remains to be seen. It depends on how long they stay with Sida, if it is five years maybe the program can be said to have positive outcome on costs and benefits.”

“Hard to say. We do not know the cost for this group recruitment about our regular single recruitments.”

“The program placed a very high burden on many staff, as everything had to be done so fast.”

“The trainee program seems to have saved time for the managers of the operational departments and units. We did a similar group recruitment in 2019 to bring in more controllers. It was so successful that they were quickly sucked up like mushrooms in the organization. This has led to fewer gaps in Sida's staffing, which a positive effect on efficiency.”

“One negative aspect of cost-benefit was an early and well-thought anchoring in Sida's organization. The trainee program arrived as an initiative from above and various Sida units were not involved. We will take that with us for future recruitments.”

Trainees' perspectives

The efficiency of the trainee program has been suffering due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has affected the trainee's ability to meet with each other and with colleagues at Sida. It has also affected the initial plans for the Friday learning sessions, as well as travels and deployments to embassies. However, all trainees highly appreciated the efforts that went into steering the program during the pandemic.

“Sida did the absolute best they could during the pandemic and its unclear future - and managed to complete the trainee program! Sida, and especially the trainee program manager, should be praised for this. Sida did well and Jenny was great!”

“I want to emphasize that the trainees have been a bit harsh and there has been a frustration. Some of that frustration comes out of the pandemic. The trainee program manager has really tried. It is not easy managing 19 trainees during a pandemic. I am pleased to have been part of the program and recommend others to do the same.”

There is a consensus among the trainees that the Introduction-week was very well planned and organized, and was an important starting point for the trainees to meet in person as well. The Friday-learning sessions were also well received, especially during the fall, but could have benefited from a continued structure during the spring

to steer the discussions into certain areas (e.g., role and responsibilities in a government agency) or to deepen the knowledge in e.g., conflict related topics, the process of developing strategic documents at units, etc.

“The training could have been more structured and concrete to include different aspects; What are other donor countries doing? How can we complement them? How do the steering groups operate? How could different parts of Sida be engaged? What is the continuing process after Track? How to assess organizations? What efforts should Sida support? To elaborate on these questions are really important for a program officer. How should a program officer act in general? The Friday learning sessions were concrete and clear when the trainee program manager was managing them, such as the information on the Diplomat program – well framed! The other sessions were chatty and was not particularly time efficient.”

A (unintended?) positive side-effect of the Friday learning sessions was that it became a forum for peer support, as well as a forum for synergies and was overall viewed as an efficient element of the trainee program.

The Covid-19 pandemic did contribute to a sense of uncertainty among the trainees, concerning the structure of the trainee program; Would the trainees rotate once or twice? Would they be deployed to an embassy and for how long? The information dissemination was last-minute and preparations for traineeship at embassies were very short. This resulted in trainees not being able to discuss the rotation properly with heads of units, and it was even more difficult when units were not aware of what to expect from a trainee. A structured approach concerning practicalities would have been beneficial when trainees were to be deployed for traineeship at embassies to ensure all security training, vaccinations, etc., were in place before departure.

The trainee program has also suffered from relatively weak anchoring at units and embassies, as there were several cases where the perception of trainees has been confused with interns.

“What is the branding of the trainee program? What is a trainee? Trainees are usually a selected group of people who are to take leading positions in the future; in this sector, trainees are viewed as interns with no possibility of responsibility.”

“The weakest link in the trainee program is the perception of trainees and it has probably contributed to expertise not being picked-up on.”

“How well informed were the units in securing clear job responsibilities for the trainees? Have the trainees delivered what was expected? Did the trainees have the ability to perform? These are some questions for Sida to answer.”

The traineeship at embassies was highly appreciated, but there were a couple of cases where the anchoring and time period of 3 months had a negative impact on the efficiency.

“I see myself as a well-paid intern. The time spent at the embassy costs a lot of money and the program has not been cost efficient, as it could have accomplished so much more.”

“The traineeship at the embassy was ok, but there was a feeling of being redundant, as there was no clarity in job responsibilities. The wording “internship” caused confusion at the embassy although a CV had been shared, and the short time period of 3 months made it difficult in finding tasks.”

The process of defining “the project” was perceived to be disproportionate and excessive to what was being delivered in the end. However, some trainees also stressed the importance of self-leadership, in order to be effective and efficient as a trainee:

“It is not the tasks that has been the most important, it is the contacts that are established and to use the trainee program as a lever to position yourself. The trainee program is a platform to be designed, rather than a ready-made table.”

“The trainee program is not a ready-made tailored program but assumes that the responsibility lies with the trainee in how to tailor it. There has been a big responsibility and freedom in the program design, where Sida has been very accommodating. The freedom is something very positive, as it has enabled to work with relevant tasks and been deployed to an embassy of choice. The design was not served to you, but you could create your own possibilities, such as initiating contact with embassies.”

From the trainees’ inputs to the survey, it can furthermore be found that self-leadership is the area that received the lowest score (3.00) compared to other capacity-building objectives of the program.

Q8 How did the Trainee programme contribute to:(1 - minimum, 5 - maximum)

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Improving your knowledge and understanding of self-leadership	7.69% 1	30.77% 4	15.38% 2	46.15% 6	0.00% 0	13	3.00

Summarizing our findings on efficiency, the outcome is assessed as good. There are many positive reflections on why and how this group recruitment and the year-long introduction were appreciated by most of units and significantly contributed to solving staffing problems to several of them and a group of embassies. There is also a hypothesis that the fact that Sida invested so much in this group of young people, they will be motivated to stay a good number of years. A longer planning period would have made it more possible to avoid misunderstandings and sometimes extreme workload of some staff Sida.

Heads of Units perspectives

Almost all interviewees raised the issue of young staff in other parts of the organization, including the BBEs, and the limitations in absorbing their capacity when recruiting the trainees. Some of these young staff had proven their abilities but had few chances of being employed. Concerning cost efficiency, some interviewees posed the question of synergies among the different pools of young staff and also in terms of one autonomous young person leaving the unit and being replaced by a trainee in need of training.

4 Conclusions – Evaluation of the Trainee Program

The overall conclusion is that the training program achieved most of its objectives with a contribution to a key result: the staffing situation became more stable. Many Sida staff perceived it as a great investment, well-founded in Sida's strategic staffing and recruitment needs. As an immediate outcome, at least one geographical Sida department and several embassies benefitted significantly.

The program delivered 19 highly qualified people, also young, diverse in language skills and experiences from complex places for development cooperation and also with new needed professional skills, by yearly competence gap analysis. Group recruitment and training is now seen even more than previously as an effective method without replacing single recruitment. Having said this, it is difficult to draw major conclusions about the program about its impact on Sida's strategic recruitment goals, as the evaluation does not consider the entire scope of recruitment efforts and programs, such as smaller group recruitment (controllers and administrators) and to programs aimed at young professionals like JPO, BBE, UNV, SPD and JPD. The level of efficiency of the program remains to be seen, depending on how long trainees will stay at Sida and their performance with the ambition to contribute to new working methods, even if the concept of innovation needs to be better defined. The trainee program suffered ambiguity from the beginning when it came to the specification of required competencies. Some, but not all, units perceived that this had a negative impact. Several trainees lacked experience in development cooperation and did not have experience working in governmental agencies.

The need for additional anchoring would have been relevant at the embassies and units at Sida HQ for a better match of need and supply in competencies, for a better understanding of the trainee role and better planning purposes both strategically and operationally.

Several of the trainees had some prior experience in conflict-context countries and had the willingness and ambition to be deployed to such countries. Although some are currently based in post-conflict countries, there could be a pool of around 5 people that could be groomed into rotating to a conflict-context country in a few years. The number is based on trainees' prior experiences in conflict contexts, their positive attitude in being deployed to such countries, and some of the current postings in hardship countries (e.g. Burkina Faso and Liberia). Perhaps a tailored PULS program or other ways of providing additional training to these people would be beneficial. However, if the objective is to deploy trainees to conflict countries, it could be useful to assess in what ways trainees in the Diplomatic program are being prepared for such postings to strengthen the Sida trainee program in this area.

5 Recommendations – Evaluation of the Trainee Program

Based on analysis, observations, opinions, perceptions, and the conclusion, the evaluators make the following recommendations:

1. Narrower specifications in required profiles and competencies to make recruitment more targeted.

Sida should consider making similar group recruitments more targeted and raise age limits (or have them flexible), by including more detailed profile specifications when planning and preparing recruitment announcements. This would solve an often perceived contradiction in the Trainee program: on the one hand, employ a pool of young people to work in contexts with high-intensive conflicts and on the other, embassy positions in such contexts require very experienced people.

2. Change the name of the program

In line with the efforts to increase the number of younger experts - as opposed to relatively new graduates – Sida should consider changing the name of the trainee program, as it would better match the mutual expectations of both Sida units and the recruited participants.

3. Improve anchoring the program with units and embassies.

Although good efforts were made to have broad participation in the planning of the program, several units perceived they were not well informed which created some difficulties in taking care of the trainees and providing them with useful tasks.

4. Better definition of the role of becoming “change agents” and provision of examples of innovative ways of work

Concepts like “change agents” and “innovative ways of work” were perceived as vague and difficult what it means, also considering the traditional role of program officers with obligations to comply with laws, policies, and regulations. Improved definitions are needed or, at least, a list or basket with documented best practices and examples of innovative ways of doing development cooperation work. It should be part of the introduction scheme and involve supervisors/mentors/coaches both at Sida HQ and embassies, to have common understandings and expectations.

5. Analyse the Trainee program about other initiatives of young staff

It would be useful to analyse the Trainee program vis-à-vis other channels of young staff at Sida, such as the BBE program, young fixed-term employees and interns, to assess possibilities of cost efficiency and synergies.

6 Findings – Evaluation of the PULS Program

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the assessment of Sida's PULS program. The assessment was conducted against key evaluation questions and indicators, as presented in the evaluation framework. The responses result from documentary evidence and data and information received from various stakeholders and present the basis for conclusions and recommendations about this particular program.

6.2 RELEVANCE

The program concept was also relevant to the prospective Sida staff considering or planning to take field deployment. It offered a training package with a mix of themes and approaches, that were deemed as relevant and interesting to the participants. The PULS program planned to target senior Sida staff, but the selection process resulted in a varied pool of Sida staff members, engaging both with seasoned Sida employees who have experience being deployed to conflict environments and newcomers (new employees) or those staff members who do not have international experience. The PULS program participants were predominantly mid-level or junior Sida staff, which changes somewhat the focus of the program. Yet this shift did not affect the relevance of the program as such. Stakeholder interviews emphasised that the mix of more senior/more experienced Sida staff and those with less or no experience was useful and improved the relevance of the training to the participants, as it allowed mutual exchange, discussions regarding experiences and measures taken in different situations, and mutual learning. The PULS' underlying networking principle was raised as an additional relevant investment, as participants had a chance to increase their social and professional network as well as to build mutual trust with their core groups. Finally, the Program's concept included 20% of the working hours for each participant to be devoted to the course itself, which theoretically provided ample time to build skills and knowledge and empower participants to be more resilient and ready for field deployment. The fact that participants were invited to co-create workshops has been a good measure, which increased the relevance of some of the training sessions that were included in the package. The Program cycle is presented in Figure 4 below, presenting an overview of timelines and approaches to the program.

Figure 4: PULS PROGRAM OVERVIEW



The relevance of the PULS program, as a knowledge development concept, has been high for both Sida and training participants, though its operationalization encountered challenges, which diminished the relevance somewhat. The PULS program has been designed as a comprehensive one-year long course for more senior Sida staff “interested in applying for a position in a conflict- or post-conflict area, within a one-to-three year timeframe after finishing the program. As such, the course aimed to assist in building the right competencies for persons deployed to complex conflict environments, to ensure that the co-workers feel safe, and are knowledgeable to decide when and how to use these competencies the best way within conflict environments. The conceptual approach of the program to engage and build skills, resilience, and a network of prospective Sida employees in the field missions has been aligned with and contributes to Sida’s Operational Plan 2019-2021, and in particular the strategic goal 4: Operate in conflict environments and the strategic goal 5: Learning.

However, the evaluation found a somewhat diminished relevance, stemming from problems in terms of the operationalization of the PULS program. There is a general disappointment among participants regarding the choice of themes and the depth of the coverage of topics that were included in the course. Key informants noted that the themes that the course covered were rather general and, in a large number of cases, were already known to participants (e.g., leadership). In addition, participants expected more in-depth unpacking of themes relevant to people deployed to conflict settings, which were not included in the syllabus. Even though the program was designed to allow for co-creation of the program syllabus, training participants reported that many themes were not covered to a great extent (e.g., humanitarian aspects of work in conflict environments; safety and risk mitigation measures; role of peacekeeping or UN missions; leadership in crises, etc. as mentioned by interviewed stakeholders), and consequently the expectations of participants were not fulfilled. From this perspective, it is observed that the full potential of the co-creation feature of the program was not fully utilized. This contributed to the diminished relevance of the course for such specific situations.

The program did not manage to fully engage the direct supervisors (Unit managers) of participants to ensure that the 20% time allocation is operationalized, leading to a decrease in the time that participants could spend on learning objectives. The concept, whereby 20% of working hours were to be dedicated to learning for each PULS training participant, is sound and would have provided ample time for self-development. The enrolment measure by which Unit managers endorsed the participation of their staff members, whereby they also confirmed that 20% of the time may be dedicated to learning, was perceived as conceptually good but not viable in practice. The PULS training participants were not in a position to use this time to the extent to which it was planned, as per received stakeholder feedback. The main reasons for this were noted to be the difficulty for the PULS training participants to devote this time available due to other conflicting day-to-day duties that they had to perform. In essence, even though the Unit managers initially endorsed this measure, the PULS program did not include steps to continuously check in with the PULS training participants and their Unit managers on how the time can be better devoted to learning. In addition, no measures were taken to operationalize the commitment by an operational plan for each PULS training participant on how the time will best be utilized or in what way the tasks for each PULS training participant could be transferred to other team members within a given unit or solved feasibly to ensure that the PULS training participants can utilize this allotted time. This has been a weakness, which affected the effectiveness of the program as a whole. The operationalization of the program from that perspective also diminished the relevance and full potential of the program.

6.3 EFFECTIVENESS

As noted above, the PULS program was envisaged as a training program to prepare employees to work in conflict and post-conflict environments or environments with special safety/security challenges. The program as such was comprehensive. It included a variety of training approaches and methods, as follows:

- **Program modules that required the participation of the entire group in group sessions.** The modules focused on conflict sensitivity and multidimensional poverty analysis methods and tools, nexus approaches; self-leadership, the ability to navigate uncertainty, complexity and risk environment, etc.
- **Individual work for each participant, requiring 20% of the time to be devoted to individual learning and training course of choice, based on the individual competence plan that participants developed according to their interests and needs.** Individual plans could include any type of activity from internships at other units at Sida and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to various in-depth courses or field missions, including thematic areas, such as peace and conflict resolution, to leadership courses.
- **Networking** opportunity for participants to generate mutual trust and self-confidence. Networking was aimed at building stronger links and networks for participants who can help once they are deployed in the field for mutual support.

The plan was to ensure that the two types of learning opportunities run in parallel, to allow for exchange and mutual learning and also individual learning and development. In addition, the common program had predefined blocks of training but allowed for a collaborative approach to shaping the training with the participants, as well as the opportunity to break into smaller groups as venues for mutual support and contribution to in-depth learning and exchange. Stakeholder interviews and survey responses show that the program design and setup had room for improvement, with seven of the eight survey respondents noting it had room for improvement, both in terms of general objectives and the setup match. The remaining respondent noted it was a very weak setup, with poor matching between the setup and the objectives, while the planned activities were irrelevant.

Selection process

The program was advertised and promoted within Sida ranks across the different departments and units, to reach out to diverse potential participants with a plan to enrol 20 participants in the course. The application process included written motivation letters, interviews, and recommendations from Unit managers. Despite wide promotion, the course eventually enrolled twelve permanent employees, i.e., program managers and controllers with a wide range of experience and skills, some of whom also had experience in the field. Stakeholder interviews and survey responses reveal that Sida could have done more to promote and explain the training package better, both to prospective PULS training participants and their Unit managers. Four of eight respondents to the survey noted that the explanations were vague or had room

for improvement, in terms of the level of explanation or communication of the program objectives. This points to weaknesses in the way in which such types of training are promoted and communicated. In particular, a weakness was found in the way in which the promotion of main objectives and targeted prospective candidates are sought. The promotional messages were found to be rather general and unclear, which made them not very appealing for more senior staff (who were targeted by the program) to apply. At the same time, more junior staff members found the training package interesting, both from the learning perspective and also from the potential for future employment perspectives. The evaluation found that in some instances, participants understood it as a strong support factor for their employability perspective, in particular field deployment. The fact that the program did not eventually serve as a leverage for increased employability chances was a disappointment for many participants, as per feedback received within the framework of this evaluation.

Training

The group training was considered as useful and effective both as venues for group exchange and also for learning in general. The fact that the program was envisaged to include co-creation engagement when it comes to individual and group learning was viewed as a positive feature. The face-to-face exchanges that were possible before COVID-19 were viewed as beneficial. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the program was transferred online, diminishing the opportunity for face-to-face exchange, which was not optimal but was still possible. Feedback from stakeholders shows that the program did not diminish its utility by moving online. The evaluation found that the approach whereby staff from various thematic departments at Sida conducted seminars and acted as resource persons has been beneficial and raised the effectiveness of the training package but was not fully optimised to enhance the results. This is the reason that the engagement varied and was also affected by COVID-19 constraints. Overall, the PULS training participants also noted that the training program syllabus was too broad and circled generally useful themes, applicable in all lines of work, but less hands-on for actual work in conflict settings. The downside of the training modules was that they did not sufficiently integrate and/or provide concrete hands-on tools, skills, or assistance to building knowledge to prepare PULS training participants to work and how to behave in such complex settings.

The self-leadership course was implemented by external consultants. This training segment was seen as interesting and engaging for the personal growth of participants and for building trust and familiarity with other participants. The fact that some of the sessions were conducted in person also helped a lot. The training capitalized on COVID-19, which proved to be useful in strengthening the participants' ability to navigate in unsafe environments, which has also been brought to the fore with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Joint sessions focused on personal leadership, safety training and new tools for reflection, as an individual and in a group. The work included a variety of learning sessions to gain contextual understanding for assistance

in conflict environments, including the application of the conflict perspective in our multidimensional poverty analysis, MDPA, as well as insights about triple nexus, etc. The training was experience-based, allowing for reflection and theoretical input.

Stakeholder interviews and reflections reveal that participants found the training component overall as useful and inspiring, though not extremely relevant or useful to prepare the PULS training participants for work in conflict environments, as already noted above. This was mainly because these were considered rather general and only “touching the surface” when it comes to preparedness for work in conflict settings. According to feedback, the training did not include sufficient opportunity to ‘unpack’ or dive deeper into some themes of relevance (e.g., the role of peacekeeping forces; safety in the field; emergencies, etc.). Quantitative data from the survey also shows that the quality of the training was average; the highly rated area was the safe and enabling environment to express opinions and clarity of instructions by trainers; while the resource persons’ support was rated as average (See Figure 5 below). The survey responses corroborate the feedback received through stakeholder interviews, noting that resource persons were not so helpful to the participants, resulting in the discontinuation of this support measure. One reason for this was the fact that most exchange was remote/online due to COVID-19, and the sessions with resource persons were short but covered complex topics, that would have required more time for full coverage.

Figure 5: Assessment of quality of training (Survey response N:8)



Individual training plans, design workshops and learning diaries

Individual competence plans, personal diaries, workshops, and ‘exchange placements’ have been some of the tools applied to create and support the individual learning process. Individual training plans included a variety of learning options or opportunities, as noted above. These were viewed as good in general, though criticism was raised that as regards many training, those that PULS training participants wanted were not approved, due to price range (too expensive).

According to stakeholder feedback, Sida was never clear on the actual amount of funds at the disposal of participants for such training opportunities, which was seen as a weakness. As highlighted by some of those interviewed, the PULS training participants were instructed to ‘think big’ and choose training of their interest, but when they would come up with some training options it would turn out to be too expensive or not possible. Several of the participants also planned field trips to various foreign missions or international courses, but due to the COVID-19 restrictions, they have not been able to be implemented or were cancelled. Therefore, the time frame for carrying out individual activities and possible field trips was extended until the end of 2021. At the time of finalization of the report, most of the postponed activities were still not possible.

The evaluation found that the most useful and relevant PULS component given to most participants was the **Design workshops**, and, in particular, the training on Leadership in difficult situations implemented by Johan Mast Consulting company. This training was organized on the initiative of one of the PULS training participants and engaged a small group of PULS participants. All PULS training participants who had the opportunity to participate in this training noted a high level of satisfaction with the approach, themes covered, and hands-on tools and skills shared, emphasizing that such a course should have been an integral part of the package. Conceptually, a **personal diary** was seen as an important element of experiential learning, that would help participants to reflect and note their learnings and experiences for further use. However, training participants did not find it very useful. The main shortcomings that were noted included the time needed to do them, in light of the difficulty of using 20% of the time for their learning. Some participants also saw no value added to such an element.

“I found a training program with Johan Mast through another colleague in PULS, which turned out to be the most valuable part of the whole PULS program.”
Training participant

The so-called **Exchange placements** were also envisaged as individual learning support interventions, whereby participants would be able to work with another Sida department or in the field. This component included allotment of time off from participants’ work for exchange service at the host department or office. All stakeholders across each stakeholder group found that this program component is meaningful and, if/when implemented, would bring a strong added value to the participants but also to the host institutions, as well as to the current working environment of a participant. The exchange placement component was heavily

affected by COVID-19 restrictions, as most participants could not benefit from this experience. Those who did manage to be placed and have hands-on experience found it relevant and very useful for their personal development. Some interviewed participants noted that these were instructive to follow the dialogue with various actors, analyse how Sweden works with women, peace, and the security agenda, and better understand Sweden as a political actor in a peace process. Another great merit is that PULS provides the opportunity to get to know colleagues at other units in Sida, which they would not have done otherwise. However, not all participants benefited in full from this program component due to various internal and COVID-19-related constraints.

Networking

Another effective dimension of the PULS training has been its networking component. There is agreement across all interviewed stakeholders that the PULS program provided an excellent opportunity for SIDA staff from different departments and sections, but also different levels of experience to meet and work together. The group discussions, particularly small group sessions, where difficult themes were explored and discussed, provided a safe and enabling space to share, exchange, and learn from each other. This helped the groups to be more cohesive and people to get to know and understand each other more. In turn, this also helped build networks, which are considered a key benefit for the PULS training participants in their potential further engagement or deployment in conflict settings. As per feedback from multiple PULS training participants, they now *‘have someone to ask or to contact when they need information, advice or tips on how to deal with tough situations’*. Also, the PULS training participants see this as an opportunity for continued mutual learning and experience sharing.

Effects of COVID-19 on the program

The PULS Program initiation coincided with the pandemic and related lockdowns. The program was founded on in-person interactions and exchanges, as well as potential trips to the field offices, so the restrictions put a heavy toll on the program since its start. Most of the program activities happened online and with delays, which affected the extent to which networking and exchange of experience between the participants could fulfil their desired potential. Also, the field trips and some courses were postponed or permanently delayed/cancelled. The HEAT training, for example, was postponed. For these reasons, an extension of the program was approved, moving the end date from April - December 2021. On the other hand, some training used the pandemic as a good testing field for training in adaptation and self-leadership, as the pandemic itself created uncertain conditions and a fragile environment. This unexpected exercise fits well with the purpose of the program.

Contributions of the PULS program to its desired outcomes

The objective of the PULS program was to “prepare employees in the very best way to work in conflict and post-conflict environments or environments with special safety/security challenges”. Evidence of the direct contribution of the PULS capacity-strengthening interventions towards observable changes in terms of increased readiness of Sida staff to work in conflict or

fragile environments has not been readily available. The PULS aimed to increase the employability or deployability of better-skilled and equipped staff for the field missions; however, stakeholder feedback shows that such a change area is not viable.

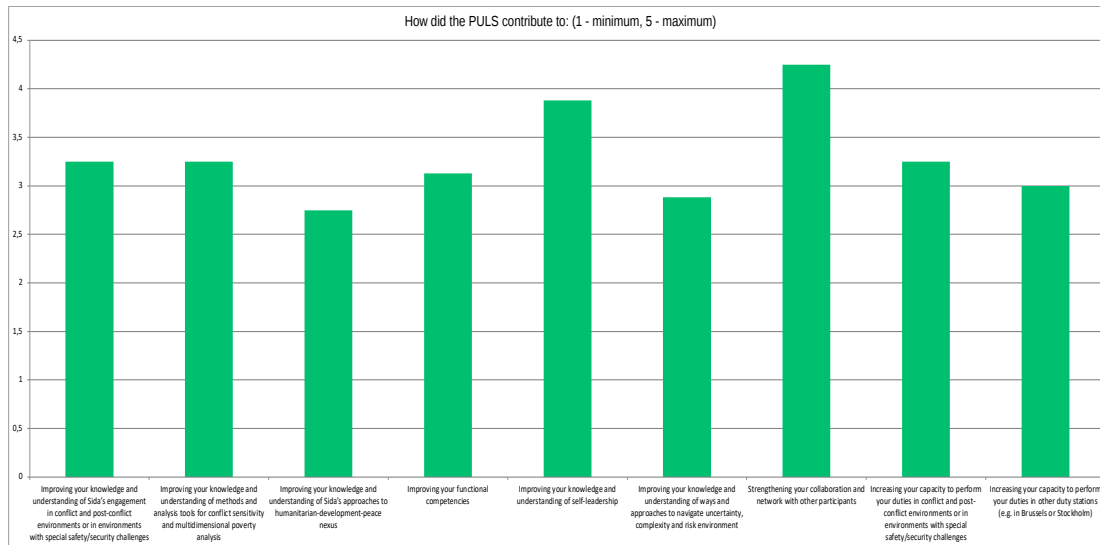
“Because of the pandemic, no field trips were possible. I also found it very hard to dedicate as much time as I had planned for individual learning”.
Survey respondent

Most of the interviewed PULS training participants noted a positive change in terms of understanding of what work in such environments means, albeit noting that they need further capacity and skill building, in the areas of humanitarian work, leadership in difficult situations or crises, etc. There is an obvious difference between more seasoned PULS training participants who noted that, while generally useful, the PULS training did not bring an expected level of input into their capacity development beyond many areas they knew already. For newcomers or less experienced Sida professionals, the learning was more beneficial, albeit still insufficient. According to the PULS statistics, out of 12 participants, four participants applied for positions in the 2021 staffing process for UM (a total of 12 positions were applied for, of which 3-4 can be classified as the type of services that the program is aimed at). During the program, two participants were stationed in the field, and another participant was seconded to Brussels. The internal audit also noted that “[t]he internal audit assessment is that the PULS did not fulfil the pragmatic needs.”⁴ The findings of this evaluation confirm such findings of the Audit report.

The survey responses corroborate these findings. Survey respondents found that the PULS program was not conducive to improving knowledge and understanding of ways and approaches to navigate uncertainty, complexity and risk environment (the average rating was 2.88, where 5 was the maximum rating) as shown in Figure 5 below. On the other side, survey responses rated as the best contribution of PULS was towards strengthening collaboration and network with other participants (average rating 4.25 out of a maximum 5).

⁴ Internal Audit Report, p. 11

Figure 6: PULS CONTRIBUTIONS (N :8)



Feedback from interviewed stakeholders points to the fact that participation in the PULS program is not viewed as an added value to training participants' professional expertise or reference that could help increase employability. Some PULS training participants shared disappointment with that fact, noting that they are eventually not more employable or better equipped, which was the initial expectation and motivation to enrol in such a program. The main issue in this regard is the lack of clarity on the

"The overall picture was missing. As it was a pilot program it felt like things were though up along the road, and all of a sudden, we had a new task that we did not understand how it fit into the rest and we did not have the chance to properly plan for how to fit into our work schedule. It is important to have the big picture and know what steps and tasks that are coming up."

Survey respondent

type of skills that Sida would require for field deployment in conflict or fragile environments. This is an issue that is debated both among participants, but also within Sida. Linked to this is the outstanding question of how the choice of training themes and the program promotion could assist prospective applicants for such a position. Some measures by the program to visualise the links between factual competencies and functional competencies that are covered by the training, and their interlinkages with recruitment demand, were perceived as a valuable response to this ambiguity. However, per stakeholder feedback, this measure did not contribute significantly to participants' confidence in their recruitment potential.

6.4 EFFICIENCY

The PULS program was designed as a mix of group and individual learning activities. At the onset, the face-to-face activities were implemented rather smoothly and efficiently. With COVID-19, all activities had to be shifted online, which resulted in delays and slight confusion or gaps in communication on the steps, requirements,

support provided, etc. Some topics were also covered in rather short sessions (e.g. NEXUS, conflict analysis), which were not efficient for coverage of complex themes.

Approach to covering some planned themes needed to be revised in light of restrictions, so for instance, the conflict analysis was done remotely by using the conflict analysis that were developed already as learning tool on the process, in absence of possibility for placements in the field. Besides, the coordinators also relied heavily on external consultant and the program Steering group (consisting of managers only from ELO and KOMPFOR), which took significant time for coordination and bringing people together, particularly in light of COVID-19 restrictions. Such a situation was exacerbated also by the fact that the implementation of the PULS program saw significant turnover of coordinating staff - there were three persons holding such position in the short period of the program implementation. This was additional challenge for efficiency of the program but also for its effectiveness: the PULS training participants were getting different and, at times, conflicting information with delays, and there were gaps in communication and institutional knowledge, which affected the extent to which the Program could be implemented smoothly to achieve its planned results. The evaluation found that the coordinators were in charge of wider portfolios, which included other tasks besides PULS, which also created constraints to the extent to which full care for the program could be ensured, but also to ensure continuity of the program and full implementation of each program component.

The evaluation found that such challenges affected the cost-effectiveness of the program. The program had a healthy allocated budget of 2,500,000 SEK, which meant. in essence. app. 208,333 SEK gross per participant. Moreover, each participant was tasked with 20% of their working time to be dedicated to the program, which would conceptually increase gross investment into learning per participant. However, the level of actual increase of knowledge or employability potential for the PULS training participants has not been so high, which means that the cost-effectiveness of the program was suboptimal.

This section provides a set of conclusions derived from the evaluation process, relating to the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the PULS program. The PULS program design was conceptually relevant, as it envisaged a set of training modules, addressing functional skills and technical competencies of prospective senior Sida staff members who would be interested in field deployment. The program has been designed in alignment with Sida's strategic objectives and envisaged a set of learning opportunities that would enable Sida staff to build their skills and knowledge, to prepare them to work in fragile environments. The program's foundation was the co-design of the training program, which – along with a combination of Sida mentorship and outsourced self-leadership training; individual learning and internships/exchanges/placements in other Sida departments or the field - has been conceptually sound and appropriate to the needs and Sida's strategic priorities.

However, the relevance of the program has been diminished in operationalization, due to suboptimal communication and promotion of the program. This resulted in a diverse group of PULS training participants, with a mix of senior, mid-level, and junior professionals, most of whom were less experienced or who had not been trained for work in conflict environments. For this fact, the program's knowledge principles and conceptual foundation was on targeting more senior or experienced prospective PULS training participants who would be able to co/design the program. This turned out not to be the most conducive to fully responding to the needs and level of understanding of the PULS training participants. The training package was designed with the assumption that the PULS training participants would have more advanced knowledge of basic concepts, which would make individual learning a conducive approach to unpacking or refining knowledge and skills. This created a discrepancy between thematic coverage, or depth, to which themes were explored or discussed, which was not always optimal to equip more junior or less experienced PULS training participants for work in conflict or fragile environments. Consequently, the program did not fully offer relevant capacity-building interventions or coverage of themes.

The program was moderately effective. The effectiveness of the PULS program's implementation was affected significantly by COVID-19 restrictions and the ability of the PULS training participants to utilize 20% of their working time for learning. The program was based on experiential learning, which calls for in-person exchanges in a safe and enabling environment, field placements, and/or exchanges with different Sida departments. However, in light of COVID-19 restrictions, most of the training activities took place remotely, with only a small number of in-person training activities. This diminished the possibility for participants to exchange more deeply or more substantially because online exchanges are inherently less nuanced than in-person ones. In addition, field deployments were not possible due to travel restrictions, while the placement with other Sida departments was done remotely, which again affected the level of interaction and substantive exchange or learning.

Effectiveness was also affected by the failure of the program to include themes or go to the desired depth in exploring, learning, and discussing themes of relevance for engagement in conflict environments. This in essence meant that many thematic areas remained tackled at rather general levels, applicable in day-to-day work everywhere but without ample opportunity for hands-on learning and acquiring of necessary knowledge and skills that would be crucial, in particular, for less experienced participants. Finally, the effectiveness of the program was challenged by the fact that no operationalization of declarative endorsement of the use of allotted 20% time materialized. The fact that the PULS training participants could not use the allotted 20% of their working time for learning or participation in courses on related themes, diminished its full potential. This situation resulted in sub-optimal level of preparation or capacitation of Sida staff to be employed/deployed in conflict situations. On the positive side, the program was beneficial for building networks and

links between Sida staff from different thematic units and departments, which provides some potential for future exchanges and mutual learning.

From that perspective, the PULS program was not cost-effective. The overall financial and time allocation for the training was generous and, if the coverage and targeting were adequate, would have provided for a strong and beneficial program. However, the turnover of coordinators, suboptimal conceptualisation of the program, and selection of themes, and COVID-19, provided adverse factors affecting its results.

7 Recommendations – Evaluation of the PULS Program

The evaluation findings and conclusions point to two alternatives to the design of a fully-fledged PULS program, based on the results of this pilot. These alternatives are:

1. Design a targeted PULS program for those Sida staff that are (or: have been?) selected for deployment in conflict settings, or
2. Design a more general PULS program for Sida staff considering deployment in conflict settings in the near future

The below recommendations are elaborated and presented in light of and to underpin the selection of one of these alternatives. A third set of recommendations has been proposed that applies equally to both, whichever alternative is chosen.

Both sets of recommendations are underpinned by the need to have a strong conceptual thematic framework and operational plan, that enables a more solid focus on building capacities of Sida teams to effectively engage in conflict, conflict-prone or post-conflict, and fragile environments.

Alternative 1: Design a targeted PULS program for those Sida staff that are selected for deployment in a conflict setting

Recommendation 1.1: The PULS program should serve as a mechanism to prepare Sida staff for field deployment.

Evaluative evidence shows that the PULS program has been conceptually sound as a mechanism to further increase the skills and knowledge of more senior Sida staff members who are already more recruitable for field deployment. To ensure that the PULS program fulfils its potential, and is fully cost-effective, the program should target those already recruited Sida staff members for field deployment. In such a way, the program would provide the necessary preparation for the participants on a number of issues that are appropriate at the time of deployment and for the countries where they will be deployed. At the same time, it would allow for networking and trust building, which would prove valuable for the training participants once they are actually deployed to the field, as a safety net for mutual support and advice in difficult situations or similar types of programs should be designed, with a clear intervention logic of what is to be achieved and how. The program design should be based on extensive needs assessment and conceptualization of themes, in line with co-design principles to ensure that the actual training program is relevant and beneficial for its participants.

Recommendation

1.2: Divide the training into two segments:

- 1) Training in preparation for deployment; and**
- 2) Hands-on training during deployment.**

The PULS program should include two training phases, addressing the specific needs of Sida staff to be deployed in the field, in convergence with other Sida preparation activities.

The first training phase should be developed in such a manner, as to prepare the Sida staff to be deployed by addressing a set of functional competencies technical skills and knowledge through experiential learning and peer exchange. This will help participants be better equipped for deployment, in terms of knowledge, network, and group of trust and support. It will also help build the self-confidence of participants that they are ready and in possession of a trusted network of other people who are in similar situations so can be relied upon at times of need.

The second training phase should deepen the knowledge acquisition, with hands-on training, based on real-life examples brought by participants for analysis and reflection on solutions, best practices, etc. Facilitated peer exchange could be considered ongoing support interventions within this phase.

Sida should stipulate the allotment of a certain amount of working hours for the entirety of the training duration to ensure sufficient time for participants to invest in learning and personal development. Such a comprehensive training package could have the potential to be one of the incentives for more senior staff to apply for field deployment.

Alternative 2. Design a more general PULS program for Sida staff considering deployment in conflict settings in the near future.

A. Recommendation

2.1: Focus on specific themes and methodological approaches that envisage and nurture hands-on tools, learning and exchange be promoted and sustained across the program.

The PULS program has been a conceptually sound and well-thought-through package of joint and individual learning opportunities and internships, which demanded an allotment of 20% of working hours to be devoted to learning. As such, it is extremely attractive, particularly for newcomers or those persons who want to expand their general knowledge. If the program remains a general training opportunity, it should keep the main features from the initial design in the pilot phase, upgraded by a range of specific themes and knowledge areas that can bring useful, actionable and hands-on learning opportunities for deployment in fragile contexts. A range of issues should be explored and unpacked to allow training participants to understand the conflict settings, measures, and actions that may be useful, along with practical skills. Taking into account participants' satisfaction with the Johan Mast training, this training module should be included as an integral part of the core training. Moreover, such

training should also allow ample time for exchanges and discussions among participants to stimulate reflection and increase confidence and understanding, leading to a genuine desire by training participants to engage in work in such areas.

Recommendation 2.2: Fully operationalize all program’s conceptual elements to ensure that the program fulfils its potential.

The allocation of working time for learning for participants of such a program should be operationalized through an action plan, with measures on how the tasks for a training participant will be transferred to other team members or planned to essentially allow the training participants to use this time for learning only. The endorsement of the Unit managers should be, hence, followed up and elaborated through measures and steps and included in the agreement for participation.

Recommendation 2.3: Communicate and promote such training programs with clear messages to ensure that prospective participants make informed decisions to apply and raise realistic expectations.

Communication messages and promotion activities should be clear, concise, and targeted to the appropriate audience. In particular, information about the selection criteria and requirements should be presented, to ensure that prospective applicants can understand them and assess their qualification match. If a program were directed to those already selected Sida staff (See Recommendation 1 above), this recommendation would be less relevant. However, if PULS remains a rather general program, the communication should stipulate the program’s prospects, in terms of contribution to an increase in the employability of its participants, as a result of participation.

Recommendations that intersect and apply to both the two alternatives:

Recommendation 3.1 Certify the training.

The program should be certificated, to quality assure it and to give more incentive for enrolment. This can be done by partnering with a relevant educational institution and/or promotion of the program as a specialised one for building skills and knowledge to work in conflict settings.

Recommendation 3.2: Base the program on a clear intervention logic of what is desired to be achieved and how.

The Evaluation found that the pilot PULS program did not have an elaborate results framework that would provide for a better understanding of the intervention logic and the links in the chain of results. A full-fledged program (desirably targeted as recommended above) should be based on an elaborated intervention logic with clear links in the chain of results to facilitate monitoring and adjustments of approaches, leading to the achievement of results. In particular, a set of tools to measure the contributions of the program to the increase in skills and preparedness of Sida staff deployed in the field should be designed.

Recommendation 3.3: Devise strong measures for institutional memory and knowledge management be established for all learning programs implemented by Sida.

Training programs should come with a set of institutional measures for monitoring and reporting, as well as clear guidance on program implementation. Such measures will help to enhance institutional monitoring practices but will also ensure that potential staff turnover does not affect the smooth implementation of a program. Moreover, such measures are important to maintain knowledge resources.

8 Overall conclusions and recommendations for both programs

Sida's investment in building human resource capacity, both at entry and more senior levels, to engage in operations in post-conflict environments, as well as other fragile and difficult environments/contexts, has been organized, inter alia, through two programs, i.e. the so-called Trainee Program and the PULS program. Both programs, in their own right, were aligned with and contributed to Sida's Operational Plan (VP) for 2019-2021, which stipulated how Sida should strengthen its ability to operate in conflict environments (VP goal 4); through a strong presence, and relevant skills, and adapted working methods.

Comparative data of the two programs shows that both training programs have been relevant. Both programs addressed the functional skills and technical competencies of their prospective training participants. Both programs, by their concept, provided relevant learning opportunities that would enable Sida staff to build their skills and knowledge to prepare them to work in fragile environments. Such training opportunity was in particular relevant for the entry-level staff, noting the relevance and need to address capacity and knowledge gaps to newcomers into Sida, and, in particular, those working on issues of conflict sensitivity and fragile context. Operationalization of such programs, however, encounters challenges, which affect relevance, as exemplified by the PULS program. The conceptual design of the program was comprehensive but its implementation encountered several issues, relating to selection of candidates, co-design of sessions, and ability to implement all components due to, inter alia, COVID-19, which affected its relevance to the participants.

The effectiveness of the programs was starkly different. The trainee program was effective, fulfilling its results. However, the effectiveness of the PULS program was limited. The evaluation points to two important ingredients for effectiveness: sound design and the ability to fully implement the planned activities without disruptions. The major disruption to both programs was COVID-19, which affected most activities of the programs, including the inability to organize in-person training; internship or exchange placements, or other types of sessions. Other challenges that the PULS program included suboptimal operationalization of the planned 20% allocation of working hours for participants for individual learning and superficial coverage of some of the themes.

The effectiveness of programs' components affected the achievement of longer-term results. The trainee program was rather successful in increasing the number of employees in operations with competence and interest in working in post-conflict environments, as well as other fragile and difficult environments/contexts. On the other hand, the PULS program was not successful in raising the competencies or increasing the deployability of its participants in field operations in fragile contexts.

9 Overall Recommendations

Such a situation points to several strategic recommendations, as follows:

1. Sida should continue investing in capacity strengthening of its human resources to be better prepared for working in field operations or engaging in/on issues of conflict and fragility.
2. Such investments should be based on careful consideration of ways in which already employed Sida staff members can benefit from training programs, without disruption, to ensure the cost-effectiveness of such efforts. The working time allocation for individual learning, in particular, if applied – needs to be fully operationalized in close liaison with Unit managers.
3. Such training programs need to be designed carefully to ensure the full scope of themes and their deeper investigation is envisaged, to avoid superficial coverage of themes that can prove crucial for adequate deployment. Experiences and best practices from such programs, within Sida or other development agencies, should be explored and integrated into new Sida programs.

ANNEX 1. EVALUATION MATRIX

Evaluation questions (EQ)	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis
Relevance: Is the intervention doing the right thing?				
EQ1: To what extent have the program objectives and design responded to the identified competence gaps and long-term competence needs, as defined in Sida policy documents? (To be defined per program)	• Degree of matching between the PULS and the Trainee program objectives and the objectives outlined in Sida's strategies and plans. • Perception of training programs' participants and Sida teams on the degree of alignment of training programs' objectives and interventions with Sida's strategies and plans. • Objectives of programs are adapted to the needs (e.g., in terms of selection and outreach to beneficiaries, targeted profile, geographical location) based in comprehensive analysis of context and needs in specific areas.	• SIDA policy documents • Training programs' planning documents, reports and training materials • Sida teams at HQ and field operation levels • Training participants	• Document review • Semi-structured interviews • Online survey	• Document review • Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders • Quantitative data analysis of online survey • Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis
EQ2: To what extent are the programs perceived relevant from the needs and priorities by the operational/geographical departments at Sida? (Specifically those units recruiting to conflict- and challenging security contexts).	• Perception of operational/geographical departments at Sida on the degree of alignment of training programs' objectives and interventions with their strategies and plans. • Degree of responsiveness of the programs to evidenced capacity gaps and needs of operational/geographical departments at Sida. • Degree to which capacity strengthening activities were designed based on an analysis of needs/gaps of operational/geographical departments at Sida.	• Sida policy documents • Training programs' planning documents, reports and training materials • Sida teams at HQ and field operation levels	• Document review • Semi-structured interviews • Online survey	• Document review • Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders • Quantitative data analysis of online survey • Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques,

ANNEX 1. EVALUATION MATRIX

	• Evidence and examples of conducted needs assessments and analyses and their use in informing the design of program structures and approaches, coverage of themes. • Perceptions of stakeholders on the relevance of training measures with the needs of operational/geographical departments at Sida.	• Training participants		and data types according to principles of iterative analysis
Evaluation questions (EQ)	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis
• To what extent have the programs responded to the capacity-building needs and expectations of the participants?	• Degree of responsiveness of the programs to evidenced capacity gaps and needs of participants. • Degree to which capacity strengthening activities were designed based on an analysis of needs/gaps. • Evidence and examples of conducted needs assessments and analyses and their use in informing the design of program structures and approaches, and coverage of themes. • Perceptions of stakeholders on the relevance of training measures with the needs of training participants	• Sida-policy documents • Training programs' planning documents, reports and training materials • Sida teams at HQ and field operation levels • Senior officials • Training participants	• Document review • Semi-structured interviews • Online survey	• Document review • Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders • Quantitative data analysis of online survey • Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis
Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?				
EQ3: To what extent have the programs achieved, or are expected to achieve, its results and intended outcome? If so, why? If not, why not?	• The marketing and recruitment process was effective in reaching their set objectives. • Number of trainees reached (disaggregated by sex) comparing planned vs actual. • Evidence of delivery of appropriate capacity-building activities (training, learning sessions, projects). • Evidence from pre-existing and quantitative data regarding sufficient achievement of intended outputs. • Evidence of improved awareness, knowledge and capacity of trainees (<i>PULS</i>, <i>trainee program participants respectively</i>) to design, coordinate, and implement their tasks in conflict and post-conflict	• Training programs' planning documents, reports and training materials • Monitoring data • Sida teams at HQ and field operation levels • Senior officials • Training	• Document review • Semi-structured interviews • Online survey	• Document review • Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders • Quantitative data analysis of online survey • Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis

ANNEX 1. EVALUATION MATRIX

	environments or in environments with special safety/security challenges. ● Stakeholder perceptions regarding each program results as having been achieved and contributing to overall positive change in terms of preparation of staff to be deployed to conflict and post-conflict environments or in environments with special safety/security challenges. ● Evidence that capacity strengthening interventions create observable changes in terms of supply of government services.	participants		
EQ5: To what extent have lessons learned for what works well and less well been used to improve and adjust the programs?	● Evidence of integration of Sida's monitoring data and institutional knowledge (lessons learned, reflection on results from the implementation of programs thus far) in the design of the training approaches and adjustments (also in light of COVID-19).	● Training programs' planning documents, reports and training materials ● Monitoring data ● Sida teams at HQ and field operation levels ● Senior officials ● Training participants	● Document review ● Semi-structured interviews ● Online survey	● Document review ● Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders ● Quantitative data analysis of online survey ● Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis
Efficiency – Can the costs for each program be justified by its results?				
EQ6: To what extent have the programs been implemented in timely and efficient manner?	● Degree to which the management set up for the 1) Trainee program; 2) PULS program was conducive for efficient delivery of results. ● Extent to which activities have been delivered as planned. ● Stakeholder perceptions that the implementation of activities is sufficiently timely and appropriate. ● Extent to which Sida applied the most appropriate training modality to ensure cost-effectiveness of its interventions. ● Factors hindering or facilitating timely delivery of results (including special focus on COVID-19).	● Training programs' planning documents, reports and training materials. ● Monitoring data ● Sida teams at HQ and field operation levels. ● Senior officials ● Training participants	● Document review ● Semi-structured interviews ● Online survey	● Document review ● Qualitative iterative data analysis of the KIIs with key stakeholders ● Quantitative data analysis of online survey ● Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types according to principles of iterative analysis.

ANNEX 2. LIST OF INTERVIEWED PERSONS

iv. The Trainee program

Trainees	
1. Christian Neckache	11. Niklas Machado Knutsson
2. Sara Gelotte	12. Zeenat Kader
3. Yusra Imsheiel	13. Hassan Guyo
4. Nawar Al-Ebadi	14. Johanna Suberu Svanelind
5. Linnaea Manberger	15. Kajsa Salomonsson
6. Sebastian Brandt	16. Felix Helgesson
7. Edvard Thorfinn	17. Gustav Isaksson
8. Wanja Kaufmann	18. Tom Jinert Baret
9. Turkan Omari	19. Nikolina Stålhand
10. Fredrika Norén	

Sida HQ Trainee Program stakeholders	
Name	Role/Sida department/unit
20. Angela Kristiansson	Core team
21. Carin Morin	Core team
22. Anna Skoglund	Reference group
23. Karolina Hultström	Reference group
24. Annika Otterstedt	HR Council; Bit AC HumAsien, head of cooperation Embassy of Sweden Kenya
25. Karin Andersson	HR Council; Bit AC Afrika
26. Eva Lövgren	HR Council; Bit AC Intem
27. Julia Ekstedt	HR Council; Chief of Staff General Director secretariat
28. Malin Perhult	HR Council; Bit AC Eurolatin
29. Pia Heyman	HR Council; AC Ledningstöd
30. Johanna Wallmo Wahlgren	HR Council; AC Verksamhetsstöd
31. Maria Lundén	Head of Unit
32. Jenny Åkerbäck	Trainee Program manager

Trainee program Head of unit/supervisors	
Name	Role/Sida department/unit
33. Patrik Stålgren	Head of Unit SPINN (Strategic partnership, innovation, private enterprises and new methods)
34. Karin Lindblad	Mentor working at the unit for Guarantees and Catalytic Financing for Development
35. Eva Gibson Smedberg	Head of Unit MENA (Middle East North Africa Unit)
36. Karin Metell Cueva	Head of Unit CAPDEV (Capacity Development Unit)
37. Anna Rosendahl	Head of Unit SOCIAL (Global Social Development Unit)
38. Lisa Hedin	Head of HUM (Humanitarian Assistance Unit)
39. Maria van Berlekom	Head of Unit GLOBEN (unit for Global Cooperation on Environment)
40. David Holmertz	Head of Unit ASIEN (Asia Unit)
41. Carolina Wennerholm	Head of Unit Latin America and Thematic Support
42. Staffan Smedby	Head of Unit DEMO (Democracy and Human Rights Unit)
43. Ingrid Rydell	Head of Unit ANALYS (Unit for Data Analytics and Statistics)

Sida Field operations stakeholders - Embassies	
Name	Role/Sida department/unit
44. Christina Wedekull	Head of Development cooperation, Rwanda
45. Johan Romare	Head of Development cooperation, Liberia
46. Joachim Beijmo	Head of Development cooperation, Democratic Republic of Kongo

v. *The PULS program*

Sida HQ Puls program stakeholders	
Name	Role/Sida department/unit
1. Johan Hansson	SteeringGroup; Head of KOMFOR
2. Karolina Hultström	SteeringGroup; Head of ELO
3. Caroline Holst Åhbeck	SteeringGroup; ELO
4. Lisa Hellström	PULS program manager
5. Annika Otterstedt	Former Deputy Head for HUMASIA Department
6. Matti Ek	Psychologist
7. Elisabet Brandberg	Senior Policy Specialist on Peace and Security at TEMA/INTEM

ANNEX 2. LIST OF INTERVIEWED PERSONS

8. Agnes Stenstrom	Development Analyst, Chief Economist Team
9. Carina Staibano	Senior Policy Specialist
10. Anna Akerlund	Lead Policy Specialist Peace and Security
Sida PULS training participants	
11. Andreas Nilsson	Program manager, Swedish Partnership Forum
12. Anna Rosendahl	Head of unit, Mena
13. Elin Ahlberg	Program manager, Iraq unit
14. Erik B Pettersson	Program manager, Peace and human security unit
15. Ingela Fransson	Controller, unit for Business Management
16. Jens Thulin	Controller, Capacity Development Unit, previously Afghanistan unit
17. Katri Pohjolainen	Program manager, unit for Research Cooperation
18. Luz Baastrup	Program manager, Civil Society unit
19. Ylva Sahlstrand	Program manager, embassy Albania
20. Lotta Westerberg	Program manager, embassy Kabul , but in Sweden now
21. Catarina Nilsson	Program manager, embassy Moldova
22. Marcela Lizana	First Secretary, embassy Bangladesh
PULS Program external stakeholders	
23. Erica Wright	External consultant; INDEA
24. Magnus Möller	External consultant; Rezon
25. Marianne Littke	External consultant; Rezon

ANNEX 3. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

vi. Survey questionnaire for participants in the PULS Program

1. Which department do you work for? Please, specify: _____
2. Gender
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary
 - Prefer to self-describe: _____
3. What was your motivation to participate in the PULS program?
4. In your opinion, what is added value of The PULS program? Multiple choice
 - Technical expertise
 - Provision of direct assistance through training
 - Opportunity to participate in other types of Sida's learning events
 - Internship placements
 - Other, please, elaborate _____
5. How well did Sida explained or communicated to you the objectives of the PULS program?
 - Very vaguely
 - Room for improvement
 - Well explained
 - Crystal clear objectives
6. How would you assess the design or the set-up of the PULS program in relation to the program objectives?
 - Very weak set up, poor matching between the set up and the objectives, planned activities were irrelevant
 - Room for improvement but in general objectives and the setup match
 - Good matching between objectives and the set up.
 - Perfect matching altogether
 - Do not know
7. Did you use the funds provided for individual learning/training?
 - Yes
 - No
- 7a. If yes, in what way did you use the funds? Please, elaborate

8. Please, assess the quality of training you participated in:
(1- minimum – 5 maximum)

	1	2	3	4	5	I don't know/no answer	Comment
Do you feel that the training reached its objectives?							
Were the topics relevant to your current work?							
Did you find the composition of the group appropriate? (similar levels of knowledge and experience to yours)							
Did you feel comfortable expressing your opinion in the group?							
Did the training include sufficient practical exercises?							
Was the training material (workbook, slides) useful?							
How would you assess the expertise of the trainers?							
How would you assess clarity of instructions by trainers?							
How would you assess the support by your mentor?							
How would you assess organisational aspects of the event (logistics, schedule, quality of organization)							

Did you receive sufficient information before the training to help you understand the purpose of the training?							
Overall							

9. How did the PULS contribute to:

(1- minimum – 5 maximum)

	1	2	3	4	5	I don't know/no answer	Comment
Improving your knowledge and understanding of Sida's engagement in conflict and post-conflict environments or in environments with special safety/security challenges							
Improving your knowledge and understanding of methods and analysis tools for conflict sensitivity and multidimensional poverty analysis							
Improving your knowledge and understanding of Sida's approaches to humanitarian-development-peace nexus							
Improving your functional competencies							
Improving your knowledge and understanding of self-leadership							

Improving your knowledge and understanding of ways and approaches to navigate uncertainty, complexity and risk environment							
Strengthening your collaboration and network with other participants							
Increasing your capacity to perform your duties in conflict and post-conflict environments or in environments with special safety/security challenges							
Increasing your capacity to perform your duties in other duty stations (e.g. in Brussels or Stockholm)							

10. Should any additional topic(s) be covered by the PULS training?

- Yes
- No

If yes, which topic(s)?

11. What was missing in the program in your opinion? Please, elaborate any aspects, themes, approaches, components that you think would have improved the utility and value of the program: _____

12. How useful/usable is the new knowledge you acquired through the PULS?

- Extremely useful
- Very useful
- Moderately useful
- Slightly useful

13. In what way do you use the knowledge you acquired through training? Please, provide an example where the skills and knowledge that you acquired came in handy to solve an issue:

14. To what extent has the PULS program helped advancement in your career?

- Totally, I managed to get a good job/advance in my career
- To large extent

- Moderately
- Not so much
- Not at all

15. How likely is it that you recommend PULS to others?

- Extremely likely
- Very likely
- Moderately likely
- Slightly likely
- Not at all likely

16. Other comments and reflections

Comment Box

vii.

viii. *Survey Questionnaire for the participants of the Trainee program*

1. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer to self-describe: _____

2. What was your motivation to participate in Sida's Trainee program?

3. In your opinion, what is added value of Sida's Trainee program? Multiple choice

- Technical expertise
- Provision of direct assistance through training
- Opportunity to participate in other types of Sida's learning events
- Internship placements
- Other, please, elaborate_____

4. Did you have a chance to participate in learning projects organized within the framework of the program?

- Yes
- No

4a. If yes, in what way did you use the funds? Please, elaborate:

5. How well did Sida explained or communicated to you the objectives of the trainee program?

- Very vaguely
- Room for improvement
- Well explained
- Crystal clear objectives

6. How would you assess the design or the set up of the trainee program in relation to the program objectives?

- Very weak set up, poor matching between the set up and the objectives, planned activities were irrelevant
- Room for improvement but in general objectives and the setup match
- Good matching between objectives and the set up.
- Perfect matching altogether
- Do not know

7. How do you evaluate the overall implementation quality of the trainee program, in terms of for example the, during the thematic areas in the Modules and the study visits?

	Very high overall quality	High quality	Acceptable quality	Room for improvement, did not really met my expectations	Overall poor quality	Don't know/N/A
Capacity of and dedication by the mentors						
Quality of lectures						
Friday learnings (and other occasions)						
Thematic coverage in the modules						
Study visits						
Other types of learning possibilities (please, specify:)____ —						

8. How did the Trainee program contribute to:
(1 – maximum, 5 minimum)

	1	2	3	4	5	I don't know/no answer	Comment
Improving your knowledge and understanding of Sida's engagement in conflict and post-conflict environments or in environments with special safety/security challenges							

Improving your knowledge and understanding of methods and analysis tools for conflict sensitivity and multidimensional poverty analysis							
Improving your knowledge and understanding of Sida's approaches to humanitarian-development-peace nexus							
Improving your functional competencies							
Improving your knowledge and understanding of self-leadership							
Improving your knowledge and understanding of ways and approaches to navigate uncertainty, complexity and risk environment							
Strengthening your collaboration and network with other participants							
Increasing your capacity to perform your duties in conflict and post-conflict environments or in environments with special safety/security challenges							
Increasing your capacity to perform your duties in other duty stations (e.g. in Brussels or Stockholm)							

9. Should any additional topic(s) be covered by the Trainee program?

- Yes
- No

If yes, which topic(s)?

10. What was missing in the program in your opinion? Please, elaborate any aspects, themes, approaches, components that you think would have improved the utility and value of the program: _____-

11. How useful/usable is the new knowledge you acquired through the trainee program?

- Extremely useful
- Very useful
- Moderately useful
- Slightly useful

12. In what way do you use the knowledge you acquired through training? Please, provide an example where the skills and knowledge that you acquired came in handy to solve an issue:

13. To what extent has the Trainee program helped advancement in your career?

- Totally, I managed to get a good job/advance in my career
- To large extent
- Moderately
- Not so much
- Not at all

14. How likely is it that you recommend the Sida Trainee program to others?

- Extremely likely
- Very likely
- Moderately likely
- Slightly likely
- Not at all likely

15. Other comments and reflections

Comment Box

ix. Survey Questionnaire for mentors

1. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer to self-describe: _____

2. What program did you offer mentorship to?

- PULS program
- Trainee program

3. How well did Sida explain or communicate to you as a mentor, the objectives of the program?

- Very vaguely
- Room for improvement
- Well explained
- Crystal clear objectives

4. How would you assess - as a mentor - the design or the setup of the trainee program in relation to the program objectives?

- Very weak set up, poor matching between the set up and the objectives, planned activities were irrelevant
- Room for improvement but in general objectives and the setup match
- Good matching between objectives and the set up.
- Perfect matching altogether
- Do not know

5. To what extent did your expectations and demands as a mentor matched the profiles and capacities of the selected trainees?

- My expectations and demands were a lot higher than the profiles and capacities of the selected trainees
- Room for improvement existed
- My expectations and the profiles and capacities of the trainees did match
- Perfect matching altogether

6. What were the main themes and areas of concern that participants raised as relevant to tackle through mentoring activity? Please, elaborate

7. What are the most significant changes in the ways in which participants approach their work? Please, elaborate

8. What was missing in the program overall? Please, elaborate

9. Other comments and reflections

Comment Box

ANNEX 4. LIST OF DOCUMENTS

SIDA TRAINEE PROGRAM

- 00 Call-off Inquiry_traineeprogram_PULS.docx
- 01 Deltagare traineeprogram.pdf
- 02 Dokumentsammanställning.docx
- 03 FN_UD Trainees pprogram 10-11 June 2021 Program Draft.docx
- 04 Fredagslärande_Årsplanering_ver2.xlsx
- 05 HUMASIENs mid-term review av Trainee-programmet.pdf
- 06 Indder.pdf
- 07 Kontaktdetaljer utvärdering_dokumentöversikt.xlsx
- 08 Mall_Lärplan.xlsx
- 09 Manual for workshops, short and long internal democracy assessment.docx
- 10 Media.xlsx
- 11 Mentorträning_III_03Sep2020_final (2).pptx
- 12 Mångfaldig Rekrytering_05Nov2020_.pptx
- 13 Package Chefer AC_22June2020.pptx
- 14 Program onboarding_trainee.docx
- 15 Projects.xlsx
- 16 Schema december utbildning.docx
- 17 Sidas traineeprogram 2020 – konceptpapper.pdf
- 18 Temperaturmätning_2_april 2021.pdf
- 19 Temperaturmätning rekrytering, onboarding oktober.pdf
- 20 Traineeprogram_program_ver3.docx
- 21 Traineeprogram_upplägg_ver1.docx
- 22 Tutor @ Sida Training Aug 2020 (2).pdf

PULS PROGRAM

- 00 Kontaktpersoner Sida PULS.docx
- 01 Deltagare PULS lista från Lisa.docx
- 02 Internrevisionsrapport 20-08 Strategisk kompetensförsörjning_kortversion 3016789_1_1.PDF
- 03a Lärdomar Sida_ Erica Wright.docx
- 03b Lärdomar från PULS Erica Wright april 2021.pdf
- 04 Slutsatser PULS ws 27.11.20.docx
- 05 Programblad utvecklingsprogram för personal i konfliktmiljöer_.pdf
- 06 PULS snurra och översikt.pptx
- 07 Inside text AnnaKlara.docx
- 08 Tidsberäkning och innehåll programt december 2020.docx
- 09 Outrodag 24 mars kl 9-12 LH.pptx
- 10 Handlingsplan NoAKS statusuppdatering våruppföljning 2021 (mål 1).docx
- 11 Handlingsplan NoAKS_verka i konfliktmiljöer_slutlig.pdf
- 12 Sidas verksamhetsplan 2019-2021.pdf



Evaluation of Sida's Trainee Programme and the Leadership Development Programme for working in Fragile Environments (PULS)

Sida assessed the effectiveness of two training programs, the "Sida Trainee Program" and "The Leadership Development Program for Fragile Environments (PULS)," seeking an independent review. The results will help Sida shape future iterations of these or similar programs to support operations in delicate environments. The evaluation found that both programs largely achieved their goals, notably in stabilizing staff numbers. Many at Sida saw these programs as strategic investments aligned with recruitment needs. They produced 19 skilled individuals with diverse backgrounds, languages, and expertise in complex development cooperation areas. While effective for group recruitment and training, the evaluation didn't offer a complete picture of their impact on Sida's overall recruitment strategies. It didn't cover smaller group recruitments or programs such as JPO, BBE, UNV, SPD, and JPD, primarily focusing on the Diplomatic program's preparedness for conflict zone assignments. Several trainees showed interest in conflict contexts, with around five potentially groomed for future deployments. Customized programs or additional training could benefit these individuals. Assessing the readiness of Diplomatic program participants for such postings could further enhance the Sida trainee program in this field.

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