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Sida Evaluation

NIRAS Sweden AB

Formative Evaluation of Normative Dialogue at Sida, 2015–2022

Final report



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

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Foreword

Normative dialogue refers to “any effort to strategically engage in dialogue about desired change with the explicit purpose of seeking to influence or safeguard universal norms as reflected in Swedish priorities, policies, and strategies” with the goal of creating “an enabling environment for improved development results.” It is an element of Sida's global advocacy work and the expectation is that if the actors targeted by normative dialogue change their attitudes and behaviours, development cooperation results will improve.

Covering the period 2015-2022, the main purpose of this evaluation is to identify whether, to what extent, why, and when normative dialogue contributes to improved development cooperation results. It is based on interviews and focus group discussions in combination with four case studies, each of which covers a separate theme – environment and climate change, sexual reproductive health and rights, gender equality, democracy and human rights – where Sida to various degrees and in various ways implemented normative dialogue. The findings are intended to be used for informing Sida's strategic usage of normative dialogue, including its institutional capabilities and approaches and methods to carry out normative dialogue.

The evaluators conclude that normative dialogue has served to align development outcomes with universal norms and Swedish priorities. Normative dialogue is most effective when it is underpinned by long-term engagement by Sweden and co-ordination among Swedish actors. The authors note that internal direction and capacity for normative dialogue is often missing among Swedish actors, while planning and co-ordination is weak, which in turn undermine the effectiveness of normative dialogue.

We wish to express our thanks to the evaluation team and all individuals – including staff at Sida, Swedish embassies, civil society organisations, international organisations, foreign governments, and various experts – who participated in the evaluation. It is our hope that this report will be of value to managers responsible for development cooperation strategies, policy specialists and programme officers at Sida, as well as Sida's senior level management, cooperation partners and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The report has been written by an independent external evaluation team contracted by Sida. The responsibility for the report's analysis, conclusions, and recommendations rests with the evaluation team.

Sundbyberg, 29 August 2024
Lena Johansson de Château
Head of Evaluation

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CEFM	Child Early and Forced Marriage
CEPAP	Coligação para Eliminação dos Casamentos Prematuros
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ERC	Equal Rights Coalition
EQ	Evaluation Question
FFP	Feminist Foreign Policy
FLLoCA	Financing Locally Led Climate Action
HQ	Headquarters
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex
LLCAF	Locally Led Climate Change Adaptation and Finance
LoCAL	Local Climate Adaptation Living Facility
LoGIC	Local Government Initiative on Climate Change
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs
OECD DAC	The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Development Assistance Committee
RFSL	The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Rights
RFSU	The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education
SADC	Southern African Development Community
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sex Characteristics
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNCDF	UN Capital Development Fund
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WHO	World Health Organization

Preface

The purpose or overall goal of the Formative Evaluation of Normative Dialogue at Sida (2015–2022) is “to promote learning about Sida's work with normative dialogue, (...) identify key factors behind successful normative dialogue, (...) and help Sida increase the understanding of what works, what does not work, and why, as well as identifying both key bottlenecks and ways to improve”.

The report was prepared by the following team selected by NIRAS:

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NIRAS and the team would like to thank the steering group, reference group, and stakeholders at Sida and the embassies for their time and support during the evaluation.

The findings and recommendation of the report are the responsibility of NIRAS and the evaluation team and should not be taken as expressions of Sida policies or opinions.

Executive Summary

Goals, approaches and methods

The **overall goal of the Formative Evaluation of Normative Dialogue at Sida** (2015–2022) is “to promote learning about Sida's work with normative dialogue, (...) identify key factors behind successful normative dialogue, (...) and help Sida increase the understanding of what works, what does not work, and why, as well as identifying both key bottlenecks and ways to improve”.¹

The ultimate goal of normative dialogue² is to provide an enabling environment for improved development results based on universal norms and Swedish development cooperation priorities. The evaluation approach is **theory-based** in that it has analysed normative dialogue in relation to an overarching theory of change that encompasses varied pathways towards this objective.

The core methods of the evaluation combine **case studies** with **outcome harvesting** to allow for a participatory and learning-oriented approach. These methods were considered appropriate given the somewhat ‘fluid’ boundaries of what normative dialogue is perceived to be among Sida staff and stakeholders and what it is meant to achieve. As set out in the evaluation’s Terms of Reference (ToR), Sida selected the **thematic areas and sub-areas of focus** for the four cases, which were further refined during the evaluation’s inception phase. The case studies examined:

- **Environment and climate change** with a focus on locally led climate change adaptation and finance at the global level, with examples from Kenya and Bangladesh;
- **Sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR)** with a focus on Universal Health Coverage (at a global level) and regional and country SRHR efforts and policy processes in Africa, with examples of access to safe and legal abortion in Liberia and ending child marriage in Mozambique;
- **Gender equality** with a focus on women’s economic empowerment (WEE), with country examples from Mozambique, Bangladesh, Somalia, Tanzania and in multi-country programming; and

¹ Sida. (2022). *Formative Evaluation of Normative Dialogue at Sida, 2015-2022*. Terms of Reference. See Annex 1.

² As defined in the inception phase of the evaluation.

- **Democracy and human rights** with a focus on normative dialogue around LGBTQI issues at global, regional and national levels (Republic of Moldova).

The evaluation recorded many stories of change where Sida's dialogue efforts contributed to **concrete shifts in people's attitudes, knowledge or skills** – at an individual level – and in **processes, policies, partnerships or institutions** at a more collective or systemic level. Factors that enabled results from normative dialogue included:

- Creating new or deepening ongoing partnerships around normative priorities;
- Amplifying efforts of champions for change or processes with existing momentum for policy reform in line with universal norms (and as reflected in Swedish strategies);
- Positioning Sweden and its partners as legitimate and knowledgeable resources, often through research and analytical work that contributes to a stronger evidence-base;
- Increasing the number of entry-points for engagement on a normative issue, e.g., by connecting partners and policymakers in multistakeholder dialogues;
- Securing operating space for partners working in fragile or sensitive contexts; and
- Aligning actors' interests and identifying areas of mutual commitments in line with international normative frameworks and goals.

Findings

Examples across all four cases and in non-case-specific interviews illustrated how Sida uses normative dialogue **to push the boundaries of how issues are framed**. Perseverance and long-term engagement together with like-minded partners were considered key factors. Sida was commonly referred to as being **value-driven**, i.e., persistent and committed to issues over time. Sida does not have to be visible or in the lead, though, as its role has often been to create conditions for dialogue among others.

Successful outcomes reflect how Sida engages in various dialogue constellations of actors and contexts at multiple levels, using a variety of complementary entry-points at global (multilateral), country (bilateral), and sometimes regional levels in ways that are coordinated and synergetic. Normative changes are almost always multi-directional and often consist of a series of micro-changes in attitudes and behaviour that cumulatively lead to more systemic shifts in policy or practice. The evaluation found some common key **enabling factors**, which included:

- A clearly articulated strategy with spelled-out normative objectives;
- Strong coordination among Team Sweden (including other Swedish government actors) at multiple levels;
- The use of multiple entry points for engagement;

- Sufficient staff capacity to respond to opportunities for dialogue on strategic priorities;
- A strong evidence-base upon which joint messaging can be developed; and
- Investment in trust-building among key actors over time.

However, Sida sometimes lacks clear **internal direction or capacity** to engage directly in normative dialogue. There is minimal systematic monitoring, evaluation, and learning to 'build a case' for the added value of Sida's normative dialogue efforts. Planning and coordination functions are generally weak, and some staff are uncertain about the extent of their mandates for normative dialogue and how it should be prioritised. This is compounded by **uncertainty** and diverging views regarding the differences between normative dialogue and the 'normal' dialogue on administrative issues.

To overcome such uncertainty, a clear, politically anchored dialogue strategy is needed, accompanied by better coordination within Sida and across Team Sweden. This was exemplified by the efforts associated with the Feminist Foreign Policy, which gave **structure and impetus to the normative dialogue**.

Sida actively used normative dialogue in **identifying and mobilising partners**, both in the critical stages of alliance-building and through ongoing interaction with partners via contribution management. Lessons and experiential evidence from the normative work of partners often **informed** Sida's approach to its own normative dialogue. Sida's support has also enabled partners to develop and articulate their own normative positions.

Sida's **institutional learning** about how normative dialogue contributes to development results remains largely tacit. The use of monitoring to support this learning process is, to date, minimal. Efforts to strengthen institutional learning have been undertaken since 2019. Yet, at the time of the evaluation, these efforts were still under development and largely detached from strategic decision-making and planning at a corporate level at Sida.

Conclusions

'Success' in Sida's (and Team Sweden's) normative dialogue has **enabled development results** that are aligned with universal norms and reflect the norms embodied in the five perspectives guiding Swedish development cooperation.

Normative dialogue offers Sida **a means of aligning efforts with other Team Sweden actors and partners** toward commonly defined goals. This is essential as partners often lead advocacy efforts in national and regional contexts. Sida therefore plays an important role in connecting processes of normative change, which are led and owned by development cooperation partners, to dialogue efforts led by Team Sweden in different fora. However, Sida's capacity to track ongoing broader normative change

processes, including how Sida positions itself strategically in relation to other actors, is weak. That means that Sida's experiential evidence **may be underutilised**.

Outcomes from normative dialogue in terms of changes in people's awareness, knowledge and skills at an individual level, as well as in policies, priorities, and practices (at a collective or institutional level), are significant. However, these outcomes are not systematically tracked and analysed in relation to the enabling of development results.

The evaluation found that normative dialogue is a critical part of how **Sida engages adaptively and strategically in a given context**. Sida often takes a cautious approach to engaging in the normative change process. A more strategic, coordinated and internally articulated approach has the potential to influence the framing and analysis of normative issues while maximising Sida's role as convenor of knowledge-sharing and learning. **Clear institutional priority-setting and direction are needed** regarding how and when to use normative dialogue, for what purpose, and to what desired effect.

Recommendations

1. Sida's leadership should ensure that its mandate and role in engaging in normative dialogue on key Swedish priorities are clarified and systematically communicated to staff (including limits and opportunities for its use). It should regularly discuss Sida's role in relation to normative priorities with MFA.
2. Sida should put in place mechanisms to link normative dialogue more clearly with enabling development results at all levels of operation.
3. The concept of normative dialogue and what it implies in relation to contribution management should be clarified at all levels of the organisation.
4. Partnerships are central to how Sida undertakes normative dialogue, but the contours of these partnerships should be defined within Theories of Change (ToCs) in relation to broader normative objectives, with a clearer role division of how partners and Team Sweden actors complement each other throughout the envisaged normative change process.
5. Sida should dedicate sufficient resources to ensure that it has the required internal capacity to backstop staff (including embassies) and partners on prioritised normative agendas, and to fully operationalise the 360 model.

1 Introduction

1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The **overall goal** of the Evaluation of Normative Dialogue at Sida (2015–2022) is “to promote learning about Sida's work with normative dialogue, (...) identify key factors behind successful normative dialogue, (...) and help Sida increase the understanding of what works, what does not work, and why, as well as identifying both key bottlenecks and ways to improve”.³

Furthermore, the Terms of Reference (ToR) state that findings and recommendations will be **used to inform Sida** to develop:

- A more **strategic approach**, including prioritisation, planning and follow up of normative dialogue;
- Sida's **management and organisation**, including the role played by Sida within Team Sweden;⁴
- The necessary **institutional capabilities** for engaging in normative dialogue, reflected in the design of future trainings and other planned learning activities;
- **Approaches and models** of normative dialogue, including how to work strategically with partners at different levels to advance Swedish priorities based on universal norms; and
- **Communicative methods and instruments** for normative dialogue.

The ToR identify four **thematic focus areas** where Sida has been actively engaging in normative dialogue and where lessons have been gained at different levels of operation. For each thematic area, a subarea of focus was proposed and further refined during the inception phase, namely: gender equality with a focus on women's economic empowerment (WEE); sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR); democracy and human rights with a focus on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) rights; and environment and climate with a focus on locally led climate adaptation and finance (LLCAF). These focus areas were selected to reflect the

³ Sida. (2022). *Formative Evaluation of Normative Dialogue at Sida, 2015-2022*. Terms of Reference. See Annex 1.

⁴ Team Sweden is used to refer to Sida, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Folke Bernadotte Academy and the embassies. An 'extended Team Sweden' may include other actors such as framework CSOs, other Swedish authorities, and/or specific cooperation partners in a given context.

perspectives in Swedish development cooperation for their “clearest guiding signal for the normative dialogue” (p. 7).

The **period** covered by the evaluation is 2015 to 2022.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND DEFINITIONS

The evaluation **defines normative dialogue** as “any effort to strategically engage in dialogue about desired change with the explicit purpose of seeking to influence or safeguard universal norms as reflected in Swedish priorities, policies, and strategies”. Also defined in the inception phase of the evaluation is the “ultimate objective of normative dialogue is to create an enabling environment for improved development results”.⁵

The objective of normative dialogue assumes that the specific norms to be influenced or safeguarded are made clear to relevant stakeholders and are in **line with development cooperation strategies and policies**. The term ‘normative dialogue’ is shorthand for ‘dialogue for normative change’ and is seen as a tool to “advocate for Swedish priorities and universal norms” to “increase the impact and accelerate progress” against the overall goal of Swedish international development cooperation, namely “to create preconditions for better living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression.”⁶ While dialogue has always been an important element of Swedish development cooperation, use of the term ‘normative dialogue’ appeared for the first time in Sida’s operational plan from 2019. In the current operational plan (2022–2024), one of Sida’s operational goals (goal 2) specifically refers to how Sida, through normative dialogue, will advocate for Swedish priorities and universal norms, including gender equality, environment and climate.⁷

The emphasis on normative change as an **enabler for better development results** is a somewhat different conceptualisation from what was typically covered by policy dialogue in the past. For instance, in a *Sida Evaluation of Policy Dialogue as an Instrument in Development Cooperation – the case of Gender Equality* in 2015,⁸ policy dialogue is defined as: “an instrument of development cooperation that brings together two or more parties to discuss, and possibly reach consensus on the core values underlying their policy and programming decisions, including resource allocation.” The 2015 evaluation, which looked primarily at dialogue efforts at embassy-level, also

⁵ NIRAS. (2023). *Formative Evaluation of Normative Dialogue at Sida, 2015–2022*. Inception report, available as separate annex to this report.

⁶ ToR, pp. 2-3.

⁷ Ibid, p. 3.

⁸ Dana Peebles, Jonas Lövkrona and Nadine Jubb. (2015). *Evaluation of Policy Dialogue as an Instrument - the case of Gender Equality*. Sida Evaluation 2015:1.

recognised that there was no clearly articulated theory of change (ToC) of how to use dialogue as an instrument, and that approaches to dialogue were not consistently applied across Sida given the lack of a common understanding of it as a specific method to be used to advance progress in addition to funding.

The 2019 articulation of normative dialogue as one of Sida's operational objectives underlined the fact that using dialogue as a complementary **influencing tool** could enable Sida to be “strategically relevant, results-focused and effective.” This has called for improved internal coordination (led by an internal working group on normative dialogue), and a more coordinated Team Sweden approach – i.e., cooperation among Sida, the Swedish ministries and foreign missions.

Additionally, the **360 model**, which has been de facto adopted as a good practice within Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, seeks to strengthen the information flow from and back to embassies.⁹ The aim is that more of the operational and contextual knowledge from in-country operations underpinning normative priorities is reflected in high-level negotiations with, e.g., multilateral organisations, or taken up during their respective board meetings. Outcomes from such global/international normative dialogue are then to be fed back to country-level operations so that they can inform dialogue and follow-up by embassies in their bilateral in-country dialogues with the same agencies and governments as appropriate.

The ‘**norms**’ in normative dialogue refer both to Swedish priorities and universal norms as spelled out in universal resolutions, conventions, and declarations, and which Swedish development cooperation aligns with. The steering framework for what Sida should prioritise in its dialogue, however, “is complex, as directions and priorities are primarily outlined by the Swedish Government but are also developed in internal steering at Sida”.¹⁰

The Policy Framework for Swedish Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid outlines the Swedish Government's directions and priorities for development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. It sets out both an overall and a thematic focus for development aid cooperation and, by extension, its priorities for normative dialogue. The policy framework states that **five perspectives** permeate Swedish development cooperation. These consist of two **overarching perspectives** (the poverty and rights perspectives), and three **thematic perspectives** (conflict and peacebuilding, gender equality, and environment and climate) that are in line with international

⁹ The 360 model, or “hela varvet runt” refers to the fact that all involved actors, at all different levels of policy dialogue or operations are informed of priorities for normative dialogue, and that information exchange between parties is coordinated and strategic, combining experiential evidence with dialogue efforts at different levels.

¹⁰ ToR, p. 2.

resolutions, conventions and declarations and should be integrated into development cooperation, including its normative dialogue. The ToR for this assignment specifies that in Sida, “normative dialogue should address Swedish priorities based on universal norms, including the five perspectives and should be conducted on global, regional and national levels”.

The ToR clearly distinguishes between day-to-day dialogue on partners’ delivery capacity and risk assessments regarding specific programmes and the dialogue for normative change conducted to influence or convince partners to adopt certain shared normative values in their work. However, as will be discussed in the evaluation, this distinction is less clear in practice. While normative dialogue goes beyond specific programmes or management, it is also closely linked to the daily ‘learning-by-doing’ by partners, particularly if the promotion of certain norms has been agreed on upfront and is even supported by additional capacity-building assistance from Sida.

1.3 METHODOLOGY AND EVIDENCE-BASE

1.3.1 Overall approach

This evaluation was designed with a strong **utilisation focus** given its formative nature and in line with the ToR (Annex 1). The evaluation did not seek to do a comprehensive cataloguing of dialogue efforts but relied to a large extent on ‘stories of change’ that appeared to be significant to different categories of internal and external stakeholders.

The evaluation approach is **theory-based** in that it analysed the effects of Sida’s normative dialogue in relation to an overarching theory of change (ToC) which was developed by the evaluation team during the inception phase based on scoping interviews and document reviews as well as iterative inputs from the evaluation steering group and reference group. The evaluation ToC (see Figure 1 and elaborated in Annex 2) provided the overarching analytical framework and set out a series of expected outcomes from normative dialogue in relation to individual changes in people’s awareness, knowledge and skills (typically among those directly involved in the dialogue process), and institutional and systemic outcomes at a collective level including in work practices, policies, priorities and policies.

The ToC for the evaluation takes a **system perspective**, i.e., that performance and effectiveness are affected by a set of interlinked sub-systems (‘domains of change’). These sub-systems have their own dynamics and are nested in a larger interlinked ‘eco-system’ of actors. The level of alignment and the quality of relationships within and across sub-systems affect the ultimate objective – to enable the delivery of development results based on universal norms and in line with Swedish development cooperation priorities.

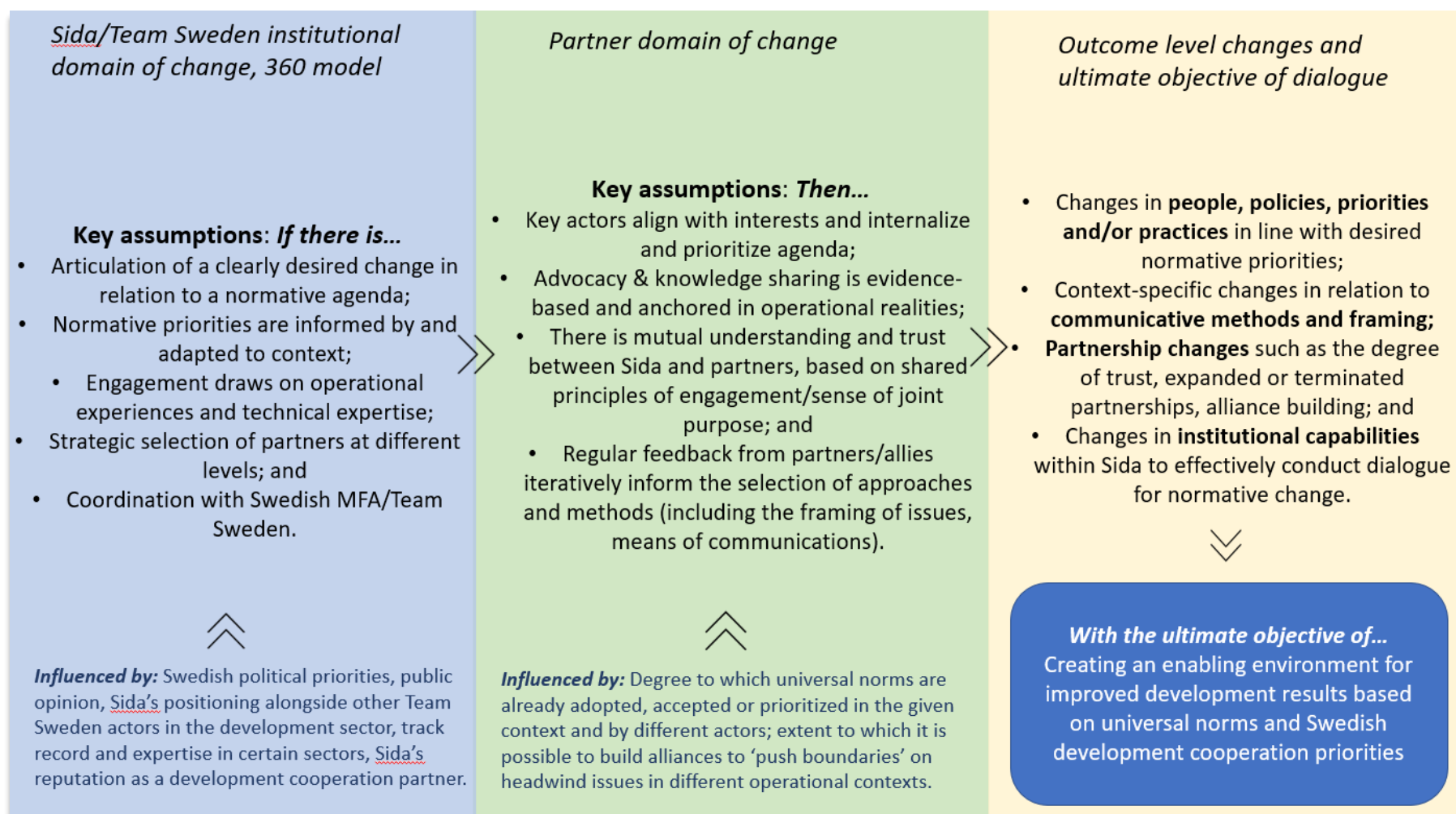


Figure 1 Evaluation ToC as developed by the evaluation team (also presented in Annex 2).

1.3.2 Methodology

The ToR for the evaluation (Annex 1) determined the case-based methodology to be applied, and specified pre-selected **thematic areas, sub-areas of focus, and geographical sampling** for each of the four cases. These were further explored and assessed for their evaluability during the inception phase of the evaluation. As per the evaluation design specified in the ToR, each thematic case focuses on specific sub-themes,¹¹ and covers (as applicable) normative dialogue at global, regional/multi-country and national levels:

- **Environment and climate change** with a focus on locally-led climate change adaptation and finance (LLCAF) at a global level and with country examples from Kenya and Bangladesh;
- **Sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR)** with a focus on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) at a global level and regional and country SRHR efforts and policy processes in Africa with examples on access to safe and legal abortion in Liberia and ending child marriage in Mozambique;
- **Gender equality** with a focus on women's economic empowerment (WEE), with country examples from Mozambique, Bangladesh, Somalia, Tanzania and in multi-country programming; and
- **Democracy and human rights** with a focus on normative dialogue around LGBTQI issues at global, regional (Eastern partnership countries) and national levels (Republic of Moldova).

The pre-selected case-based approach was combined with a tailored version of **outcome harvesting (OH)**. Outcome harvesting is an open-ended methodology in that it is more inductive than deductive in its approach. It emphasises finding emerging patterns in outcomes before formulating and further investigating causal pathways. The choice of method was considered appropriate given the somewhat 'fluid' boundaries of what normative dialogue is perceived to be within Sida and among Team Sweden members, and what it is meant to achieve as an intentional practice. As such, it was used to complement the nuanced narratives coming out of the cases and allow for cross-case analysis of emerging patterns when it came to **contributing enablers and barriers**.¹²

When Sida directly engaged in dialogue or indirectly via intermediaries or partners but where Sida played a significant role, the outcome was considered. While outcome harvesting was used to record and cluster results from normative dialogue and what

¹¹ Determined and validated through scoping interviews undertaken during the inception phase.

¹² A tool for logging of outcomes across cases and institutional KIIs according to various characteristics and variables is included in Annex 3.

enabled these, the thematic cases (see volume two of this report) went further in-depth in the analysis to determine what factors or institutional mechanisms within Sida enabled or hindered successful outcomes. Institutional mechanisms within Sida were also explored through focus group discussions held with Sida personnel representing different organisational functions at Sida headquarters (see 1.3.4).

1.3.3 Evaluation process

The evaluation was conducted between **August 2022 and August 2024** and consisted of three main phases: the inception phase, the data collection phase (including country visits for the four cases), and the synthesis and reporting phase. Field visits and in-country data collection took place between March and May 2023.

The methods for data collection and analysis have included:

- Key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions with input from 154 stakeholders (see Annex 4);
- Document review (see Annex 5); and
- Regular interactions with feedback from the evaluation steering group (consisting of Sida personnel) and reference group, including three participatory in-person workshops to share insights, discuss the methodology and evaluation ToC, discuss preliminary findings and brainstorm about recommendations.

Throughout the evaluation design and implementation process, **ethical considerations** were raised by the evaluation team and discussed with the Sida evaluation steering group. Safeguards to ensure anonymity included the need not to reveal too many details about organisations or interviewees consulted, particularly when it came to those working on headwind issues where there was strong resistance and where the context for dialogue was less conducive. This is reflected in some of the case studies where the sampling for each individual case is fairly small, and where it was the view of the evaluation team that harm could be done if too many details about working methods or interviewees were revealed. Draft text was also shared with thematic focal points in Sida, and occasionally with partners, for feedback to ensure such ethical considerations were appropriately addressed.

1.3.4 Evidence-base

The **evidence-base** for the findings consists of documents reviewed, consultations with 154 people through key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions with Sida, MFA staff, embassy staff, intermediaries (help desks, academia, framework civil

society organisations (CSOs), and partner organisations (Annex 4).¹³ Of these, a majority of respondents (56%) were from Team Sweden, i.e., Sida, MFA, embassies and other Swedish public agencies. Other groups of stakeholders consulted were: CSOs (20%); multilateral organisations (11%); other types of organisations such as the private sector, foundations and academia (7%); and national government agencies (around 6%) (see Figure 2).

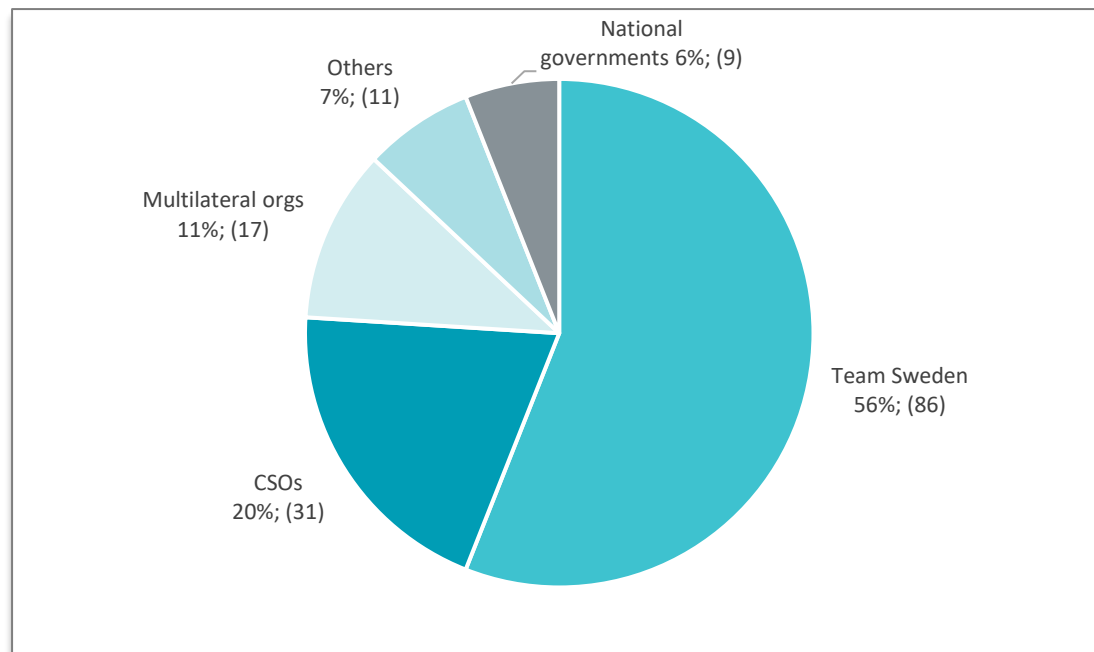


Figure 2 Overall sample of people consulted, (n=154).

Within the category of **Team Sweden respondents**, those from Sida headquarters represented most participants (54%), followed by embassy personnel (38%), remaining MFA functions (not in embassies) (7%), and other implementing Swedish public/government agencies (1%)¹⁴ (see Figure 3).

Although there was a clear majority of female respondents (around 70% women, 30% men), there was no noticeable difference in reported outcomes when **disaggregating** female from male informants. It should also be noted that while some respondents volunteered information about their gender identity, the evaluation team did not specifically inquire about the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) of respondents.

¹³ A total of 19 people participated in two focus group discussions. Some of the focus group participants were also consulted via in-depth interviews but only appear once in the final count.

¹⁴ E.g., Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa and Swedish Chemicals Agency.

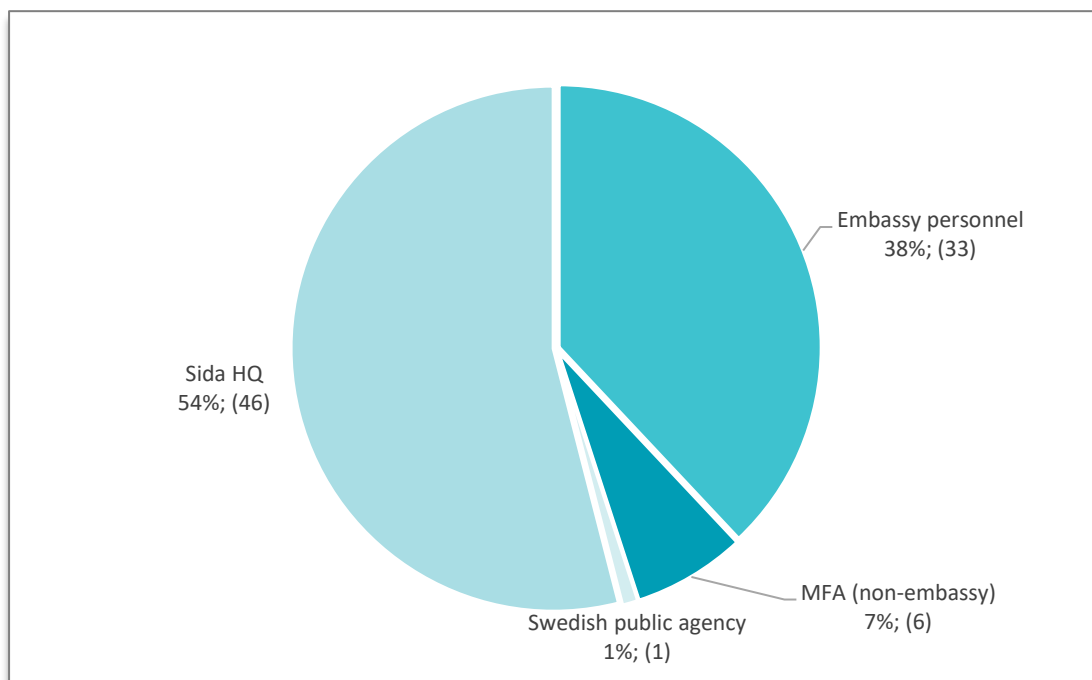


Figure 3 Breakdown of Team Sweden Respondents, (n=86).

Field visits with in-person interviews were conducted in four countries: Bangladesh, Kenya, the Republic of Moldova, and Mozambique, with country examples harvested (via digital KII interviewing, focus group discussions and document reviews) from a larger number of countries. As noted above, the sample was based on Sida's proposals in the ToR and refined in the inception phased to reflect available data, feedback from informants and relevance to the themes proposed by Sida.

The respondents (KII and focus group participants) were **purposely sampled** to reflect the formative nature of the evaluation. This reflected how efficiency questions (Sida's organisation, management, approaches and methods to undertake normative dialogue) constitute the majority of evaluation questions, linked to the learning objectives of the evaluation. An initial list of interviewees identified by Sida was expanded by the evaluation team for each of the thematic cases during the inception and scoping phase. In consultation with the evaluation steering group, additional Sida and MFA key informants were also added during the data gathering phase to sufficiently cover some of the organisational and internal steering functions in Sida and in embassies in order to answer the efficiency questions.

All harvested outcomes were gathered through in-depth KIIs and validated through literature review and focus group discussions. Outcomes were logged in an **online database** to allow for cross-case comparison. For each outcome, a number of characteristics and variables were noted (see Annex 3). In total, 45 distinct outcomes were logged, of which over 90% were based on inputs from multiple sources. Around half of the outcomes were based on inputs from more than one KII and other forms of validation such as documentation and/or focus group discussions. Other outcomes used only one KII as the basis, but with further validation from documentation and focus

group discussions. The four logged outcomes that used only one source (KIIs) were all part of thematic case studies and added a specific partner perspective given the broader case narrative.

The number of outcomes recorded per thematic area should be distinct from **level of significance** and perceived effectiveness of dialogue efforts given that results at global and regional levels often were found to have larger leveraging potential than those recorded for individual programmes or country-specific initiatives. While all outcomes were considered significant by one or several stakeholder groups, there was a variation in how stakeholders saw Sida's role and contribution (discussed more in section 2.3).

1.3.5 Limitations and challenges

A more in-depth discussion of limitations and challenges is included in Annex 2 on the approach and methods. Some of the main challenges included:

- The lack of awareness among Sida (and embassy) staff of what 'normative dialogue' is and how it is meant to be applied in relation to Sida's operational goal led to the need for the evaluation team to 'educate' interviewees on the definition and remit of what was being evaluated;
- A certain nervousness of interviewees (particularly at programme officer level) on whether they were allowed to share their views on the topic without first checking with their supervisors;
- The diversity of the use and applicability of methods for normative dialogue across the four thematic cases, which also generated challenges in comparability of lessons across cases;
- The lack of systematically gathered monitoring data in Sida on normative dialogue efforts and the need for the evaluation to rely primarily on individual recall and experiential evidence of interviewees;
- The assumption in Sida's pre-selection of thematic cases that synergies were present between the global, regional and country levels when more often normative dialogue happened in parallel at different levels of operation;¹⁵
- Difficulties in determining the extent of Sida's contribution to observed outcomes apart from via the significance assigned to Sida's role by interviewees and (when possible) validated by several internal and external stakeholders;
- The complex nature of how norms shift over time, with a number of overlapping factors and micro-level changes (in internal capabilities and in regard to opportunities in the external context) eventually accumulating to affect system dynamics and more tangible norm shifts; and

¹⁵ Some examples of linkages and synergy effects between different levels of operation were present in all cases, but not consistently (with SRHR being an exception).

- The long-term nature of normative change, compounded by staff turn-over and a reliance on correct recall by the interviewees (mitigated by the evaluation as far as possible via triangulation).

1.4 REPORT STRUCTURE

This report consists of three main chapters with further details provided in annexes. The case studies are included in volume two. Following this introductory section, Chapter two provides a detailed discussion of the overall evaluation findings, each clustered under the effectiveness (EQ1 and 2) and efficiency (EQ3-7) criteria of the evaluation questions. The efficiency questions are further divided into several sections relating to what they cover in terms of organisation and management (Section 2.3), approaches for working with partners (Section 2.4) and communications methods, means and messages (Section 2.5). Chapter 3 presents conclusions that cut across the different evaluation questions and provides recommendations for the key issues to be addressed.

Annexed to the current report are the ToR developed by Sida for the evaluation, a more extensive account of the evaluation approach, methodology and an example of the outcome logging tool, along with annexes listing organisations/functions consulted and literature reviewed. The inception report is available as a separate Annex, and further describes the scoping process, evaluability considerations and explanations of the evaluation ToC (see Figure 1). The thematic cases are written as stand-alone reports in volume two of the report.

2 Findings

2.1 EFFECTIVENESS: CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

This section seeks to answer the effectiveness of the evaluation question (EQ) that focuses on the likelihood of normative dialogue contributing to change. It also looks at different types of outcomes and explores the linkage between change from normative dialogue and improved development results. This was essential to test the evaluation ToC (see Figure 1), which defines the ultimate objective of normative dialogue as “creating an enabling environment for improved development results based on universal norms and Swedish development cooperation priorities.” Notably, the evaluation was not asked to evaluate the full impact of such enabling conditions, which would have widened the scope of causal inference beyond what the evidence can support. Moreover, full cataloguing of dialogue efforts per thematic area was not possible as there is no common understanding or way of tracking such dialogue efforts internally. Rather, focus was on recording stakeholders’ recall and experiential evidence of changes that led to normative shifts at different levels, and Sida’s role and significance in contributing to such shifts through normative dialogue. The evaluation question to be answered in this section is:

EQ1: How likely is it that the normative dialogue has *contributed* to change?

Key finding 1: When Sida and Team Sweden used normative dialogue strategically and as a complement to other forms of influencing,¹⁶ it enabled the achievement of development results in line with Swedish priorities and universal norms.

Normative dialogue has proven to be an effective tool in aligning development outcomes with universal norms and Swedish priorities. However, **for this dialogue to be truly transformative, specific conditions must be met.** Clear coordination is crucial among Team Sweden members, especially between Sida and the MFA. Additionally, normative dialogue should be applied as a complement to other forms of influence, such as financing, training, research, and capacity-building. Furthermore,

¹⁶ Including through funding, training and capacity-building, and research collaborations.

dialogue processes should be conducted at various levels, utilising multiple entry points to advance a well-defined normative agenda.

The evaluation recorded many stories of change where Sida's dialogue efforts led to concrete shifts in awareness, knowledge and skills at an individual level of those directly involved in the dialogue process. Changes were also seen in processes, policies, partnerships or institutions at a collective or systemic level.¹⁷ Based on stakeholders' recall and experiential evidence, these examples of positive change¹⁸ were found across all thematic cases and in examples brought up in focus group discussions on institutional practices.¹⁹

For all the recorded outcomes during the evaluation process, these results of normative dialogue were considered to have **substantially added value** to the conditions for, or delivery of development results.²⁰ Factors that enabled results from normative dialogue included:

- Creating new or deepening ongoing partnerships around normative priorities;
- Amplifying efforts of champions for change or already existing momentum for policy reform in line with universal norms (and as reflected in Swedish strategies);
- Positioning Sweden and its partners as legitimate and knowledgeable resources in priority areas – often through research and analytical work that contribute to a stronger evidence-base and clearer problem diagnostics;
- Increasing the number of entry-points for engagement on a normative issue, e.g., by connecting partners and policymakers in multistakeholder dialogue;
- Securing operating space for partners working in fragile or sensitive contexts; and
- Aligning actors' interests and identifying areas of mutual commitments in line with international normative frameworks and goals.

For a large majority of the recorded outcomes (nearly 80%), Sida used normative dialogue in **combination with different forms of financing**. This was done either through a specific programme, or by financing research or other types of diagnostic work that partners, in turn, would use in their own advocacy or policy reform work. In

¹⁷ A total of 45 outcomes were recorded, using outcome harvesting methods and tools. For more information on the ToC and outcome indicators, refer to the Inception Report and evaluation ToC.

¹⁸ The evaluation also inquired into examples of negative change, but no specific examples were observed. No change or sub-optimal change are covered under EQ2.

¹⁹ Two focus group discussions, held on March 21st and 23rd, 2023, involving a total of 19 Sida HQ staff.

²⁰ This was regardless of the perceived contribution by Sida to the outcome, which varied. Some outcomes were led by partners or other Team Sweden members with Sida taking a less prominent role or where the role of Sida was not used in an optimal way (explained further in the following sections).

three out of the four thematic cases such diagnostic work was used to facilitate processes where partners and stakeholders developed a joint ToC, agreed on shared principles or set an agenda for further normative engagement.²¹

Outcomes were fairly evenly harvested **across the themes**, with the variation largely explained by the sampling (see Figure 4).

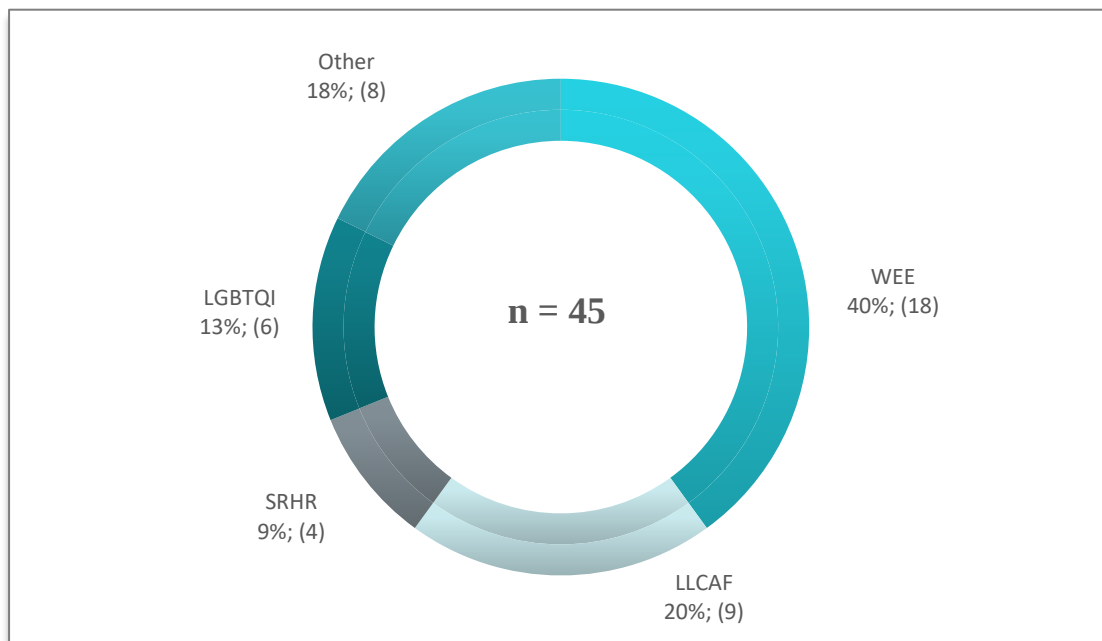


Figure 4 Outcomes harvested across themes.

Overall, a majority of outcomes were achieved at the country level (as shown in Figure 5). Even other (i.e., not case-specific) examples identified in focus group discussions or by non-case specific KIIs²² often referred to specific change processes in-country. This is not surprising given that this is where normative dialogue has had the most tangible effects on operations. Yet, all cases pointed to links with normative dialogue taking place at regional or global levels²³ where Sida played a more or less prominent role alongside other Team Sweden members.

²¹ WEE, LLCAF and SRHR.

²² Selected based on their overall track record within normative dialogue within Sida or at embassies.

²³ Through e.g., the support of international CSO partners, think tanks, or in multilateral fora or international conferences.

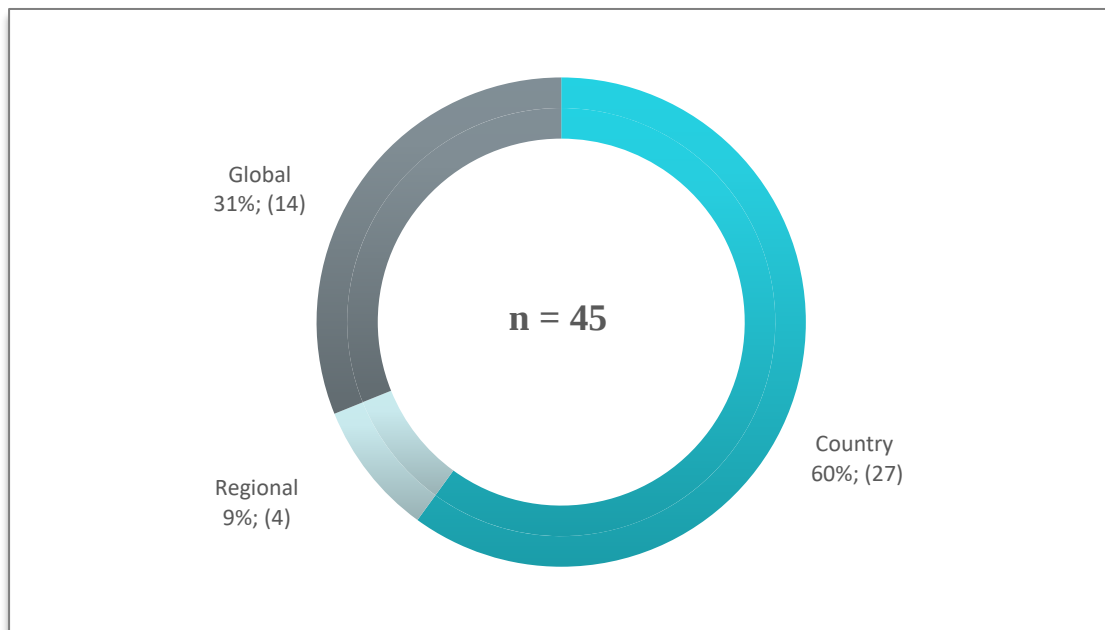


Figure 5 Harvested outcomes by level of operation.

Sida's role and contribution were considered to be **highly significant** in around half (23) of the 45 recorded outcomes from normative dialogue²⁴ (see Figure 6 below). That means that Sida staff, partners and/or other Team Sweden members considered Sida's contribution to have substantially contributed to the observed outcome, and that the outcome would not have occurred without Sida's involvement. Of these, 43% (10 of 23) of the outcomes were at a global or regional level with ripple effects for other levels of programming or engagement. These outcomes typically involved strategic policy influence at high-level meetings, normative engagement with multilateral institutions, taking an active role in donor coordination and anchoring the normative engagement with regional bodies and institutions. At a national level, examples included strong engagement in both policy dialogue and programming, with close coordination on normative priorities across the country portfolio. In a majority of the outcomes (70%), the dialogue complemented some form of financing. Likewise, a majority of outcomes (80%) involved direct engagement in the dialogue process combined with working via intermediaries and/or being part of a multi-donor initiative.

Medium-level significance (15 of 45) of Sida's contributions was typically assigned by stakeholders to outcomes where Sida played a role alongside other Team Sweden members, or where partners were more prominent in doing advocacy while Sida took more of a background role. For around one third of the outcomes recorded in this category, the normative change process was led and implemented almost exclusively

²⁴ Harvested based on KIIs and focus group discussions (21 and 23 March 2023) and validated by at least one source. See Annex 3 for format.

by the embassies (under the MFA), but the lack of a plan to implement a 360 model weakened Sida's involvement.

For seven (16%) of the 45 outcomes (as seen in Figure 6), the significance of Sida's role was **considered low**. This indicates that while the observed normative change in itself was considered important, Sida's role and contribution were less clear or visible to internal and external stakeholders. These occurred in the WEE and LLCAF thematic areas. In the WEE area, Sida's and/or the Swedish embassies' role was considered less significant, particularly among country counterparts, where they only had influence during the programme design, but then outsourced both programme management and dialogue on normative issues to a technical implementing partner (e.g., a consultancy firm). There were also instances in both LLCAF and WEE where Sida was perceived primarily as a financier and other, bigger funders were perceived to have more influence on the normative priority setting and dialogue.

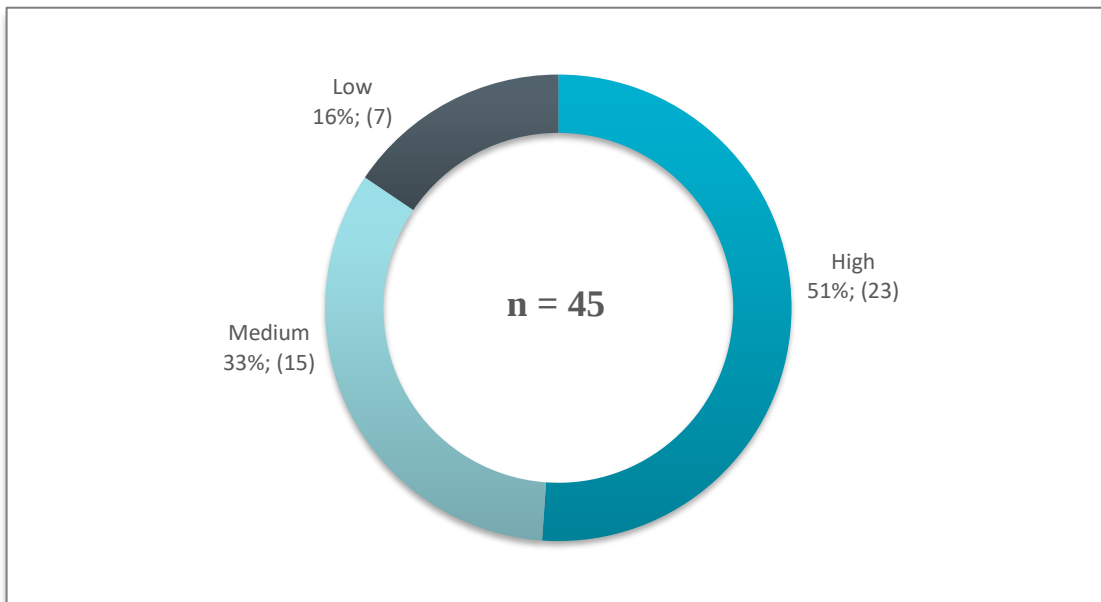


Figure 6 Perceived level of significance of Sida's role in relation to harvested outcomes from KIIs, n=45.

The types of changes observed²⁵ indicated that the **greatest shifts** were in awareness, attitudes, skills and/or behaviours at the individual level (people), often combined with other types of changes in processes or priorities, partnerships or policy shifts (shown in Figure 7). Yet, slightly more than half of the recorded outcomes also led to more systemic or institutional changes in relation to partnerships or shifts in policy.

²⁵ In line with the evaluation ToC.

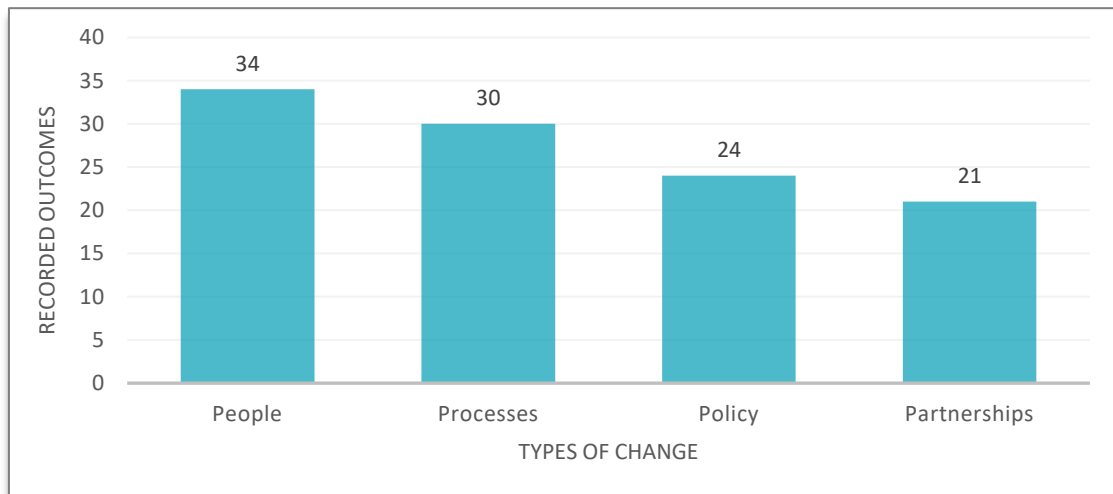


Figure 8 Types of changes observed as a result of normative dialogue across the 45 recorded outcomes (categories are not mutually exclusive), n=45.

More than one third of the outcomes (40%) observed two main shifts. These were most often changes in people's awareness, knowledge and skills (individual level) combined with one of the other categories. Nearly one in four (24%) outcomes recorded changes in three categories and nearly one in five (18%) recorded changes across all four categories. **Multiple changes** typically occurred where Sida played a prominent role and engaged in dialogue at various levels and through multiple channels (directly, via intermediaries and in donor coordination). When Sida's contribution was considered highly significant, the types of changes observed were more evenly distributed across all of the change categories (see Figure 8). These outcomes were also more strategic in nature, anchored in clearly articulated internal priorities in line with universal norms.

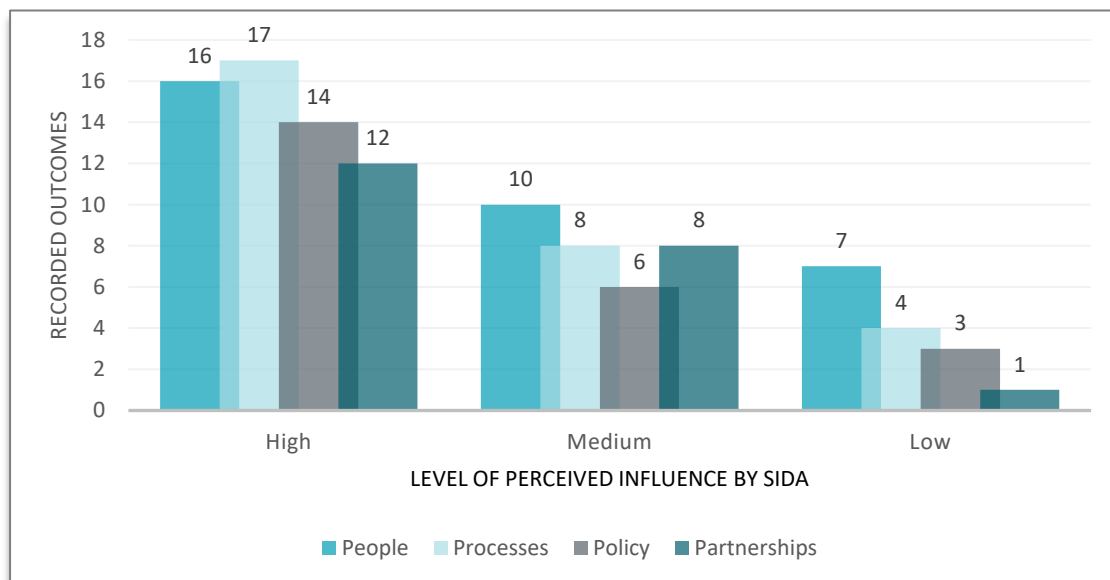


Figure 7 Distribution of observed changes as a result of normative dialogue across the 45 recorded outcomes by level of perceived influence by Sida (categories are not mutually exclusive), n=45.

Key finding 2: Sida's normative dialogue is used to push the boundaries on issues, thereby contributing to how issues are framed in policy formulation and implementation.

Several examples across the four cases and in non-case-specific interviews illustrated how Sida uses normative dialogue to push the boundaries of how issues are framed in order to align objectives and achieve results in line with Swedish development cooperation priorities. Perseverance and working with like-minded partners were considered key factors for **shifting the framing**.

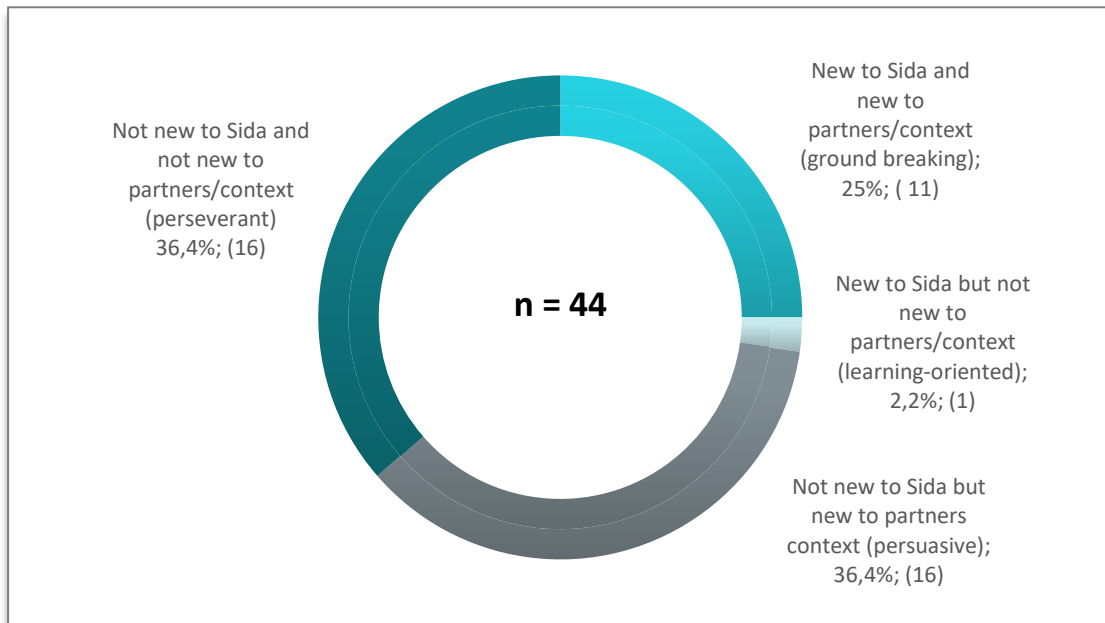


Figure 9 Perceived use of normative dialogue to frame or influence the normative agenda (n=44, as one of the 45 outcomes lacked the data).

Of the documented outcomes, one in four (25%) exemplified how normative dialogue had been used to explore areas that were new to Sida and to partners, thereby laying the ground for new partnerships and implementation areas. In other outcomes, the normative issue was not new to Sida, nor its partners (36,4% of outcomes). In one example, partner-led normative dialogue initially lacked broader internal anchoring in Sida (i.e., it was new to Sida, but not new to partners). In around one third of outcomes (also 36,4%), Sida sought to directly influence partners to adopt or strengthen normative priorities of importance in Sweden's strategies (Figure 9).

One example²⁶ of how normative dialogue was used to lay the ground for a shift in framing was the establishment of a workstream for civil society within the OECD DAC. Its adoption called for new and renewed policies also within Sida. The successful normative dialogue helped push the boundaries for working in new ways, which had previously been resisted among partners (Box 1).

Box 1. Creating new conditions for engagement: The establishment of a workstream for civil society within the OECD DAC

Through its civil society unit CIVSAM, Sida has actively been raising attention to the need to support local partners via core support in line with aid effectiveness and localisation principles. Sida has pursued efforts to establish a workstream for civil society within the OECD DAC since 2017. This involved normative dialogue led by CIVSAM at Sida headquarters and through active collaboration with seconded personnel from Sweden to OECD. Among other things, the new workstream has conducted a large study of DAC members' support to civil society, created a reference group for CSOs in DAC, established regular OECD DAC Civil Society Days and created a Community of Practice for all DAC members.

A key milestone has been to come up with a recommendation to OECD-DAC members on Enabling Civil Society, a toolkit to support common approaches to “Funding civil society in partner countries,” and a second on “Shifting power within partnerships”. Sida played an instrumental role in the normative dialogue by applying a clear change theory and working through multiple channels in a coordinated manner. For CIVSAM, the workstream was considered a success in taking the dialogue further, opening up new space for engagement, revisiting the framing of the issue, aligning interests and overcoming resistance. These processes have implications for Sida's continued multilateral engagement and donor coordination on the issue, and for how Sida updates its own policies and operational guidance. The constant interaction between external dialogue (with OECD and in OECD-facilitated fora) and reflection within Sida was noted as helpful to inform internal thinking and efforts to develop policies and renew approaches. Sida's ability to maintain a persistent and collegial approach created conditions that enabled achievement of these results.

2.2 EFFECTIVENESS: SUCCESS FACTORS AND OBSTACLES

This section covers effectiveness questions related to what successful outcomes of normative dialogue may look like and what may hinder such success (further explored

²⁶ This example was brought up in focus group discussions and was further validated afterwards (March-April 2023). It does not form part of the four thematic case studies but was recorded as one of the 45 outcomes overall.

under the efficiency section). Drawing on the findings from the four thematic cases, enabling and hindering factors are always highly contextual. Yet, there are also some commonalities across different thematic areas and contexts. The team analysed factors and mechanisms that enabled or hindered success both in the institutional domain – covering assumptions spelled out in the ToC that directly relate to how Sida and other Team Sweden actors organise themselves, and in the partner domain of change – covering assumptions of how Sida and Team Sweden interact directly or indirectly in the dialogue with and through partners. The following two evaluation questions are answered in this section:

EQ2: What are examples of *successful outcomes* of normative dialogue at Sida? What are examples of *unsuccessful outcomes*?

EQ3: Which key *success factors* and *mechanisms* can be identified? Which key factors and mechanisms can be identified as hindering successful normative dialogue?

Key finding 3: The characteristics of successful and unsuccessful normative dialogue are context dependent, yet there are some common enabling and hindering factors that cross-cut contexts. This includes having a clear and coordinated Swedish strategy based on good evidence that is executed by competent staff and involves trust-building with partners.

The four thematic cases and institutional KII feedback²⁷ illustrated that success can be difficult to detect or define since changes almost always are multi-directional and often consists of a series of micro-changes in attitudes and behaviour that cumulatively lead to more systemic shifts in policy or practice.

The evaluation cases and focus group discussions nevertheless found some common key **enabling factors for success**, which included:

- A clearly articulated strategy with spelled-out normative objectives;
- Strong coordination among Team Sweden actors at multiple levels;
- The use of multiple entry points for engagement, including strategic leveraging of multilateral partners at global, regional, and national levels;
- Sufficient staff capacity in terms of both technical and negotiation skills to respond to emerging opportunities for dialogue on strategic priorities;
- A strong, shared evidence-base among key actors on which joint messaging can be developed and adapted to context to ensure national ownership; and
- Investment in trust-building among key actors over time.

²⁷ Focus group discussions (21 and 23 March 2023) and KIIs with different Sida and Team Sweden institutional actors (undertaken in May-June 2023).

These enabling factors were found across all four cases to varying degrees.

Yet, one of the clearest examples of successful normative dialogue was in the SRHR area where **capabilities to act strategically** on the normative agenda were recorded within both Sida as a part of a unified Team Sweden approach, and among partners²⁸ (Box 2).

Box 2. SRHR integration into Universal Health Care commitments

Team Sweden, with lead from the technical expertise within the Sida SRHR Regional Team and Sida headquarters, established strategic support for integrating SRHR into countries' commitments to Universal Health Care. Initially, this included mobilising support for the agenda among a core group of like-minded actors across UN agencies, governments, research organisations, and civil society (including extended Team Sweden actors). Sida played a key role in drafting a concept note which was successfully negotiated and approved by the group. Initial convening also included agreeing on strategies and an overarching ToC which was backed by a road map and key messages that were used in the normative dialogue at different levels and in different spaces.

At the highest policy level, as a result of the joint normative dialogue conducted by Sweden and like-minded allies, SRHR was adopted as an integral component of Universal Health Care (UHC) within the political declaration of the Geneva 2019 UN High-Level Meeting on UHC. Sweden played a key role in the advocacy process. To support technical operationalisation of the declaration, a SRHR and UHC reference group was established at the World Health Organization (WHO). The mandate and legitimacy of WHO and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), helped to create leverage for the political declaration. A notable institutional policy change was also the inclusion of SRHR and UHC in the UNFPA global strategy.

Programmatic funding was not the main influencing channel in this change process. Yet, the normative dialogue created conditions for numerous funded partnerships and follow-up opportunities for normative dialogue at different levels. Sida, as part of a coordinated Team Sweden approach, could also successfully leverage its long-standing partnership with UNFPA, other multilateral organisations and regional bodies including the EU, through a mix of normative dialogue and programming. For instance, the regional '2gether4SRHR programme', funded by the Sida Regional SRHR programme, has helped strengthen UN partners (UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO) working jointly to influence the SRHR agenda in Sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, through the same programme support, the Southern Africa Development Committee (SADC) developed a regional SRHR strategy that requires member states to ensure that SRHR is integrated into UHC and primary health care agendas.

The approach of securing high-level political support (aligning with international and regional normative frameworks), coupled with regional and country-level efforts, was

²⁸ The institutional and partner domains in the evaluation ToC.

considered necessary partly because aspects of SRHR are highly contested in most places Sida operates. A highly political and strategic approach was needed to shift conditions to engage on the agenda and secure operating space for international and local actors whose interests aligned with universal SRHR norms.

This differed from the cases of WEE and LLCAF, which were considered **less sensitive in nature** and where there was a considerably higher level of alignment among key actors. That also meant that more of the normative dialogue was linked to specific programmes and that the normative dialogue had greater importance in programme design and as part of contribution management in the regular partner dialogue. For gender equality (including WEE), a strong policy impetus was the Swedish government's Feminist Foreign Policy,²⁹ which provided an additional incentive to develop an articulated strategy for WEE as part of a broader effort to use normative dialogue as an intentional tool to advance Sida's work on gender equality³⁰ (Box 3).

Box 3. The Feminist Foreign Policy – an incentive for an integrated approach to normative dialogue on gender equality

The Feminist Foreign Policy gave little guidance on practical implications of the policy and how it differed from previous approaches to gender equality, as noted in the recent EBA study *More than a label, less than a revolution: Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy*. Instead, it provided an **opportunity for embassies** to define implementation mechanisms and concludes that “aid embassy staff reported norm promotion to be the most common method used to pursue gender equality”.

In Bangladesh, Sweden has a long track record in the area of gender equality. The Feminist Foreign Policy gave further impetus to engaging in normative dialogue on a range of gender equality issues. Combined with internal leadership, prioritisation, support from the Sida headquarters geographical planning unit, and the assignment of dedicated staff to coordinate across sectors and programmes, the policy led to the creation of a **coordinated ‘whole-of-embassy’ approach** to gender equality as a focus for normative dialogue. Although the Feminist Foreign Policy was abandoned by the Swedish government in 2022, the holistic and integrated approach to normative dialogue on gender equality still exists in Bangladesh, using the expertise across the whole country portfolio while tracking cross-sectoral synergies and effects.

Despite also having agreed principles, a similar policy drive was **lacking** in the field of LLCAF, leaving bigger gaps in the coherence of approach and messaging at different levels. Relying almost exclusively on programme management fora to advance normative priorities also proved less effective (see section 2.1), worsened by the lack

²⁹ The policy was adopted by the Swedish Government in 2014 and abandoned in 2022.

³⁰ Ann Towns, Elin Bjarnegård, Katarzyna Jezierska. (2023). *More than a Label, Less than a Revolution: Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy*. EBA 2023:02.

of a clear mandate for staff to take on a more active role in the normative dialogue in the context of contribution management (see also key finding 6).

Few stakeholders recalled specific examples of **unsuccessful** normative dialogue. This may be due to the fact that normative dialogue was not systematically documented or reported on before 2019, and the lack of positive effects (as opposed to negative effects) may therefore be difficult for stakeholders to recall or retrospectively assess. All thematic cases did, however, underline the importance of securing ownership among national and local stakeholders to avoid backlash. A lesson, based on two distinct examples,³¹ was also that such ownership needs to be broad-based within institutions or among a core group of like-minded stakeholders and that working with individual champions of change may not suffice.

Hindering factors for effective normative dialogue were often associated with outcomes where Sida's significance was perceived to be low (15%) but were also derived from non-case specific KIIs and focus group discussions on institutional practices and mechanisms. A frequently recurring discussion was related to the strategic direction of the dialogue efforts, where staff pointed to a lack of clarity about Sida's priorities for using normative priorities as a complementary tool to other forms of influence (such as financing). The lack of relevance or adaptation of global normative priorities to the national context was also referred to as a hindering factor. Conversely, insufficient sharing or use of information about normative dialogue linked to contribution management in-country weakened the use of a 360 model. Other hindering factors included:

- Weak internal mechanisms to monitor and connect normative dialogue with improved development results (affecting time use and lack of internal incentives to engage in and report on dialogue efforts);
- Weak organisational culture of working with change theories where the role and added value of Sida in relation to other Team Sweden actors is spelled out;
- Lack of guidance on how to work with normative agendas across sectors;
- Insufficient clarity in guidelines, instructions, and tools on how to address prioritised normative dialogue;³²
- Insufficient sharing of knowledge products and staff capacity in undertaking strategic communications;
- A disconnect between those working with political issues/reporting (including at ambassador level) and those in charge of development cooperation at embassies; and

³¹ In the thematic areas of WEE and LGBTQI.

³² E.g., Sida. (2010). *Instruktion för bidrag ur anslagsposten Stöd genom svenska organisationer i det civila samhället*.

- Seeing partner selection as the end goal of normative dialogue, or ‘outsourcing’ normative change work to partners.

Key finding 4: Sida is recognised by partners as promoting its values and also stepping back and listening when appropriate, but Sida could be more proactive in how it adds value to the normative work of partners.

Partners commonly referred to Sida as a ‘**value-driven**’ funder. Being persistent and committed to issues does not necessarily imply that Sida must be visible or in the lead, as its role has in several instances been to create conditions for dialogue among others and support champions or partners who have emerged endogenously. It was noted that “dialogue is as much about listening as it is about formulating key messages,”³³ and Sida was referred to by external stakeholders as a “listening donor,”³⁴ as well as appreciated for its readiness to let partners “do the talking.”³⁵ For instance, Sida’s support to LGBTQI-led partners has enabled LGBTQI activists to directly engage in normative dialogue at high-level policy fora.

Listening and being supportive of partners does not mean that Sida does not have a role to play that is complementary to partners when it comes to normative dialogue. Allied stakeholders on headwind normative dialogue (and also to some extent, those working with LLCAF) expressed that they would like Sida to be **more visible and vocal on Swedish positions** in ways that would add value to the advocacy on normative shifts by partners. Many Sida respondents saw this as being outside their role or did not feel they had the internal mandate to speak out on normative issues.

In case examples where **the 360 model** was working well – allowing for dialogue efforts to be based on practical experience and priorities on the ground – Sida staff were more confident in how they worked proactively to promote values. However, sometimes the model appeared to be more aspirational in nature, particularly when there was more of a focus on national level normative discourses than on global policies and priorities (see Box 4).

³³ KIIs conducted May-June 2023.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

Box 4. The challenge of harmonising national and global discourses

LLCAF is an area where, despite clear global principles wherein Sida has had an active role, country-level programmes have tended to ‘live a life of their own’ due to the predominance of national discourses. This was evident in Kenya where national actors were largely focused on the constitutionally driven policy of devolving power to the counties. Sida faced a challenge in ensuring that its environmental and biodiversity goals were adequately addressed within the dominant focus on overall devolution of power. In Bangladesh, UNCDF played an important role in maintaining coherence between the Bangladeshi focus on extreme poverty and the global LLCAF emphasis on climate vulnerability. The examples reflect how it is through the contributions, and within the work of programme officers who manage them, that Sida’s LLCAF commitments are harmonised with partners’ nationally defined priorities and practices.

2.3 EFFICIENCY: ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF NORMATIVE DIALOGUE

This section looks at two efficiency questions that affect how Sida is positioned alongside other Team Sweden actors (notably the MFA) in the normative dialogue efforts, and how Sida organises and manages normative dialogue efforts internally to maximise strategic added value. The evaluation’s ToC assumes that the efficiency of Sida’s internal organisation directly affects its ability to engage partners, thus affecting desired outcomes. The internal systems to organise and manage the normative dialogue also sought to identify what successful and less successful normative dialogue looked like (covered in section 2.2). In this section, these are further explored and exemplified. This section also includes reflections on internal resources (time, budgets, human resource capacity) needed to engage strategically in normative dialogue, particularly as it affects Sida’s role and engagements with other Team Sweden actors. As per the ToR for the evaluation, the EQs covered here are:

EQ4: How does Sida’s *prioritisation, planning and follow-up* of normative dialogue affect the results of Sida’s normative dialogue?

EQ5: How does Sida’s *organisation* of the normative dialogue, i.e., roles, responsibilities, forum for dialogue, and timing affect the results of normative dialogue? How does Sida’s role in and *coordination within Team Sweden*, affect the results of Sida’s normative dialogue?

Key finding 5: Sida lacks clear internal direction or capacity to engage directly in normative dialogue. There is minimal systematic monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) to build a case for Sida’s added value in Team Sweden’s normative dialogue effort.

The extent of Sida's strategic approach in relation to **prioritisation, planning and follow-up** of dialogue varies. This clearly **affects the level of results achieved**. High-level coordination of dialogue with multilateral organisations at a global level is well organised, led and managed by a dedicated unit in Sida. Yet, bridging such multilateral dialogue with the planning of operational units still appeared to be *ad hoc* despite some recorded positive examples.³⁶ The lack of institutionalised practices in this field undermines the aspiration of creating more coherence in the way Sida influences its multilateral support. The evaluation found that Sida was most likely to influence multilateral agencies (including the UN, multilateral development banks and other international organisations) and processes when it was seen as a knowledge resource with clear links to results achieved on the ground. Conversely, in the country context, successful dialogue results were recorded when the dialogue could follow up on agreements and discussions held at regional or global levels.

Planning functions at the different Sida departments have a recently enhanced support role in coordinating normative dialogue and in developing adapted dialogue plans for their respective units.³⁷ Efforts to create a more coherent institutional approach to normative dialogue are nevertheless fairly recent, since the operational goal on normative dialogue was included in Sida's operational plan in 2019. At the time of the evaluation, clear **internal guidance from the senior management** on what the operational goal on normative dialogue means when it comes to prioritisation, planning and follow-up was largely found to be missing.

Sida's organisation of the normative dialogue in terms of roles and responsibilities, was negatively affected by a perceived lack of clarity among a majority of the consulted Sida staff on their **mandate** and 'boundaries' for normative dialogue. Sometimes,³⁸ Sida served primarily as a funding mechanism for partners while it let MFA do all the talking. In other scenarios, Sida used its partnerships more strategically to gather lessons, strengthen the evidence base, and use such insights strategically in its normative dialogue efforts alongside the MFA. Across most of the gathered examples in the thematic cases, Sida tended to step back once partnerships were in place. A certain nervousness of overstepping Sida's mandate and role was referred to as a major reason. Other reasons ranged from normative dialogue being a fairly new and poorly understood concept; the internal goal formulation in Sida's operational plan is too vague ("could mean anything")³⁹; the roles and responsibilities of different categories

³⁶ E.g., in relation to SRHR and to a varying degree in the area of WEE.

³⁷ This is a relatively recent phenomenon and there are variations between the different departments.

³⁸ Observed across all thematic cases, though primarily when internal capacity or an internal strategic vision was lacking.

³⁹ KII, direct quote.

of staff are poorly defined and sometimes disputed; and it is unclear how normative priorities are set and how the management of dialogue efforts takes place internally.⁴⁰

Sida's key informants noted that a **mind-shift**, "including at the highest level of leadership and prioritisation within Sida,"⁴¹ would be needed to reconceptualise normative dialogue as something intrinsic to the practical delivery of effective development results. Such a mind-shift would require moving away from assumptions that Sida simply influences partners through dialogue, who in turn deliver results in line with Swedish priorities. Such a linear change theory does not reflect what the evaluation encountered in actual practice. The evaluation found that pathways to change were more complex and included both enabling (and possibly hindering) roles of multiple actors in the dialogue process, including Sida and other Team Sweden actors.⁴²

The evaluation asked key informants to describe what **key capabilities** enabled Sida to contribute to a specific outcome, and then clustered answers into categories of key capabilities⁴³. KIIs cited most frequently: i) the "capability to relate and attract others" in relation to alliance-building; and ii) trust-building among partners (for nearly two-thirds of the outcomes), along with the capability to commit and engage over time. The capability to balance diversity and coherence in the approach and messaging was noted least often (in 11 of the 45 harvested outcomes). This is caused by Sida often purposively selecting already like-minded partners, instead of trying to convince a more diverse group to ascribe to certain norms. However, this was not seen as a static form of alignment. In nearly half of the harvested outcomes, the "capability to adapt to the context and self-renew in line with strategic priorities" was referred to. This reflects outcomes where Sida has used normative dialogue to act opportunistically, e.g., by

⁴⁰ Currently the work on normative dialogue is led by a focal point in Sida's department for international organisations, global strategies and thematic support. The department also hosts the internal working group for normative dialogue with participation from several Sida departments. However, the links between this internal working group and Sida's leadership, decision-making and management systems as an institution was unclear at the time of the evaluation.

⁴¹ KII.

⁴² Such enabling or hindering factors could (based on examples) include e.g., the degree of alignment and coordination between Sida and MFA, and/or the willingness of other extended Team Sweden actors to adopt key normative priorities in relation to human rights, gender equality, and the mainstreaming of environmental issues.

⁴³ Based on the core capabilities framework as described in Heather Baser and Peter Morgan. (2008). *Capacity, Change and Performance Study report*. Maastricht. ECPDM discussion paper no 59B. <http://ecdpm.org/publications/capacity-change-performance-study-report/>.

working with emerging champions for change in institutions and/or where there was already ongoing momentum for change in line with Swedish priorities (Figure 10).

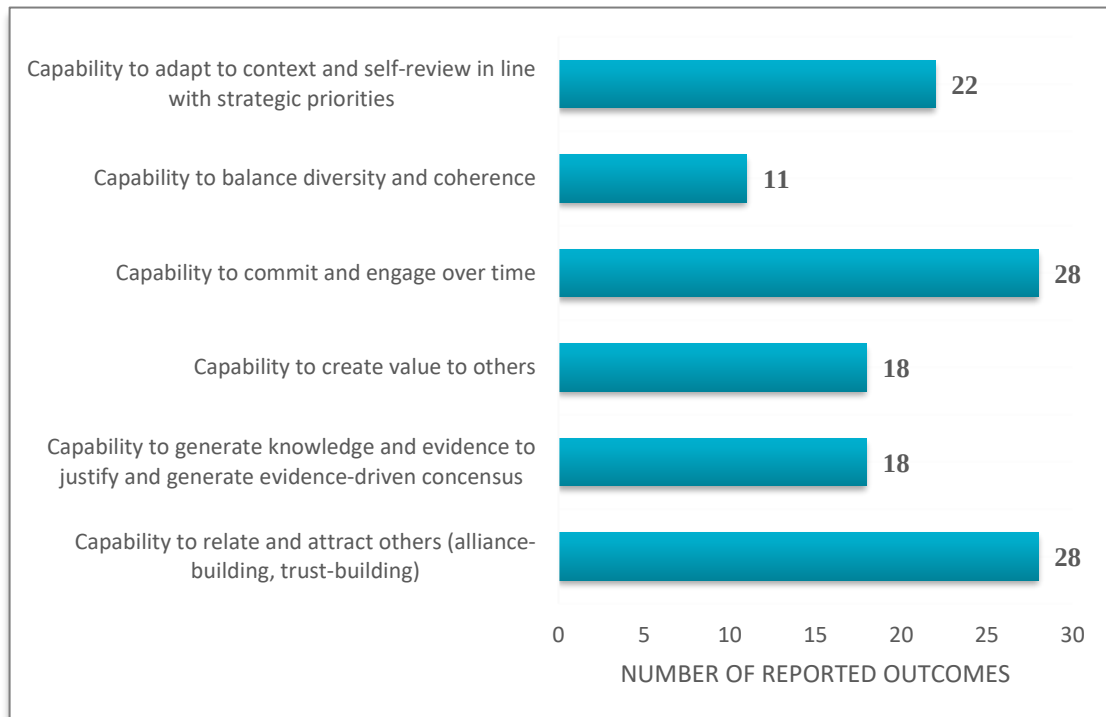


Figure 10 Organisational capabilities within Sida that affected the outcomes of normative dialogue.

Capacity issues often compounded confusion around Sida's mandate related to normative dialogue. This affected the extent to which institutional knowledge was built and shared internally over time, and the extent to which norms were reflected across Sida's internal structures and tools, for example, in the area of LGBTQI rights (Box 5).

Box 5. Capacity to 'walk the talk' on LGBTQI issues

In addressing LGBTQI rights, the stakeholders consulted observed that Sida does not directly engage in normative dialogue apart from in donor coordination. This is less of a strategic choice as it is linked to a division of labour 'by default' given Sida's limited human resources capacity in this area and the diverse (often *ad hoc*) ways in which the normative dialogue is organised among Team Sweden actors. Team Sweden dialogue is led by MFA at global and country level, as well as by the LGBTQI organisations that operate globally, regionally and in-country. On the other hand, Sida's role and visibility on the issue are limited by human resources constraints. These capacity gaps are visible across Sida's strategy instructions and tools, most notably those related to gender equality, which remain largely binary and provide little basis for undertaking more explicit messages on the rights of LGBTQI persons. Thus, even though Sweden (collectively) is at the forefront of the rights of LGBTQI persons, Sida has a low profile with limited capacity to institutionalise knowledge and provide technical and policy backstopping to colleagues on LGBTQI issues.

Currently, **MEL** is still primarily contribution-focused. Monitoring is rarely elevated to the portfolio level, much less to a level that reflects the cumulative effects of Team

Sweden in promoting Swedish normative priorities and which illustrates the added value of different Team Sweden actors at varying levels of operation (e.g., the role division and synergy effects of MFA and Sida in addition to the normative work of external partners). Without consistent tracking and documentation against clear joint objectives and a clearly spelled out ToC across Team Sweden actors, it is difficult for Sida to demonstrate its comparative advantage or to generate lessons that could inform future joint Team Sweden efforts and role division in the normative work. Interviewees also noted that such ‘holistic’ systems thinking is not currently prioritised as part of the monitoring, evaluation, and learning practice, which focuses primarily on administration and control of contributions.

Capacity shortages, gaps in internal coordination, uneven communication on normative priorities (particularly when it comes to operationalising the 360 model), combined with unclear conceptualisation of normative dialogue as an integrated approach to development cooperation is **likely to negatively affect the results** of Sida’s normative dialogue.

Key finding 6: Sida staff are uncertain about how normative dialogue relates to other contribution management tasks and responsibilities.

Roles and responsibilities within normative dialogue was found to be particularly unclear when it came to **how staff prioritise** and include normative dialogue alongside other tasks in contribution management.

Uncertainty and diverging views prevail regarding the differences between normative dialogue and the dialogue undertaken as regular administrative and financial follow-up on agreed programme objectives as part of contribution management (what some KIIs referred to as ‘normal’ dialogue).⁴⁴ Ideally, the systems to organise and manage normative dialogue should have clear linkages and boundaries related to this normal dialogue. Views on whether this exists diverge considerably. Feedback from Sida stakeholders at headquarters disputed whether this differentiation was significant, given that all of Sida’s work should, in principle, be driven by the same values and universal norms. However, the ToR⁴⁵ for this evaluation explicitly defines these two tasks as being different, stating: “The normative dialogue differs from the day-to-day dialogue that Sida has with its cooperation partners regarding specific programs and projects, i.e., dialogue on capacity and risk assessment or the organisation’s ability to implement the program and report results.”

⁴⁴ Frequently recurring observation among both Sida staff at headquarters and embassy staff in-country.

⁴⁵ See Annex 1.

KIIs indicate that most programme officers, indeed, see all their work as anchored in norms. At the same time, they also perceive their **contribution management** as primarily focused on the practicalities of managing contributions rather than having a dialogue about wider norms. This appears to be how they interpret the Trac guidelines that inform Sida staff, programme officers in particular, of their tasks and responsibilities.⁴⁶ Trac instructs them to prioritise their work and as guidance for this states that: “Contribution management is Sida’s core activity.” Trac guidance provides ample advice on ensuring that choices and follow-up regarding programming reflect Swedish strategies and at least some of the five perspectives. However, subsequent day-to-day dialogue is inevitably focused more on practical and administrative matters. Some interviewees expressed frustration that, for example, in annual meetings on programmes with multiple donors, Sida was the only agency present that was even trying to transcend administrative issues and inject reflections on how implementation reflected normative intentions.

The **resulting ambiguities** inherent in the continuum between normative and ‘normal’ dialogue have positive and negative implications. On the positive side, it gives space for Sida staff at embassies to tailor dialogue to the local and often contribution-related discussions in which they are engaged. It also generates opportunities to monitor and promote strategic coherence as part of implementation. On the negative side, programming-related conversations may diverge from headquarters’ efforts to establish a coherent set of normative messages.

Tracking the results of dialogue for normative change is weakened because it usually **falls outside of programme-specific monitoring and follow-up**. If normative change does get picked up in Trac – such tracking does not necessarily aggregate efforts to allow reflection on Sida/Sweden’s overall role and contribution across programmes at portfolio or country level, or in relation to other Team Sweden actors.

Key finding 7: A clear, politically anchored dialogue strategy and agenda provides incentives for better coordination and organisation of dialogue efforts within Sida and across Team Sweden actors.

Three of the thematic studies showed that integration of the Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) in the prioritisation and coordination of normative dialogue at all levels of operation, contributed to important **positive results**.⁴⁷ FFP gave coherent signals on policy priorities across Swedish public agencies in charge of foreign policy

⁴⁶ Sida. (2021). *A Guide to Contribution Management at Sida*, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Introduced by the government in 2014 and abandoned in 2022 in connection with a change of government and government priorities.

implementation and embassies. A recent study⁴⁸ concludes that all agencies became engaged in more gender equality activities after the FFP was introduced⁴⁹ and that the policy contributed to joint action and coordination between policy areas.⁵⁰ While ways of working were not necessarily drastically altered regarding programmatic work, the recent EBA study concluded that the government's policy directives to the embassies led to increased attention to gender equality at embassies. This coincides with the findings of this evaluation where organisation, prioritisation and role divisions between Team Sweden actors were generally clearer in areas linked to the FFP (WEE, SRHR and LGBTQI) than in the area of environment and climate change. Three interviewees in the LLCAF case study noted this contrast between approaches to gender and environment.

The success of the FFP in giving **structure to the normative dialogue** was also because it aligned with, reinforced, and added to other steering signals on gender equality and ongoing programming in this area. It is, therefore, important to consider whether aspects of the model applied through the Feminist Foreign Policy can be replicated – or if it represents an exception that proves the rule. Although this evaluation cannot give an exhaustive answer to this question, it noted that the more successful examples of normative dialogue come from areas where the normative objectives are clear, the process is well-structured, and there is frequent communication both vertically (between various levels of engagement) and horizontally among groups of like-minded peers with shared normative objectives. (See also section 2.2 on success factors).

At embassy-level, results were positively affected by **clear coordination** across political and technical functions with strong buy-in among all embassy staff on priorities for normative shifts and objectives. The ability to work adaptively and opportunistically in the local context added to the overall relevance of regional and global strategies and facilitated a shared understanding about the positions and policies that constitute the 'norms' that the dialogue is about. Spelling out expectations and functions of different staff in relation to normative objectives was found to be important. For instance, several of the national programme officers at embassies interviewed did not see it as their role to engage in normative dialogue (a role typically

⁴⁸ Towns, Bjarnegård and Jezierska. (2023). *More than a Label, Less than a Revolution: Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy*, p. 67.

⁴⁹ With the exception of the Inspectorate of Strategic Products, the Swedish agency mandated with implementing the government's Security Policy.

⁵⁰ Linked to the increased use of normative dialogue as a policy instrument, the study states that "the FFP gave the embassy staff the mandate to discuss what Sweden does in the area of gender equality more often and in a more comprehensive way, leading Kenyan actors to expect the embassy to bring up gender equality. See Towns, Bjarnegård and Jezierska. (2023). *More than a Label, Less than a Revolution: Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy*, p. 67.

considered to be reserved for the Ambassador and/or Head of Development Cooperation). Yet, evidence from country-level examples across the four thematic cases revealed that they often played critical roles given that they were well-versed in the national political context and housed important institutional memory from having monitored issues over time. Close coordination between Ambassadors and the Head of Development Cooperation was also found to be critical to ensure a coherent approach and messaging.

The data uncovered showed that **links between global and national normative dialogues** were sometimes sub-optimal. Obstacles in relation to awareness, coherence and continuity in normative dialogue relate to factors such as staff rotation, inconsistency of communication about norms, and limited awareness/ownership of norms among programme officers. Based on examples gathered across the four cases, particularly experiences from successfully using a regional hub approach in the area of SRHR, it is the view of the evaluation that improved regional and horizontal learning within Sida could contribute to overcoming such obstacles.⁵¹

Key finding 8: Processes for engaging strategically in normative dialogue require investments in dedicated staff time and resources, combining both technical competence and diplomatic skills.

Normative dialogue is neither free nor cheap, and success is dependent on whether sufficient internal resources were allocated in line with internal priorities and strategies. Success in achieving outcomes related to SRHR, for example, can be largely attributed to the sizeable Sida team in Pretoria (previously located within the Embassy of Sweden in Zambia) to drive these issues in Africa. The SRHR case illustrates how important it is that such hubs house both technical competence and diplomatic skills for thinking and working strategically to convene and manage dialogue in complex and sometimes contested multi-stakeholder processes.

The **types of investments** (and human resources) found across the four cases included: i) studies to map a specific policy area; ii) mobilisation of actors and potential partners; iii) identification of entry-points for engagement; iv) building of an evidence-base (e.g., through collaboration with think tanks); and v) facilitation of dialogue among actors around such evidence (in the area of SRHR, it also led to the development of a joint ToC). These investments typically cut across individual programme initiatives or preceded programmatic or partner-specific funding. A key success factor was to continue to dedicate time and resources to ongoing knowledge sharing on normative priorities throughout the partnership process, beyond the initial phases of joint

⁵¹ At the time of the evaluation, Sida was exploring how to best use a regional hub approach also for environmental issues.

conceptualisation and framing of the normative agenda. An issue encountered in two of the four cases was, however, that staff time for follow-up on normative priorities tended not to be sufficient or prioritised once the inception phase of programmes was over.⁵²

Help desk support (typically outsourced to on-demand services from an academic institution or consultancy firm) proved to be an important way to frame or maintain a focus on key normative issues and/or provide capacity support to Sida for its dialogue efforts. Of the recorded outcomes in gender equality,⁵³ several had involved some form of inputs from help desk services. Services provided through these help desks were typically short-term and technical in nature, however, while issues for normative dialogue often are context-dependent, ongoing, and complex.

Seconded Sida or MFA staff to partner organisations provided a longer-term perspective and was more process-oriented by providing a direct dialogue partner ‘embedded’ in partner organisations. However, this is also a rather costly option. Its effects were nevertheless found to be positive, both in relation to the secondment of a Sida expert on gender equality and trade to the World Bank’s Gender and Trade unit at its headquarters, and in relation to the normative dialogue around a civil society workstream at OECD (see Box 1 above).

It appears that across the four thematic cases the size of investments in normative dialogue also matters in relation to how Sida **positions itself alongside other actors within Team Sweden**. For SRHR overall, Sida and MFA have a joint approach where Sida leads on technical issues, serves as a knowledge resource (MFA refers any requests for technical inputs to Sida), and maintains the normative engagement with partners. This is in stark contrast to the thematic area of LGBTQI rights, where Sida acts primarily as a funder of partners. Sida’s role has been to influence how local partners are funded via donor coordination, with a focus on funding for local LGBTQI-led organisations. Yet, at the global level (at headquarters), Sida does not have adequate personnel resources to engage in additional forms of normative engagements or to backstop colleagues in-house or at embassies who want to engage on this normative agenda. Given Sweden’s leading position internationally on LGBTQI rights,⁵⁴ it was unclear to the evaluation team whether this division of roles between Sida and the MFA was a strategic choice, or if it occurred by default (see also Box 5).

⁵² In particular in relation to WEE and LLCAF.

⁵³ 13 outcomes in the focus area of WEE.

⁵⁴ See thematic case for further details (volume two of this report).

2.4 EFFICIENCY: APPROACHES FOR WORKING WITH PARTNERS

This section looks specifically at the domain of change in the evaluation ToC that relates to partner interactions. In other words, it seeks to highlight how Sida's and Team Sweden's institutional practices and ways of organising themselves (covered in the preceding section) enable them to work efficiently with partners in line with universal normative aims and Swedish priorities. In this section, the evaluation focuses on:

EQ6: How do approaches to normative dialogue, such as the *choice of cooperation partner* at different levels and the way the collaboration is conducted, affect the results? Specifically, in regard to choices at the country level and the so called 360-model?

Key finding 9: Sida purposively selects partners and allies who share its normative priorities. Sida both influences and is influenced by partners' expertise through regular follow-up and convening.

Sida actively used normative dialogue in the identification and mobilisation of partners in the critical stages of **alliance-building** and through ongoing interaction with partners via contribution management. Dialogue about desired normative shifts was commonly held with potential partners before entering into a funding relationship to ensure that shared values would be upheld, which in some cases involved developing a joint ToC.

Of the 45 outcomes harvested for this evaluation, around two-thirds (64%) involved normative dialogue conducted **via intermediaries**. Of these, around half were also accompanied by Sida's **direct interaction** to support the desired normative change. Given that Sida's partners conduct much of the normative dialogue, Sida tended to select partners that shared its fundamental values and spent significant time monitoring normative priorities throughout the implementation process.

Lessons and experiential evidence from the normative work of partners also **informed** Sida on how to take forward its own normative dialogue in other fora. This was particularly evident in targeted WEE programming where systems were in place for Sida to advise partners on what WEE principles represent, and for partners to support Sida with examples of current experience in applying these principles. LLCAF partners, such as UNCDF and IIED, have been explicitly selected due to their roles in setting global LLCAF norms and supporting the application of these principles in practice.

The links between normative dialogue and contribution management **vary in focus and depth**. Sometimes, partner dialogue primarily emphasised routine follow-up on administrative matters, which reflects current Trac guidance, wherein normative dialogue is not (based on a review by the evaluation) sufficiently prominent, as evidenced in Box 6.

Box 6. Trac Guidance on normative dialogue

On pages 132-133 in the Trac guidance normative dialogue is discussed as follows:

“2.9.4 Document dialogue issues other than those identified as risk mitigation measures: If you would like to encourage your cooperation partner to change its behaviour, attitudes or relations relating to issues for which you haven’t identified any risks, you can identify this as dialogue issues. By identifying dialogue issues at the appraisal stage, you will ensure that these issues will be remembered during the implementation phase. Examples of dialogue issues:

- That the cooperation partner becomes better at involving the rights holders;
- That the cooperation partner has improved relations with local stakeholders;
- That the cooperation partner improves its application of a rights-based approach;
- That the cooperation partner becomes more results oriented; and
- To raise the cooperation partners awareness and understanding of corruption as a development obstacle.”

At the country level, normative dialogue may emerge from Sida support for partners’ own efforts to develop their capacities for policy analysis and advocacy. Sida’s role may be **in the background**, but its flexible support to CSOs and think tanks can constitute a vital basis for these dialogues. In a couple of the cases, such as with LLCAF and LGBTQI, the nature of Sida’s/Sweden’s support has encouraged and enabled partners to develop and articulate their own normative positions. In some instances, Sida has subsequently adopted the norms of these partners, rather than vice versa as may be assumed.

Partnerships for normative change did not only include funding relationships. Convening discussions among a wide range of like-minded allies have been equally important. Interviewees described how events, ranging from those in the formal arena, such as global conferences (e.g., Stockholm+50, which was used to launch the global LLCAF principles), to informal conversations held at dinners at the residences of Swedish ambassadors, play significant roles. In addition to contributing to establishing a consensus among partners around a normative agenda, such recurring face-to-face interactions were also important to **build trust**. The evidence gathered show that trust-building activities were particularly important when dealing with headwind issues or when operating in fragile contexts (see Box 7 for an example). Trust-building efforts

led to successful outcomes when they were followed up by more structured processes that maintained a sense of purpose and momentum.

Box 7. Enabling partners to participate in high-level dialogue

In relation to LGBTQI, the normative dialogue was conducted by the MFA: Much of the convening and facilitation of partners' involvement took place mainly through Sweden's permanent missions in Brussels (on LGBTQI inclusive EU common positions), Geneva (the Human Rights Council) and New York, but also through Swedish delegations to UN high-level meetings, to which RFSL (the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex rights) and RFSU (The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education) have been invited. Partners confirmed that being invited to participate in such high-level dialogue fora helped build their advocacy capacity. The thematic case found that Sweden played a key role in connecting partners to these events, and by featuring the experience and expertise of partners by, for instance, organising dedicated side-events.

2.5 EFFICIENCY: COMMUNICATION METHODS, MEANS AND MESSAGES

This section covers findings related to methods used in selecting communicative approaches to normative dialogue in different settings. This largely overlaps with the approaches for working with partners, which are covered more extensively above (section 2.4). The importance of applying both a coherent and well-coordinated approach, while also allowing for local adaptation and ensuring ownership has been highlighted in section 2.3. This section looks further into communication methods applied when and by whom, the inherent dilemma in making sure content and messaging are sufficiently coherent, and the strength in using normative dialogue as a tool to act opportunistically and adaptively in a given context. This is covered under the following evaluation question:

EQ7: How do *methods* within normative dialogue, such as the practice of different *communication means and messages* and the way Sida adapts them to local contexts, affect the results?

Key finding 10: Communications approaches and messages were effective when they were jointly developed between Sida, other Team Sweden members and partners, and when they were based on robust evidence and a shared analysis of the problem.

Sida influences how a shared normative agenda is framed by convening stakeholders and partners to jointly define it, while allowing for a high degree of flexibility when it comes to the choice of communicative means and messages by individual actors.

Successful outcomes (notably outcomes where Sida was considered to play a highly significant role)⁵⁵ were generated when Sida and partners invested time and resources in **mapping and understanding the normative landscape** at different levels, and also in identifying the drivers as well as the resistance to normative change. Such mappings, when they occurred, helped navigate complex policy arenas, avoid backlash when it came to the choice of communicative means and messages, and contributed to a framing that ensured ownership of key messages by different actors. Having a joint strategy and approach reportedly made it easier for different actors to then internalise the shared normative agenda and adapt messages to their respective operating contexts.

While the evaluation documented some good practice examples of this, it did however **not uncover conclusive evidence** for whether such in-depth analysis and strategic choice of communicative means had been consistently applied across the recorded good practice examples.⁵⁶ More often, strategic communications used in normative dialogue was either assumed (but not necessarily visible) in the daily tasks of contribution management (see Section 2.3), or regarded as a task in addition to core responsibilities. In some instances, engagement in normative dialogue depended on individual initiative and commitment by staff or embassy leadership rather than on a structured institutionalised approach.⁵⁷

Conversely, in well-coordinated and strategic examples of normative dialogue (see section 2.2), initial convening of stakeholders and potential partners included:⁵⁸

- **Problem identification and analysis of current framing:** how the normative issue was currently framed as illustrated in the existing discourse; how the current discourse aligned with or contradicted other dominant discourses on the norms; what was the evidence-base for such prevailing discourses;
- **Understanding the system:** identifying ownership of and endogenous momentum for change is – i.e., who drove it, who resisted it, what ‘holding patterns’ existed; the level of alignment among key stakeholders and development cooperation partners;
- **Establishing boundaries:** determining the boundaries of the sub-system(s) where normative change was desired or feasible with a reframing of the problem

⁵⁵ In 23 of the 45 recorded outcomes.

⁵⁶ A notable exception includes the thorough analysis and evidence-gathering as part of the normative dialogue around integrating SRHR in UHC commitments, described in section 2.2.

⁵⁷ This also meant that the institutional memory resided largely with individuals, several of whom the evaluation had to track down in their new positions to get access to information about the dialogue process.

⁵⁸ Derived from KII feedback and case examples, see e.g., Box 2, Key finding 3.

if needed;⁵⁹ deciding whether the main aim was to push the boundaries on normative status quo,⁶⁰ aligning with like-minded actors within already set boundaries, or supporting new actors to enter or claim space within the existing boundaries for a normative dialogue arena etc.;

- **Aligning with universal norms and international commitments:** identifying how desired norm shifts relates to, and could potentially activate, the mechanisms of relevant human rights treaties; how national/sectoral priorities converged with those of Swedish development cooperation perspectives and priorities as formulated in the Swedish government's strategies; and
- **Setting objectives, elaborating a joint ToC, and devising a joint action plan including for communications:** explicitly specifying what development results the continued process of dialogue and advocacy was meant to enable; dividing roles based on the actors' respective comparative advantage (including Sida other Team Sweden actors); developing a joint action plan; and preparing joint communications strategies with room for adaptation to different contexts.

Key finding 11: Different methods for normative dialogue are used by different staff functions at Sida and in embassies. The extent to which such disparate efforts are interlinked and analysed holistically for internal learning and priority setting is unclear.

Sida staff typically **tailored methods** to its partner selection and interaction, the nature of the issue, and the ultimate objectives of the dialogue process. Most of the recorded outcomes were achieved using multiple entry points for engagement, i.e., both through direct engagement by Sida and other Team Sweden actors and through the normative engagement undertaken by intermediaries. Methods also varied depending on the level of operation and the stage of programming (for individual programmes or at portfolio level). A summary of observed methods⁶¹ and who within Sida headquarters or embassies were typically involved are listed in Table 1 below.

⁵⁹ For instance, in relation to developing a regional SRHR approach, mapping already ongoing reform efforts of the health system was undertaken to identify cases that could demonstrate how to incorporate SRHR in ongoing health sector reform.

⁶⁰ E.g., how LGBTQI rights are addressed and framed in different national or international settings.

⁶¹ Based on lessons summarised in the four thematic cases.

Table 1 Methods by level of engagement and functions in Sida/embassies.

Level of engagement	Method	By whom
Strategy planning⁶² and management (Sida units at headquarters or in embassies)	Policy dialogue (political or policy-oriented), direct engagement by Sida/Sweden with stakeholders, coordination among Team Sweden members at multiple levels (including regular follow-up meetings between Sida and MFA at central level).	Ambassador and Head of Development Cooperation (in-country), Sida policy lead (global) supported by technical and geographic units, Sida departmental planning units, Sida leadership and MFA counterparts.
Programme design and inception phase	Sida/Team Sweden convenes key stakeholders and potential partners, initiates dialogue on the evidence-base and framing of normative priorities, undertakes mutual learning and bi-directional influence among Sida/embassy and partners. Sida and its partners divide roles, devise a joint ToC, undertake joint action planning, and develop joint messaging and strategic communications approaches.	Programme managers, National Programme Officers, Head of Development Cooperation (supported by Ambassador), coordination and information exchange with relevant geographical units at headquarters.
Programme implementation	Normative influence is primarily undertaken via partners and intermediaries with ongoing support and complementary dialogue efforts conducted by Sida/embassy at different levels of operation (360 model).	Partners lead the normative work on the ground with Sida and/or Team Sweden members playing a supportive role at different levels through high-level dialogue with multilateral institutions and in relevant international conferences and gatherings, and

⁶² Sida's instructions for the Strategy Plan (January 2021) specifically indicates that the strategy plan should be based on a multidimensional poverty analysis and that the strategy team in Sida units and embassies "in addition to acting as financiers, must increasingly prioritize and plan to work with normative dialogue, to facilitate partnerships between other actors and to mobilize new actors and capital."

		through engagement in donor coordination. Sida/embassies follow-up on normative priorities as part of contribution management.
Reporting	Synthesis and analysis of sections related to operational goal on normative dialogue in Annual Strategy Reports, processed by internal Working Group for Normative Dialogue at Sida. Unclear how it feeds into other mechanisms for internal strategy and planning at Sida.	Annual Strategy Reports are prepared by Sida and embassies. Occasional thematic portfolio reviews ⁶³ led by Sida headquarters where results from normative dialogue may be partially reflected. Programme staff undertake follow-up on normative commitments as part of contribution management, though this is typically reported separately and not used for internal reflection.

In terms of **country contexts**, there was a fairly even split between outcomes recorded in open and transparent contexts (55%) and those observed in contexts that were considered fragile or repressive in relation to the desired normative change (45%). In both fragile/repressive and open/transparent countries, **methods** for undertaking dialogue included: (i) direct; (ii) indirect via partners; and (iii) through donor coordination. However, in countries considered **fragile or repressive**, direct engagement was present in nearly all examples (85%) as opposed to around two-thirds (62%) in country contexts that were considered **open and transparent**. Conversely, working via intermediaries was more common in open and transparent contexts (81% of outcomes) as opposed to repressive and fragile contexts (61% of outcomes).

Working through more than one entry-point for normative dialogue was also frequent across all country contexts. However, the thematic case narratives illustrated that the sequencing varied with the **type of issue** at hand. For headwind issues, particularly in fragile or repressive contexts, more emphasis was initially placed on securing operating

⁶³ Sida. (2023). *Thematic Overview 2023: Women's Economic Empowerment*, is one example reviewed by the evaluation.

space for local groups through international fora and direct engagement with authorities. A regional approach (both in the LGBTQI case and SRHR) also added an additional platform for raising issues with regional normative bodies, such as SADC, the AU or the EU, thereby deflecting potential tensions in individual countries and encouraging regional peer exchange on issues.

Key finding 12: Internal coordination mechanisms for supporting the effective use of strategic communications in normative dialogue were generally found to be weak, as was the coordination with other Team Sweden actors.

Strategy plans, crafted by Sida units and embassies and updated yearly, set out the main direction for the normative dialogue⁶⁴ but were typically not detailed enough about how normative dialogue complements other official external communications and public diplomacy efforts in-country.⁶⁵ A fairly new practice has, therefore, been to complement these with dedicated dialogue plans (see also key finding 13), drawn up by Sida's various departmental planning units in collaboration with geographic units and embassies.⁶⁶

Sida staff, both at headquarters and in embassies⁶⁷, perceived **normative dialogue to be different** from other official communications about Swedish values and priorities used in public diplomacy and official communication about Sweden as part of official outreach led by the MFA and the Swedish Institute.⁶⁸ Information dissemination about Sweden was seen to be more one-directional with the intent of building or maintaining Sweden's public image with key audiences abroad. Normative dialogue was perceived to be different in that it engages stakeholders and counterparts about universal norms and values (as reflected in Swedish priorities and strategies) to enable development results. There was, however, wide recognition that the two types of communication (communication for normative change to enable country-owned development results, and communication for spreading awareness about Sweden) could, and even should, be **used in complementary ways**.

The conclusions of the four case studies (all of which included in-country visits to embassies and interviews with national stakeholders) show that where the political/diplomatic and the development cooperation arms of the embassy collaborated closely and “spoke with the same voice”, more **comprehensive approaches** to

⁶⁴ Instructions emphasize that “operational objectives 1 – 3 in particular should be considered” in the plans. (Sida Instructions for the Strategy Plan, January 2021).

⁶⁵ This view was raised and validated through KII feedback.

⁶⁶ Discussed during institutional focus groups at Sida (21 and 23 March 2023). The extent to which this is a widespread institutional practice was unclear.

⁶⁷ I.e., those in charge of development cooperation at embassies.

⁶⁸ Raised in interviews with three different embassies and discussed in Sida institutional focus groups.

normative dialogue were developed with better results. This could involve regularly emphasising programmatic lessons in higher-level policy dialogue in-country and aggregating lessons across the country portfolio level (e.g., on gender equality) in line with national priorities in the country. At the same time, Sida and the development cooperation perspectives were found by the evaluation to be **largely absent** in a review of communications instructions and resources for communication about Sweden's foreign policy.⁶⁹

Box 8. The case of Albania's *Pop-Up Embassy* initiative to promote Sweden's normative priorities and increase local ownership

In Albania, the embassy promoted Sweden's normative priorities in the areas of gender equality (particularly women's political participation), democracy, and human rights through the use of *Sweden On Tour*. Organised with regular intervals, the initiative gathered all embassy staff and other Swedish actors in Albania (the extended Team Sweden) and launched a *Pop Up Embassy* at a central area in municipalities where they were supported initiatives.

In addition to leading to stronger buy-in by municipal leaders for the priority areas supported, the approach increased the credibility and positioning of Sweden both nationally and in different subregions of Albania. This, in turn, led to Sweden being sought after as a partner in new collaborations (EU-Italy on environment, UK's new strategy on youth and gender equality, etc.), and the Albanian Parliamentary Committee on Women's Political Participation began to regularly consult the embassy. The strong positioning and legitimacy of Sweden as a supporter of local actors also created more space for partners – including local civil society groups and women's associations – to operate and engage on issues that can be seen as headwind issues, particularly in some rural areas due to prevailing cultural norms.

A positive example illustrating the **synergetic effects** between different types of communication was found in Albania, which pioneered regular embassy tours with so-called *Pop-up Embassies* in areas where Sweden supported initiatives to promote women's political participation, democracy and human rights.⁷⁰ This was also used to get other Team Sweden actors onboard, increase information exchange between different stakeholders, and give local municipalities a chance to feature their good

⁶⁹ For example, the references provided at sharingsweden.se do not have development cooperation as a dedicated topic. Also, an official guidance publication issued jointly by Sida, the Government Offices of Sweden (MFA) and the Swedish Institute, does not make any mention of normative dialogue (only strategic communication and public diplomacy), and does not make reference to the five perspectives that determine Sida's focus in the normative dialogue, nor how normative dialogue is linked to universal human rights norms and principles. Despite the title of the publication which explicitly references development cooperation, it says surprisingly little about development cooperation at all, but recognises that "The annual themes selected for public diplomacy and promotion of Sweden often overlap with priority development cooperation issues."

⁷⁰ From non-case specific KII (May 2023).

practices. These *Sweden On Tour* events were accompanied by active use of different social media channels to feature local partners and municipality leaders (see Box 8).

Key finding 13: Sida staff are insufficiently informed and trained on ‘the how’ of normative dialogue. Capacity development is particularly needed for those working in environments that are not conducive to normative dialogue.

Sida’s aspirations when it comes to normative dialogue (as articulated in Operational Goal 2) has to date **not been backed by sufficient staff guidance and training.**

The planning functions at the different Sida departments⁷¹ played a role in supporting the development of adapted **dialogue plans**. Though a fairly new practice,⁷² this seemed to have had positive effects on more strategic approaches to normative dialogue as reflected in the annual strategy reports.⁷³ Departmental strategy and planning units also played a role in ensuring coordination between Sida and MFA on normative issues at central levels. The extent to which such dialogue plans were implemented and tracked in terms of effects over time (in relation to enabling development results) and whether lessons feed back into institutional learning still remains to be seen. While dialogue plans seek to provide clarity on the ‘what’ of normative dialogue, there still appears to be capacity gaps on the ‘how’.

In some thematic areas,⁷⁴ internal capacity was complemented by the use of Sida help desks.⁷⁵ However, such support tended to be used *ad hoc*, short term, and focused on technical aspects of the dialogue rather than on how to conduct the dialogue and tracking results. Concerns regarding **how and when** to use normative dialogue were linked to unclear institutional priority-setting and steering, a perceived lack of available lessons of how others have handled dialogue in similar contexts or situations (particularly in those perceived to be non-conducive), and the lack of internal support.⁷⁶ Skills were perceived to be particularly weak among Sida staff when it came to

⁷¹ With HUM-Asia and the Africa departments at the forefront (based on both KIIs and reviewed Annual Strategy Reports).

⁷² Since 2020.

⁷³ The evaluation team analysed Sida’s annual strategy reports (2020, 2021 and 2022 – the reports completed since the Operational Goal on normative dialogue was introduced in 2019) in relation to how they refer to strategic communications, normative dialogue and influencing/advocacy.

⁷⁴ Notably in the areas of gender equality and to some extent environment.

⁷⁵ See also section 2.3, Key finding 8.

⁷⁶ This was noted particularly in areas where Sida’s internal capacity in terms of human resources was perceived to be weak, such as in the area of LGBTQI issues, particularly in non-conducive dialogue settings.

negotiation skills, and how to communicate normative priorities in non-conductive environments.⁷⁷

A brief guidance note on responding to anti-rights threats, particularly in relation to SRHR, LGBTQI issues, and women's rights was issued in 2022.⁷⁸ The evaluation also noted a range of more **generic communications instructions**.⁷⁹ However, these do cover how to implement such approaches in relation to programming and non-programmatic influencing, or what practices (including across different staff functions) are needed and what it means for Sida's and embassies' internal prioritisation and planning of normative dialogue processes. Rather, in the documentation, validated by KIIs, norm change and communications are most often dealt with as two separate functions that often run in parallel, managed by different staff functions.⁸⁰

Guidance and **training** based on experiential evidence and practical lessons were found to be scarce on how to mainstream norms in communication strategies and vice versa to make better use of strategic communications in normative dialogue, including:

- How to identify and communicate the purpose of the normative dialogue as an enabler to the targeted development results (and how success will be gauged and tracked to keep up momentum and gain buy-in);
- What factors to consider for entry-points in the broader change trajectory, including the level of maturity of the debate and level of convergence or divergence on normative issues among key stakeholders;
- How to position Sida and clarify Sida's mandate and role as a complement to other Team Sweden actors (or at embassy-level, how to ensure that the political/diplomatic dialogue is coordinated with development cooperation), with special attention to how to make best use of the 360 model;
- What actors are needed for normative change to take root and lead to transformative (systemic) effects, and how to address resistance;
- How normative dialogue is being used as a leveraging tool to complement other forms of influencing (financing, capacity building/provision of technical support, building a common evidence-base, etc.); and

⁷⁷ Raised by embassy staff.

⁷⁸ Sida. (2022). *Responding to anti-rights threats: A Tool & Resource Guide*.

⁷⁹ The following documents were reviewed: MFA, Swedish Institute, Sida. (2019). *The dialogue with our cooperation partners*; Sida. (2006). *Dialogue & Strategic Communications in Development Cooperation*; Sida. (2020). *Dialogstöd: Så planerar du strategisk dialog*; and *Guide for Great Communications* (Sida internal instructions).

⁸⁰ The involvement of communications experts or dedicated communications staff in the normative dialogue processes have so far been limited, according to KII feedback. It has been more common that the normative dialogue is led by policy experts or technical leads with communications being seen as a more generic add-on function.

- How normative dialogue can support Sida to work adaptively at different levels of operations so that learning from contribution management is systematically connected to clear theories of change that guide the normative dialogue.

3 Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the evaluation concludes that **the evaluation ToC** developed in the inception phase (Figure 1, section 1.3), including the listed assumptions, remains valid even though the pathways for responding to the assumptions are varied. While Sida articulates how dialogue about normative change is intended to contribute learning from experience,⁸¹ this learning remains tacit. Outcomes from normative dialogue in terms of changes in people's awareness, knowledge and skills – at an individual level – as well as in policies, priorities, and practices – at a collective or institutional level – are significant. However, these outcomes have tended to be *ad hoc* and are not systematically tracked and analysed in relation to the enabling of development results – something which ultimately is led and owned by Sida's partners in development cooperation countries. Yet, by not tracking and linking Team Sweden's normative dialogue efforts to concrete development results, led and delivered by partners on the ground, Sida's role as a potentially important knowledge broker in Team Sweden may be underutilised. This is evidenced by the fact that internal processes for operationalising the 360 model often are suboptimal as are the internal mechanisms for more clearly anchoring Sida's partnerships in articulated normative priorities (rather than just administering interventions).

What makes normative dialogue successful and how does it contribute to change?

- EQ1: How likely is it that the normative dialogue has *contributed* to change?

EQ2: What are examples of *successful outcomes* of normative dialogue at Sida?
What are examples of *unsuccessful outcomes*?

EQ3: Which key *success factors* and *mechanisms* can be identified? Which key factors and mechanisms can be identified as hindering successful normative dialogue?

1. **'Success' in Sida's and Team Sweden's normative dialogue enables development results that are aligned with universal norms and reflect the norms embodied in the five perspectives guiding Swedish development**

⁸¹ Implicit in the 360 model.

cooperation. The evidence gathered in the four case studies demonstrates that for normative dialogue to achieve success, the enabling conditions that are required include clear strategies, strong coordination across Team Sweden, multiple entry points for engagement, sufficient staff capacity, a strong, shared evidence-base, and readiness to invest in trust-building among key actors over time. However, the prevalence of these conditions is largely determined by the local context and the type of normative issues being addressed. Normative dialogue requires nimble and adaptive approaches.

2. **Normative dialogue offers Sida a means of aligning efforts with other Team Sweden actors and partners towards common defined goals.** This is exemplified in how Sida and Swedish embassies frequently play a convening role to bring together Team Sweden and key stakeholders to frame the normative agenda and develop a joint vision and action plan for change. However, Sida does not always have the full capabilities or leverage to mobilise Team Sweden (or even to coordinate internally) to apply normative dialogue effectively and systematically.
3. **Sida's capacity to track how dialogue adds value to ongoing broader normative change processes is weak.** To maintain commitments and momentum, as well as ensure accountability, Sida needs to highlight, analyse and articulate the results derived from its normative dialogue efforts. The integration of normative dialogue into Sida's results-based management has been minimal, and many staff are confused about how to record and analyse the processes and outcomes of normative dialogue. Without continuous tracking and documentation against clear joint objectives across Team Sweden, it is also hard for Sida to build an evidence-base of lessons that could strengthen its level of influence on the normative discourse.
4. **Partners often lead advocacy efforts for issues in national and regional contexts.** Nonetheless, effective dialogue still relies on Sida remaining actively involved by leveraging its influence (drawing on lessons and insights from partners) in higher-level coordination fora. When Sida has mostly 'outsourced' the normative dialogue to partners or stepped back after initially engaging in normative dialogue in the design and inception phase, the effects of the normative dialogue have been suboptimal. There is a delicate balance between listening to stakeholders and making Sida's values clear. Frustrations sometimes arise when partners (as well as like-minded donors) expect Sida to assume a more vocal role, while Sida prefers to remain in the background.
5. **The greatest successes occur when the dialogue is clear and politically anchored.** Success is dependent on support from the political sphere and from senior management. Sida needs to 'practice' (and talk about) what the Swedish government 'preaches'. However, Sida also needs to use Team Sweden coordination more effectively to communicate lessons from evidence and experience at country level so that they inform the Swedish development cooperation discourse. The

Feminist Foreign Policy exemplifies how a strong policy signal from the government was combined with diverse but effective framing and increased coordination at different levels of Sida's operations. The policy demonstrated the value of balancing political commitments with normative dialogue that was based on Sida's already accumulated experience and expertise. Good practice examples illustrated how the policy could lead to better coordination of the dialogue across sectors and the political and technical arms of country efforts in a 'whole-of-embassy' approach.

Who needs to be involved in normative dialogue and when is their engagement effective?

- EQ4: How does Sida's *prioritisation, planning and follow-up* of normative dialogue affect the results of Sida's normative dialogue?
- EQ5: How does Sida's *organisation* of the normative dialogue, i.e., roles, responsibilities, forum for dialogue, and timing affect the results of normative dialogue? How does Sida's role in and *coordination within Team Sweden*, affect the results of Sida's normative dialogue?
- EQ6: How do approaches to normative dialogue, such as the *choice of cooperation partner* at different levels and the way the collaboration is conducted, affect the results? Specifically, in regard to choices at the country level and the so called 360-model?

1. **To be effective, normative dialogue needs to constitute a part of how Sida engages, adaptively and strategically, in a given context.** There is no one-size-fits-all approach to selecting entry points and relevant stakeholders to engage with. These choices are highly context-dependent, and the issues and the roles of different actors (including Sida) vary greatly. Sometimes, a coalition of like-minded actors is already in place, and Sida's role is to identify channels to support them in their aspirations while gathering and feeding lessons into policy dialogue at national or multilateral levels. In other instances, normative dialogue is used to explore different actors' policy agendas, seek commonalities across contexts and actors (e.g., the private sector, civil society actors, and government) or identify opportunities to steer an ongoing debate towards common normative principles. This may be about developing consensus on how to apply new globally agreed principles within national processes in collaboration with partners. To successfully engage adaptively and strategically with processes requires that Sida is learning-oriented in how it organises itself internally around normative priorities.
2. **While Sida may apply its norms and values when it selects partners and areas of support, it often takes a cautious approach to engaging in the normative change process.** There may be situations where the most strategic choice for Sida is to

provide the funds and then step back to let MFA and CSOs ‘do the talking’. However, this should be based on a deliberate and strategic division of roles with its partners and MFA, according to jointly set objectives, where Sida maximises its added value to these in other ways. The evidence collected by the evaluation team reveals that Sida is most effective when it uses multiple entry points for engagement on normative issues and pursues these iteratively.

3. **Sida’s role is determined by internal capacity and related prioritisations.** For instance, while Sweden has a prominent profile externally relating to the rights of LGBTQI persons (mainly through MFA and partners), Sida’s staff capacity is limited in this area, both when it comes to institutionalising knowledge and providing technical and policy backstopping to colleagues. Thus, Sida may have good reason to step back from providing leadership in these types of dialogue and instead rely on its partners to assume a more prominent role. This differs significantly from the SRHR field, where there is a clear joint mandate for Sida and MFA to advance the normative dialogue and where Sida is drawn on for its technical competence, gathered across a variety of dialogue and programme settings.
4. **Normative dialogue relies on individuals, relationships, and how different sets of actors cumulatively affect systemic shifts in discourse and practice.** It is not possible to specify what functions have the capacity to drive dialogue in Stockholm and in partner countries: some staff have the experience, time, and energy to engage; others are overburdened with internal management and control tasks or are unsure about the status of the norms that they are expected to dialogue about. The cumulative nature of normative dialogue makes it essential to continuously record, assess, and learn from the effects of normative dialogue while recognising Sida’s own capabilities and constraints within Team Sweden.

How is normative dialogue best approached?

EQ7: How do *methods* within normative dialogue, such as the practice of different *communication means and messages* and the way Sida adapts them to local contexts, affect the results?

1. **Clearer institutional priority-setting and direction are needed regarding how and when to use normative dialogue, for what purpose, and to what expected effect.** There are good prospects for Sweden’s political leadership to incentivise new ways of engaging in normative influencing (as was achieved under the FFP even at the embassy-level) when it sends clear signals in a few key areas that are firmly

aligned with universal norms and Sida's five development cooperation perspectives.⁸² Clearer internal priority-setting around how and when to use normative dialogue could also help resolve an observed nervousness of staff regarding Sida's role and mandate to engage in normative dialogue and its tendency to let other Team Sweden actors or partners take a lead. While this may sometimes be the most strategic choice, it also leads to an underutilisation of Sida's accumulated know-how in the framing of the normative discourse for a joint Team Sweden approach.

2. **Convening and iteratively interacting with partners on normative priorities is critical to build trust and share learning.** The practice of developing knowledge products with partners⁸³ can reinforce the notion of having a common agenda. This has helped establish Sida as a highly credible and normatively driven knowledge resource in dialogue with government partners and other donors. Support to convene an emerging community of partners along similar lines of thinking and with similar normative aims has been effective for alliance-building.
3. **There are currently missed opportunities to fully benefit from lessons and insights concerning normative dialogue that takes place in contribution management.** A key assumption of the 360 model is that normative dialogue draws extensively on operational experiences and competence in diverse contexts. To strengthen the 360 model, programme managers need to have the time also to analyse and link the management of programmes with higher-level normative aims. When effective, the 360 model has established Sida as a credible and sought-after knowledge resource in donor coordination fora and led to more coherence in dialogue and follow-up with multilateral organisations.
4. **A pluralistic but structured approach to dialogue that adapts the roles, means, and channels for normative dialogue opportunistically and iteratively is generally effective.** Sida has made considerable progress during a limited time (since the introduction of the normative dialogue in the 2019 operational goal) in using dialogue to operationalise its five development cooperation perspectives. This has been accomplished by keeping the norms in focus while learning how to best incorporate them into dialogue along the way.

⁸² Swedish development cooperation has two overarching perspectives: the poor people's perspective on development and the rights perspective. Sida also have three thematic perspectives: conflict, gender equality, and environment and climate.

⁸³ As exemplified in the area of WEE and by the development of the LLCAF principles.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Key issue 1. There is currently insufficient clarity, awareness and consensus on Sida's mandate and roles in normative dialogue, both within Sida and across Team Sweden.

Recommendation 1. Sida's leadership should ensure that its mandate and role in engaging in normative dialogue on key Swedish priorities are clarified and systematically communicated to staff (including limits and opportunities for its use). It should regularly discuss Sida's role in relation to normative priorities with MFA.

In recognition of Sida's and MFA's complementary roles, Sida (and MFA) should consider institutionalising joint **dialogue on Sweden's normative priorities** to ensure there is an enabling and structured environment conducive to pursuing normative dialogue at different levels. Sida and MFA could achieve this by adding normative dialogue to their regular coordination meetings, focussing on normative issues in which both agencies have a stake.

Sida should consider using the coordination meetings with the MFA to regularly **share lessons from dialogue efforts** to proactively contribute to a joint framing of normative priorities based on practice and Sida's accumulated know-how.

Sida's **leadership** should address the perceived uncertainty that some Sida staff feel regarding Sida's role and mandate to engage in normative dialogue, especially in relation to MFA's role and mandate.

Key issue 2. The value of normative dialogue for achieving development results is insufficiently recognised and operationalised as part of Sida's core mandate.

Recommendation 2. Sida should put in place mechanisms to link normative dialogue more clearly with enabling development results at all levels of operation.

Sida should better manage, track, and illustrate its role and added value in ongoing broader normative change processes and how these relate to achieving development results. To begin with, Sida should consider developing broader ToCs and/or prioritised roadmaps for the normative change processes they engage in at different levels. Since normative dialogue goes beyond (but also includes) contribution management, when relevant, Sida should involve Team Sweden actors and/or partners in regular strategy testing to question key assumptions and reconsider roles among partners. The added value of different Team Sweden members would also need to be considered in the overall change trajectory. These activities should also be used to strengthen the 360 model.

At **headquarters**, such mechanisms could reside in departmental planning units with cross-departmental coordination undertaken by the existing working group. Clear links should be established between departmental and inter-departmental coordination and Sida's internal decision-making and strategic planning structures.

The role of Sida's **departmental planning units** would be to:

- Support the development of **dialogue plans, and provide support** (though avoiding restrictive templates or control) for adaptive results-based management of normative dialogue efforts;
- Aggregate results and **lessons on how** to successfully engage in normative dialogue and integrate these into Sida's institutional learning and strategic planning with efforts to operationalise the 360 model; and
- Hold regular **coordination meetings** with other members of Team Sweden about normative dialogue and related concerns on emerging issues from country teams.

The role of Sida's **leadership** would be to:

- Revise the wording of Sida's **Operational Goal 2.2** in Sida's operational plan on normative dialogue to clarify the purpose of normative dialogue as a way to leverage other means of influence (primarily funding), to position Sida strategically in a joint Team Sweden approach that fully utilises a 360 model.
- Encourage more **strategic application and follow-up** of normative dialogue. This would include setting internal qualitative and quantitative objectives at an overall institutional level that reflect institutional aspirations and principles for how and when to use normative dialogue in different situations. This would signal to staff that normative dialogue is prioritised and within their mandate. These should not necessarily consist of quantitative targets, as these may be hard to substantiate and provide less meaning. Rather, it should promote qualitative targets and tracking and narrative analysis of perceived effects.
- Establish **common principles** for normative dialogue that draw upon the good practice examples in this evaluation, such as that dialogue should be:
 - Aimed at enabling development results;
 - Based on ToCs and have a long-term perspective;
 - Clearly linked to one or several of the five perspectives and universal norms/normative framework;
 - Reflect that communication and learning are two-way with diverse entry points and ways to work with partners; and
 - Applied in areas where there is ownership for normative change and where Sida can increase development effectiveness and promote local ownership through alliance-building and support.

Additionally, Sida should consider establishing or using existing **regional hubs** that combine diplomatic/strategic skills, thematic competence and facilitation skills for normative priorities of strategic importance, given that these have proved to offer a successful (though resource-intensive) model for priority normative dialogue issues. Such hubs should have the mandate to facilitate peer-learning and gathering lessons across country operations, strengthen the links with regional normative bodies and processes, and liaise with regional offices of UN organisations whose universal normative aims align with Swedish priorities.

At **embassy-level**, a whole-of-embassy approach to key normative priorities should be encouraged in which the political and development cooperation functions work in close cooperation.

Key issue 3. The concept of normative dialogue remains vague and is sometimes even disputed within Sida, particularly in how it may impinge on contribution management.

Recommendation 3. The concept of normative dialogue and what it implies in relation to contribution management should be clarified at all levels of the organisation.

Sida's leadership and managers should promote an **institutional 'mind-shift'** in which staff are encouraged to regard contributions as parts of larger (and longer-term) change theories for which normative dialogue is one of several pathways to influence and promote change. Sida should consider reviewing and updating the Trac guidelines to clarify (and even emphasise) the programme officer's role in normative dialogue. Supervisors should ensure that the normative aspects of dialogue efforts, along with how to strategically communicate them, are given more explicit attention. Sida should consider providing guidance to programme officers on how to prioritise their time to include normative dialogue and introduce incentives for engaging in normative dialogue that are linked to staff performance reviews.

Key issue 4. Sida's normative dialogue is sometimes weakened by lack of clarity regarding who does what in partnerships.

Recommendation 4. Partnerships are central to how Sida undertakes normative dialogue, but the contours of these partnerships should be defined within clearer ToCs in relation to broader normative objectives, with a clearer role division of how partners and Team Sweden actors complement each other throughout the envisaged normative change process.

Sida should consider **developing partnership strategies that clearly spell out normative aims** and illustrate Sida's role in relation to these as well as the role of other Team Sweden actors. Sida should consider the use of normative dialogue for enhancing

knowledge-sharing, developing joint aims among partners, and identifying common interests and ideas that can lead to future partnerships. Regular partnership reviews should be undertaken at portfolio level and used to highlight convergence and divergence on normative issues as they relate to the enabling of development results.

Key issue 5. Resources are needed to transform the 360 model from aspiration to reality.

Recommendation 5. Sida should dedicate sufficient resources to ensure that it has the required internal capacity to backstop staff (including embassies) and partners on prioritised normative agendas and fully operationalise the 360 model.

Sida should **invest in** (and/or provide internal capacity support) increasing its institutional capacity for engaging effectively in normative dialogue. This could include:

- Ensuring staff have time to dedicate to normative dialogue across 360 model/system;
- Raising awareness and understanding of policy implications (internal, external) of desired dialogue outcomes;
- Initiating and facilitating events at different levels, such as side-events in high-level fora or at country level to align actors' interests and agendas, to discuss norms with stakeholders and partners for alliance-building;
- Developing more comprehensive guidance on the 'how' of normative dialogue;
- Training staff on the integration of communications approaches into the normative dialogue process and negotiation skills;
- Training teams and units using hands-on cases and practical problem-solving with ongoing coaching as new skills are put into practice;
- Providing space in planning/inception phases of programmes for thorough normative discussions with future partners to make explicit normative aims and divisions of roles among partners and Sida/embassies in jointly developed ToCs;
- Facilitating access to think tanks, help desks, research institutes/academia, etc., to ensure that normative dialogues are sufficiently evidence-based and integrated across sectors and thematic areas;
- Secondments of Sida staff to partner organisations that help embed normative priorities;
- Providing sufficient institutional support and backstopping of staff in thematic areas where Sweden is seen to be at the forefront; and
- Facilitating horizontal learning exchanges, including the use of regional hubs and direct exchanges between different embassies with similar normative programming.

Annex 1 Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for the Formative Evaluation of Normative Dialogue at Sida, 2015–2022

Date: 2022-04-08

Ref no: 22/000174

1. General information

1.1 Information about Sida

Sida, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, is a government authority. The objective of Swedish development cooperation is to create opportunities for people living in poverty and under oppression to improve their living conditions.

As other Swedish government agencies, Sida works independently within the framework established by the Swedish Government and Parliament. They decide on the financial limits, the countries with which Sweden (and thus, Sida) will cooperate, and the focus and content of that cooperation.

Sida has three main assignments:

- Assist the Swedish Government with expert support, analysis and other documentation necessary for the government's design of strategies and policies for Swedish international development cooperation
- Implement the strategies and manage interventions, (including monitoring and evaluation of results).
- Participate in Sweden's advocacy work and in the dialogue with other countries, donors and recipient countries, as well as with international organisations and other actors.

For additional information, please visit Sida's website, www.sida.se.

1.2 Information about the commissioning unit/ department

Every year Sida commissions central evaluations that are decided upon by the Director General based on their overall strategic importance for Sida. These can be commissioned and managed by Sida's Evaluation Unit or by relevant Sida units and foreign missions in cooperation with Sida's Evaluation Unit, depending on their focus. This central evaluation is commissioned by Sida's Evaluation Unit at the Department of Operational Support, since the work with the dialogue on normative issues extends

throughout the entire agency. On this central evaluation, the evaluation unit cooperates closely with the multilateral support unit, which has the main responsibility for coordinating normative dialogue at Sida.

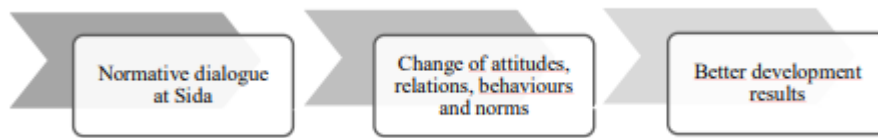
Sida's Evaluation Unit coordinates evaluation at Sida and has the ambition to create a culture of learning and evaluative thinking at Sida that contributes to Swedish development cooperation of the highest quality. To ensure independence from operational and policy units and departments the Head of the Evaluation Unit formally reports to the Director General with respect to central evaluations. The core tasks of the Evaluation Unit are to:

- Annually propose a plan for central evaluations for decision by Sida's Director General and coordinate its implementation, including management response and publication
- Conduct internal reviews
- Procure, manage and provide quality assurance of Sida's Framework Agreement for Evaluation Services
- Provide advice to Sida units and foreign missions that commission decentralised evaluations and facilitate their publication
- Engage with Sida units and foreign missions on the role of evaluation in creating MEL systems that underpin development strategies decided by the Swedish government and that are implemented by Sida
- Represent Sida in international evaluation fora in development cooperation, such as the evaluation network of OECD/DAC and the European Union
- Collaborate with Sida units regarding projects that support evaluation capacity building and participate in fora to strengthen national capacities for evaluation in developing countries
- Coordinate evaluation planning with EBA.

2. Introduction to the normative dialogue at Sida

2.1 Why dialogue?

Dialogue has always been an important element of Sida's development cooperation and is used in many ways to increase the impact of Sida's financial support to partners, and to accelerate progress in relation to the objectives given by the government. In 2019, Sida strengthened the importance of using dialogue as a tool to advocate for Swedish priorities and universal norms by including "normative dialogue" as an objective in its operational plan. Dialogue for normative change, i.e. normative dialogue, is hence part of Sida's global advocacy work. The assumption is that if the actors that Sida targets, change their attitudes, behaviours and norms, it will lead to better development results. This intervention logic is illustrated in the picture below.



There are different steering instruments that guide what Sida should prioritise in its dialogue. The steering framework is complex, as directions and priorities are primarily outlined by the Swedish government, but are also developed in internal steering tools at Sida.

The Policy Framework for Swedish Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid outlines the Swedish Government's directions and priorities for development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. The framework underlines that development cooperation must include both financial support and dialogue. It describes that Sweden, through development cooperation, enables bilateral dialogue on priority issues and thereby contributes to the impact of the Swedish policy for development cooperation and to achieving results within the framework of strategies (see below).

The policy framework provides both an overall focus and thematic focus for development aid cooperation, and thereby guides Sida's focus of the normative dialogue. The policy framework relates to the 2030 Agenda, the commitments on development financing and the Paris Agreement on climate change. Sweden's humanitarian assistance policy is needs based and founded on international humanitarian law, the humanitarian principles and principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship. Swedish development cooperation is a central component of Sweden's foreign policy, the feminist foreign policy being its back bone.

To reach the overall goal of Swedish international development cooperation, "to create preconditions for better living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression," the policy framework provides five perspectives that must be integrated in all Swedish development cooperation. Two of them are overarching perspectives:

1. **The perspective of poor people on development**, which means that the situation, needs, conditions and priorities of poor women, girls, men and boys must be the starting point for poverty reduction and for the promotion of fair and sustainable development.
2. **The rights perspective**, which means that human rights and democracy must be seen as fundamental to development. The rights perspective is based on a globally agreed set of values, which consists of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the internationally binding conventions that have been adopted. It includes four fundamental principles based on the normative framework for human rights: non-discrimination, participation, openness and transparency, and responsibility and accountability.

In addition to the two overarching perspectives, the Government highlights three additional thematic perspectives that are in line with international resolutions, conventions and declarations, and should be integrated into development cooperation:

3. **The conflict perspective**, focus on peacebuilding and state-building by taking conflict issues into account as peaceful and inclusive societies based on the principles of the rule of law are a prerequisite for sustainable development.
4. **The gender equality perspective**, seeks to enhance both gender equality and the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls, as global gender equality is essential for sustainable development.
5. **The environment and climate perspective**, seeks to shape and manage development within planetary boundaries, which includes promoting fossil-free and climate-resilient development.

The policy framework is concretised through strategies, instructions, regulatory letters, and guidelines. Strategies are one of the government's instruments for managing development cooperation and humanitarian aid. There are thematic, global, regional and country strategies as well as strategies that focus on specific forms of assistance such as information, capacity development, research and civil society. The strategies describe the objectives that development cooperation - including the dialogue - has. They set out which specific changes the dialogue combined with financial support should contribute to in a specific context. **Both the strategy objectives and the five perspectives are fundamental to and determine Sida's focus on the normative dialogue.**

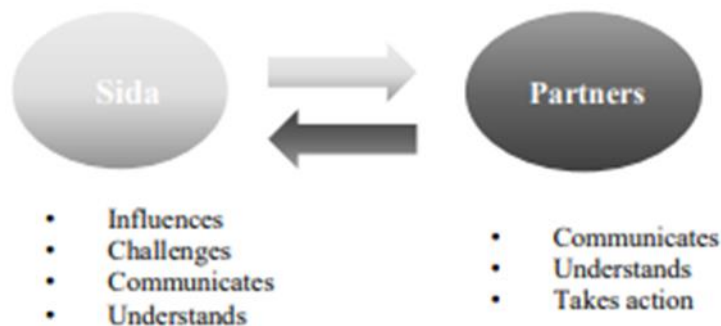
In **Sida's operational plan** from 2019, the dialogue on normative issues is given a clearer role and is for the first time called "normative dialogue." Currently one of Sida's six operational goals (in the operational plan for 2022- 2024) states that Sida, through normative dialogue, will advocate for Swedish priorities and universal norms, including gender equality, environment and climate. Sida also stresses the importance of prioritising normative dialogue as a tool for reaching the strategy objectives. In addition to the strategy objectives and operational goals, specific plans for the dialogue at different operational levels also exist. They outline targets for planned achievements on a yearly basis. Since 2020, Sida has a policy specialist and a reference group for normative dialogue with the aim of contributing to Sida becoming more effective in the use of normative dialogue.

2.2 Sida's concept of normative dialogue

The dialogue at Sida is used in different ways. **Normative dialogue** should address Swedish priorities based on universal norms, including the five perspectives and should be conducted on global, regional, and national levels. The normative dialogue differs from the day-to-day dialogue that Sida has with its cooperation partners regarding specific programs and projects, i.e. dialogue on capacity and risk assessment or the organisation's ability to implement the program and report results. Normative dialogue is used to influence stakeholders who are supported financially as well as those who

are not. Target groups of normative dialogue are different groups and/or partners at global, regional and national levels. They are key representatives of multilateral, international and civil society organisations, government officials, policy makers, private sector actors and key donors.

The concept of normative dialogue is based on a two-way communication. Sida's aim is to influence and challenge partners to change their normative behaviour, attitudes and beliefs. But normative dialogue is also communicating in the right way and understanding how partners work and think. Sida wants partners to increase their knowledge, to understand and to take action, not because Sida requires it but because Sida has managed to communicate the advantages of adopting and applying the norms advocated for. Sida also wants partners to share their perspectives to learn what works and what does not.



Furthermore, Sida wants to use normative dialogue to develop strategic partnerships and alliances with key actors on global, regional and national levels. Operational efforts are currently focused on having more actors working together, as well as advocating for headwind issues in the current era of reduced democratic space. Sida's ambition is to make normative dialogue strategically relevant, results-focused, and effective.

The agency would also like to promote a more coordinated and effective Team Sweden approach, i.e. the cooperation between Sida, the Swedish ministries and the foreign missions. A model that has been used for approximately ten years to ensure effective and results-focused information sharing, is the so-called 360 approach. This approach is built on Sida and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) obtaining information from the embassies regarding cooperation at country and regional level prior to board and high-level meetings. After these meetings, Sida and the MFA inform the embassies of what was said and what issues and priorities should be pursued further at country level.

Strategic communication is a key tool when conducting dialogue or advocacy work for a specific issue. It entails planning and developing messages to be relevant in specific contexts and reaching the relevant target group, as well as choosing the right communication channels.

3. The assignment

3.1 Evaluation rationale

As seen above, normative dialogue is complex and requires planning, long-term commitment and perseverance. The dialogue is conducted, as mentioned, on a global, regional and country level and the cooperation within Team Sweden places high demands on coordination. Many different actors are recipients of Sida's messages and Sida conducts the dialogue in different roles, directly or indirectly through other actors. Some of Sweden's priority issues are increasingly seen as headwind issues and the challenges of conducting normative dialogue within these issues have become ever more complex. This applies not least to the country level, where Sida's role is particularly important.

It is clear that normative dialogue is an important tool for Sida, but its process and effects have not always been made visible. In recent years, Sida has worked more strategically across the agency to achieve better results with normative dialogue. At the moment, there is a great demand for knowledge on what works and how Sida can become better at coordinating, streamlining and strengthening the dialogue further to achieve the abovementioned results.

Previous analyses on how to increase Sida's dialogue and communication capacity have presented several recommendations in order for Sida to become even more effective in the use of normative dialogue and strategic communication (see annex A). This central evaluation should take these recommendations into account as well as the ongoing work to develop and strengthen the normative dialogue when identifying key factors for success.

3.2 Evaluation purpose: Intended use and intended users

This central evaluation aims to promote learning about Sida's work with normative dialogue. The evaluation is expected to identify key factors behind successful normative dialogue. The evaluation should help Sida increase the understanding of what works, what does not work, and why, as well as identifying both key bottlenecks and ways to improve.

The lessons learnt will be used to inform Sida on potential improvements in the following key areas:

Prioritisation and planning

The evaluation will be used to provide support for prioritisation and to help Sida develop a more strategic approach to normative dialogue; specifically regarding important lessons on strategising, planning and follow up of the dialogue on global, regional and country levels, as well as learning and context adaptation and management. In short, the evaluation will:

- Inform Sida on how a more strategic approach, including prioritisation, planning and follow up of normative dialogue can be developed.

Organisation

The evaluation will be used to inform Sida how the management and organisation of dialogue initiatives can be further developed; for example, in regards to lessons learned about who/which actors and/or functions are best suited to conduct the dialogue in different contexts, the involvement of key expertise and when and in which forms and forums Sida should conduct normative dialogue. A specific focus will be on lessons learned from coordination and the role played by Sida in Team Sweden. The evaluation will also identify critical and needed competencies, and inform the design of future trainings and other planned learning activities at the agency. In short, the evaluation will:

- Inform Sida on how management and organisation, including the role played by Sida in Team Sweden, can be developed; and
- Inform Sida on how the design of future trainings and other planned learning activities can be developed.

Approaches and methods

The evaluation will be used to inform Sida how approaches, models, methods and instruments of normative dialogue can be developed. Approaches and models relate to how the task is approached, for example the choice of cooperation partner at different levels and the way the collaboration is conducted. The evaluation will in this regard have a specific focus on normative dialogue at country level and the so called 360-model (see definition above). Methods and instruments refer to lessons learned on choices of practical communication means and messages and how well they are adapted to contexts and the need of the target group. In short, the evaluation will:

- Inform Sida on how approaches and models of normative dialogue can be developed, such as cooperation with partner at different levels; and
- Inform Sida on how communicative methods and instruments for normative dialogue can be developed.

The **intended users** of the results and recommendations of the evaluation are:

- Sida's Executive Management Group (including Director General, Deputy Director General and the Heads of Departments) and Sida board members;
- Policy specialists within the various thematic areas;
- The working group for strengthened normative dialogue;
- Head of units, program and communication officers at foreign missions and Sida's headquarter;
- Multilateral focal points who, for example, are involved in Sweden's high-level dialogue with multilateral organisations; and

- Relevant functions at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and foreign missions.

3.3 Evaluating Normative Dialogue at Sida

In order to contribute to the overall purpose and use described above, the evaluation will need to examine a wide range of cases related to normative dialogue. To limit the scope of the evaluation and as a step in developing the terms of reference, experts within Sida undertook a selection exercise to identify relevant variables that inform normative dialogue at Sida.

The following (mutually related) variables were identified as informing normative dialogue:

- **Focus areas:** as mentioned above Sida's work is primarily governed by the strategy objectives and by operational goals. The strategy objectives presented indicate which areas to consider in the dialogue. In addition, the five perspectives, based on universal norms, must always be considered. These are the two overarching perspectives (poor peoples' perspectives and the rights perspective) as well as the three thematic perspectives (the conflict perspective, the environment perspective and the gender perspective). Both the strategy objectives and the five perspectives are fundamental to and determine Sida's focus of the dialogue.
- **Target groups:** regardless of the focus area, Sida's normative dialogue targets different groups and/or partners at different levels. Target groups of normative dialogue are key representatives of multilateral, international and civil society organisations, government officials, policy makers, private sector actors and key donors. At the global level, Sida's partners are often multilateral organisations such as UN agencies and multilateral development banks, through which a large part of development cooperation funds is channelled. At the country level, Sida's partners are national governments and authorities, private sector actors and civil society organisations, which are especially important for Sida's normative dialogue. Sida also has partners at regional and local levels.
- **Context:** Sida's operations cover large parts of the developing world and many different contexts. The focus areas within which the normative dialogue are conducted are heavily influenced by these different contexts. The contexts which have been identified as relevant for normative dialogue are: geographical context, conflict or peace contexts, fragile or non-fragile contexts, and contexts where a specific issue is seen as a headwind issue or not.
- **Approaches and methods:** when conducting normative dialogue, different methods and approaches are used. As mentioned above approaches means how the task is approached, for example the choice of cooperation partner at

different levels and the way the collaboration is conducted. One example is the 360 model with Team Sweden. One approach is to conduct the dialogue with an intermediary party who in turn conveys the message. In other cases, the dialogue takes place directly with the actor who is expected to be influenced. Furthermore there are multiple methods used such as different communication means and messages.

The above variables are more clearly delimited in theory than in practice, as they are not always as clearly formulated and documented in actual fact. As a consequence, the evaluators will need to further elaborate and specify these variables during the inception phase of the evaluation.

Normative dialogue at Sida has been more or less structured and planned. In some cases, the dialogue has had a clear objective, time period, channel and method. In other cases, it takes place without clear objectives, plans and methodology. The follow-up and documentation have also varied. Furthermore, advocacy achievements and lessons learnt from normative dialogue activities have not been visible enough in reporting.

3.4 Evaluation object and scope

The object of this evaluation is Sida's work with normative dialogue within long term development cooperation⁸⁴. Two of the above variables have been selected to help limit the scope of the evaluation: focus area (including subarea) and context. Four different focus areas have been selected to reflect the above-mentioned perspectives in Swedish development cooperation, since they are also the clearest guiding signal for the normative dialogue. As they represent priority areas for SIDA, the chosen focus areas are: gender equality, democracy and human rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and environment and climate. For each focus area, subareas have also been selected. The sub-areas represent areas where Sida have been involved in normative dialogue in different ways using various methods and approaches.

Among the different contexts, geographical focus was selected with an ambition to cover all levels involved in the 360-model as well as ensuring a breadth of countries.

Lastly, the time period covered by the evaluation will be 2015 to 2022.

The scope of the evaluation has been defined to ensure a range of different contexts and varying degrees of success within normative dialogue. Please see a preliminary list of proposed cases in the table below for further details.

⁸⁴ Dialogue within humanitarian assistance is not included in the scope of this evaluation.

The evaluation will include an analysis of the selected four focus areas, where each area will be subject to its own enquiry, i.e. all evaluation questions to be answered for all focus areas, as well as an overall analysis of normative dialogue at Sida. For each focus area the evaluation will examine which methods and approaches have been used, the different contexts, as well as how Sida has worked with different target groups (see the deliverables section for further details).

Focus Area	Focus sub-area	Geographical focus
SRHR	Safe abortion	Global
		Liberia
		Mozambique
	SRHR	Global
Democracy & Human Rights	LBTQI+	Regional Africa
		Global
		Regional Eastern Europe
Gender Equality	WEE	Country in Eastern Europe (TBD)
		Global
		Regional East Africa
		Somalia
		Mozambique
		Guatemala (TBD)
Environment & Climate	Management of pesticides	Global (TBD)
		Regional South East Asia (TBD)
		Tanzania and/or Zambia (TBD)

3.5 Evaluation objective: Criteria and Questions

This evaluation is expected to create a better understanding of Sida's work with normative dialogue, what works, what does not and why. Different key aspects of the dialogue have been identified to make the expected learning more concrete. Considering the purpose and intended use of the evaluation, the evaluation will focus on the effectiveness and efficiency of Sida's dialogue.

The questions that the evaluation is expected to answer are:

- **Effectiveness**
 - How likely is it that the normative dialogue has contributed to change?
 - What are examples of successful outcomes of normative dialogue at Sida? What are examples of unsuccessful outcomes?
 - Which key success factors and mechanisms can be identified? Which key factors and mechanisms can be identified as hindering successful normative dialogue?
- **Efficiency**
 - How does Sida's prioritisation, planning and follow up of normative dialogue affect the results of Sida's normative dialogue?
 - How does Sida's organisation of the normative dialogue, i.e. roles, responsibilities, forum for dialogue, and timing affect the results of normative dialogue? How does Sida's role in and coordination with Team Sweden, affect the results of Sida's normative dialogue?

- How do approaches to normative dialogue, such as the choice of cooperation partner at different levels and the way the collaboration is conducted, affect the results? Specifically in regard to choices at the country level and the so-called 360-model?
- How do methods within normative dialogue, such as the practice of different communication means and messages and the way Sida adapts them to local contexts, affect the results?

4. Evaluation Design

4.1 Evaluation approach and methods

Sida's approach to evaluation is *utilisation-focused*, UFE, which means the evaluators must facilitate the entire evaluation process with careful consideration of how all aspects of the evaluation will affect the use of the evaluation. The evaluation will be judged on its usefulness to its intended users. Therefore, the evaluation must be planned and conducted in ways to enhance the utilisation of both the findings and of the process itself to inform decisions and improve performance.

UFE has two essential elements: i) the primary intended users of the evaluation must be clearly identified and personally engaged at the beginning of the evaluation process to ensure that their primary intended use can be identified; ii) the evaluators must ensure that these intended uses of the evaluation by the users guide all decisions made about and during the evaluation process. Rather than a focus on general and abstract users and uses, UFE is focused on real and specific users and uses. The evaluator's task is not to make decisions independently of the intended users, but rather to facilitate decision making amongst those who will use the findings of the evaluation.

So far, the process for this evaluation has been based on a high degree of participation from the stakeholders who will benefit from the evaluation results. The evaluation unit at Sida has ensured that the expected use of the evaluation is developed and anchored with the users. It is expected that the evaluation team will use the same approach.

This participatory approach must involve close interaction between the evaluators and relevant stakeholders/users in the evaluation assignment, such as the reference group, the steering group and the different informants. The interaction must last throughout the entire evaluation process, from planning to implementation, to reporting and dissemination. An important component of this participatory approach is to enable joint knowledge creation between evaluators and the users of the evaluation.

Therefore the evaluators must, in their tender, present i) how intended users are to participate in and contribute to the evaluation process and ii) how the evaluation design and methods for data collection create space for reflection, discussion and learning between the intended users of the evaluation.

The evaluators must describe and justify the evaluation approach and appropriate methods for data collection in the tender. The evaluators must suggest an approach that provides credible answers (evidence) to the evaluation questions and addresses causality. Limitations to the chosen approach and methods must be made explicit by the evaluators and the consequences of these limitations discussed in the tender. The evaluator must, to the extent possible, present mitigation measures to address them. A clear distinction is to be made between evaluation design, methodology and data collection methods.

The evaluation design, the methodology and the methods for data collection and analysis are expected to be fully developed and presented in the inception report. In light of the situation with Covid-19, an/or other potential contextual issues, innovative and flexible approaches/methodologies and methods for remote data collection should be suggested when appropriate and the risk of doing harm managed.

A *gender-responsive* approach must be used⁸⁵. All data collected through the evaluation must be disaggregated by sex as well as by ethnicity, age, disability or other relevant factors wherever possible; that is, separately for men, women, boys and girls and other groups, unless there is a specific reason for not disaggregating. Conclusions and recommendations will be analysed in relation to a gender equality perspective and reflect any gaps related to gender and reflect any significant gender differences to the extent possible. Data collection methods need to be gender and conflict sensitive as well, e.g. if focus groups are done, they should be conducted in a way that enables people from different ethnic groups, both women and men, to have a voice.

In cases where sensitive or confidential issues are to be addressed in the evaluation, evaluators will ensure an evaluation design that do not put informants and stakeholders at risk during the data collection phase or the dissemination phase.

4.2 Organisation and Evaluation Management

This evaluation is commissioned by the Evaluation Unit at Sida. The intended users are:

- Sida's Executive Management Group (including Director General, Deputy Director General and the Heads of Departments) and Sida board members;
- Policy specialists within the various thematic areas;
- The working group for strengthened normative dialogue;
- Head of units, program and communication officers at foreign missions and Sida's headquarter;

⁸⁵ See for example UNEG United Nations Evaluation Group (2014). *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations*, <https://uneval.org/document/detail/1616>

- Multilateral focal points who for example are involved in Sweden's high-level dialogue with multilateral organisations; and
- Relevant functions at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and foreign missions.

The commissioner of the evaluation will evaluate tenders, approve the inception report and the final report of the evaluation.

Two bodies have been created to manage the evaluation throughout the process:

- The steering group; with representatives from operational units and from the evaluation unit, will be the evaluation team's main counterpart throughout the evaluation. The steering group has decision making power and will provide feedback on all deliverables and will be in continuous dialogue with the evaluation team to ensure utilisation and quality of deliverables; and
- The reference group; will provide input at various specific points during the evaluation process and will participate when relevant in workshops. The reference group is composed by internal Sida staff (thematic experts as well management representatives, and various other technical experts), and representatives from academia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

4.3 Evaluation Quality

All Sida's evaluations must conform to OECD/DAC's Quality Standards for Development Evaluation. The evaluators must use the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and the OECD/DAC Better Criteria for Better Evaluation. The evaluators must specify how quality assurance will be managed by them during the evaluation process.

The evaluators are expected to select a suitable evaluation design and method, although a stringent methodology must be applied to ensure reliable conclusions and a high degree of transparency. Questions about causality and the impact of contributions relative to other factors and alternative explanations must be analysed carefully. The evaluation report must describe limitations in process, methodology or data, and discusses validity and reliability.

The tenderer must describe the quality assurance system, organisation and routines which will ensure the quality of the evaluation. These routines must cover the entire evaluation process, from the design phase, through inception, data collection and analysis, the evaluation reports and related products. The tender must include a clear description of the communication pathways between the evaluation team and the QA organisation.

The QA organisation must include a minimum of one (1) QA professional who is designated specifically for quality assurance. The QA organisation must be separate from the evaluation team.

All QA professionals in the QA organisation must have:

- An academic education, with at least a master's degree or equivalent post graduate degree;
- At least twelve (12) years of working experience in the area relevant to the person's role within the assignment;
- At least five (5) years of experience in evaluations in international development cooperation;
- Documented experience of ensuring the quality of evaluation processes and products, having ensured quality on at least two (2) evaluations with a budget of a minimum of 2 (two) million SEK; and
- Documented experience of ensuring the quality of at least 3 (three) evaluations where at least one of the following evaluation approaches was used: process tracing, experimental approach, quasi-experimental approach, qualitative comparative analysis, or outcome harvesting.

4.4 Time schedule and deliverables

The evaluation shall be conducted between **July 2022 – Aug 2023** and will include several phases with specific deliveries expected for each phase. They are presented below.

During the **inception phase**, the evaluation team will have to assess the evaluability of all of the evaluation questions. The evaluability assessment is particularly important in this case because of the methodological challenges involved in evaluating normative work. The evaluation team will have to determine whether there is solid and available data in relation to normative dialogue at Sida. The evaluability assessment will feed into the development of the evaluation approach proposed in the tender.

During the inception phase, the evaluation team will also be expected to further develop and examine the intervention logic for normative dialogue at Sida presented in the background section above. The evaluators will be expected to propose a suitable and feasible method for how to best approach this issue, it could be for instance reconstructing theories of changes on various levels (focus areas, sub-areas) or on a general Sida level. Whatever approach is selected it is expected to be participatory, involving key stakeholders at Sida, through for example one or more workshops.

As described above, the scope of the evaluation has been defined through a participatory internal process at Sida. The evaluation team will be expected to further examine methodological considerations for each focus area and sub-area during the inception phase and document these in the inception report.

During the inception phase, it will also be key to elaborate on how the evaluation will consider and examine the usage of different approaches, methods and tools within normative dialogue at Sida and within the different focus areas and sub-areas,

especially key will be the examination of the so-called 360 model and Team Sweden. Furthermore, the evaluation team is expected to take into consideration how working with different target groups and in different contexts inform the selected focus areas and sub-areas. The evaluators shall then propose in the inception report how key aspects of this analysis could be incorporated in the evaluation design.

The timing of any field visits, surveys and interviews needs to be settled by the evaluators in dialogue with the main stakeholders during the inception phase. A time and work plan must be presented in the tender and be further detailed in the inception report, including number of hours/working days for each team member. Given the situation with Covid-19, the time and work plan must allow flexibility in implementation. The time plan shall also allow space for reflection and learning between the intended users of the evaluation.

The inception report will form the basis for the continued evaluation process and shall be approved by Sida before the evaluation proceeds to implementation. The inception report will be written in English and cover evaluability issues and interpretations of evaluation questions, present the evaluation approach/methodology including how a utilisation-focused, participatory and gender-responsive approach will be ensured, methods for data collection, analysis, joint knowledge creation as well as the full evaluation design, including an evaluation matrix and a stakeholder mapping/analysis. A clear distinction between the evaluation approach and methods for data collection shall be made. All limitations to the methodology and methods shall be made explicit and the consequences of these limitations discussed.

During the **data collection and analysis phase**, the evaluators will implement the data collection and analysis plan developed during the inception phase. As mentioned above, an important component of the expected utilisation focused approach is to enable joint knowledge creation between the evaluators and the users of the evaluation. The evaluators will therefore plan for and conduct participatory workshops with different key stakeholders. The aim of the workshops will be to present preliminary results and validate the evaluation findings as well as engaging in a joint knowledge creation process using participatory tools. The data collection and analysis phase will also include a meeting with the evaluation unit to discuss any methodological challenges and, if need be, adjust the evaluation approach.

During the **reporting phase** the evaluators will plan for and conduct participatory workshops where the recommendations are developed in a participatory manner by the evaluators and the stakeholders/users of the evaluation. The aim of these workshops is ensuring the development of practical and implementable recommendations to strengthen the use of the evaluation.

The final reporting shall be written in English and be professionally proof read. The final reporting should have clear structure and follow the report format in the Sida Evaluation Report Template for central evaluations (see Annex C). The final reporting

shall include a synthesis report and four separate annexes for each of the focus areas. It shall also include evaluation briefs for both the synthesis report and each of the four annexes (i.e. a total of five briefs).

The synthesis report shall clearly and in detail describe the evaluation approach and methods for data collection and analysis (for both the findings presented in the synthesis report and in the annexes) and make a clear distinction between the two. The report shall describe how the utilisation-focused has been implemented i.e. how intended users have participated in and contributed to the evaluation process and how methodology and methods for data collection have created space for reflection, discussion and learning between the intended users. Furthermore, the gender-responsive approach shall be described and reflected in the findings, conclusions and recommendations along with other identified and relevant cross-cutting issues. Limitations to the methodology and methods and the consequences of these limitations for findings and conclusions shall be described. The four separate annexes should have a clear structure and include an introduction, a background, findings and conclusions. Evaluation findings shall flow logically from the data, showing a clear line of evidence to support the conclusions. Conclusions should be substantiated by findings and analysis. Evaluation questions shall be clearly stated and answered in the executive summary and in the conclusions. Recommendations and lessons learned should flow logically from conclusions and be specific, directed to relevant intended users and categorised as a short-term, medium-term and long-term.

The synthesis report should be no more than a maximum of 35 pages excluding annexes. The executive summary should be maximum 3 pages. If the methods section is extensive, it could be placed in an annex to the report. Annexes shall always include the Terms of Reference, the Inception Report, a stakeholder mapping/analysis and the Evaluation Matrix. Lists of key informants/interviewees shall only include personal data if deemed relevant (i.e. when it is contributing to the credibility of the evaluation) based on a case-based assessment of sensitivity by the evaluator and the commissioner. The inclusion of personal data in the report must always be based on a written consent. The four separate annexes for the focus areas should each be a maximum of 15 pages long.

The evaluator shall adhere to the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation.

As mentioned above, the evaluators should produce briefs for both the synthesis report and the four separate annexes. The evaluation briefs shall be written in English and be professionally designed, laid-out, edited and proof read. The briefs should be no more than 2 pages each, have a clear structure and follow the format and instruction in the Sida Evaluation Brief Template (to be provided by Sida), and be approved by Sida. The aim of the **dissemination phase** is to inform and anchor the conclusions and recommendations to a wider target group than during the analysis phase. The target group being both identified stakeholders at Sida and an interested general public. Sida

is open to innovative solutions to deliver this expected result. Both the form of dissemination and the product to be disseminated will be expected to create interest and engagement.

The table below lists key deliverables for the evaluation process. Alternative deadlines for deliverables may be suggested by the consultant and negotiated during the inception phase.

Deliverables	Participants	Deadlines
1. Start-up meeting/s Sida HQ or virtual	Steering group, the head of the Evaluation unit and relevant members of the reference group	JULY
2. Draft inception report		Tentative NOVEMBER
3. Inception meeting Sida HQ, Stockholm	Steering group, the head of the Evaluation unit and relevant members of the reference group	Tentative NOVEMBER
4. Comments from intended users to evaluators (alternatively these may be sent to evaluators ahead of the inception meeting)		Tentative NOVEMBER
5. Data collection, analysis, report writing and quality assurance	Evaluators	DECEMBER – APRIL
6. Method meeting	Steering group, the head of the Evaluation unit and relevant members of the reference group	Tentative JANUARY
7. Validation workshops Evaluation Findings	Primary intended users, relevant respondents, steering group and reference group	Tentative MARCH
8. Workshops to develop recommendations	Primary intended users, relevant respondents, steering group and reference group	Tentative APRIL
9. Draft evaluation report, including annexes		Tentative APRIL
10. Comments from intended users to evaluators		Tentative MAY
11. Final evaluation report, including annexes		JUNE
12. Evaluation Briefs		Tentative AUGUST
13. Dissemination activities Stockholm and/or virtual	Primary intended users and an interested general public. Steering group, reference group.	Tentative AUGUST

The evaluator shall, upon approval by Sida/Embassy of the final report, insert the report into the Sida Evaluation layout template for central evaluations and submit it to Nordic

Morning (in pdf-format) for publication and release in the Sida publication data base. The order is placed by sending the approved report to sida@nordicmorning.com, with a copy to the “Sida Evaluation” in the email subject field. The following information must always be included in the order to Nordic Morning:

1. The name of the consulting company.
2. The full evaluation title.
3. The invoice reference “ZZ980601”.
4. Type of allocation "sakanslag”.
5. Type of order "digital publicering/publikationsdatabas.

4.5 Evaluation team qualification

It is envisaged that the assignment is carried out by a team consisting of one team leader and 2 to 3 senior team members and it is recommended that junior team members are used where appropriate. It is important that the TERMS OF REFERENCE 14 competencies of the individual team members are complimentary and that the team is composed of both women and men.

It is highly recommended that local evaluation consultants are included in the team, as they often have contextual knowledge that is of great value to the evaluation. Depending on the final selection of case study countries during the inception phase, access to a variety of contextual competencies is needed. This also applies to interpretation and translation services. Costs for such services must be included in the budget.

The evaluators must be independent from the evaluation object and evaluated activities, and have no stake in the outcome of the evaluation.

*The tenderer **shall** propose a team leader with:*

- An academic education, at least master’s degree or equivalent post graduate degree
- At least ten (10) years of work experience within international development cooperation
- At least five (5) completed assignments as team leader of complex evaluations (evaluations of impact and sustainability of large programmes with many stakeholders and/or in unpredictable contexts), in a development cooperation context, and in which the person shall have provided a work input of at least four (4) weeks. The evaluation must have been completed within no more than ten (10) years (calculated from the tender submission deadline)
- At least three (3) completed assignments with a utilization focused evaluation approach using participatory methods

- Strong interpersonal skills, diplomacy and tact to effectively communicate with all concerned stakeholders and professionals from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds

*The tenderer **shall** propose team members with:*

Senior team members:

- An academic education, at least bachelor's degree or equivalent
- At least seven (7) years working experience in the area relevant to the persons role within the assignment
- At least five (5) assignments, completed within the last ten (10) years (calculated from the tender submission deadline), in the area relevant to the persons role in the assignment within an international development cooperation context

Junior evaluators:

- An academic education, at least bachelor's degree or equivalent
- At least one (1) year working experience in the area relevant to the person's role within the assignment

All personnel proposed must have very good knowledge in spoken and written English.

*The tenderer **shall** propose a team where at least one member has:*

- Documented experience of having used at least two of the following evaluation approaches: process tracing, experimental approach, quasi-experimental approach, qualitative comparative analysis, or outcome harvesting
- Documented experience of having evaluated interventions within the area of policy dialogue, advocacy or strategic communication within international development cooperation
- Experience of undertaking evaluations within the thematic areas relevant to the assignment
- Documented experience of facilitating workshops
- Very good knowledge of Swedish

The tender **shall** include the curriculum vitae (CVs) of each of the proposed team members (including the team leader). Each CV must include the following:

- The person's first name and surname
- Education
- Work experience
- Language skills

Fulfilment of the above-mentioned requirements shall be evidenced by the attached CV of each of the proposed team member. Submitted CVs should not be longer than four (4) pages. Sida will stop reading after four (4) pages. Please use CV template.

4.6 Financial and human resources

The maximum budget amount available for the evaluation is 3 500 000 SEK. A detailed budget (based on an estimate of the time required per part of the assignment in accordance with what is indicated under section 4.4) including all expenses, shall be submitted to Sida as part of the tender response for the assignment.

Invoicing and payment shall be managed according to the following: the Consultant may invoice a maximum of 30 % of the total amount after approval by Sida of the Inception Report, a maximum of 90 % after approval by Sida of the Final Report, and maximum of 100 % when the assignment is completed.

The contact person at Sida is Jessica Olson, Evaluation Advisor at the Evaluation unit at the department of Operational support. The contact person should be consulted if any problems arise during the evaluation process.

Relevant Sida documentation will be provided by each contact person for each case described in section 3.4 “Evaluation object and scope.” Contact details to these contact persons will be provided by Evaluation advisor, Jessica Olson.

The evaluator will be required to arrange the logistics; booking interviews and preparing visits, including any necessary security arrangements.

5. Annexes

Annex A: List of key documentation

- Policy Framework for Swedish Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, Government Communication 2016/17:60
- Sidas Verksamhetsplan 2021-2023 (in Swedish)
- Sidas Annual Report 2021 (in Swedish) • Dialogue and Strategic Communication in Development Cooperation, Sida, 2006
- Sidas strategy reports (in Swedish)

Annex B: Data sheet on the evaluation object

Information on the evaluation assignment	
Title of the evaluation assignment	Formative Evaluation of Normative Dialogue at Sida, 2015-2022
Activity period	2022-2023
Agreed budget	3,5 MSEK
Name and type of implementing organisation	Consultancy Firm
Commissioning unit/Swedish Embassy	UTV/VERSTÖD
Contact person at unit/Swedish Embassy	Jessica Olson
Aid type	Experts/technical assistance
Timing of evaluation (mid-term, end-of-programme, ex-post, or other)	Ex-post
Main sector	Multi-sector
ID no. in PLANIt	15558
Dox no./Archive case no.	22/000174

Annex 2 Approach and Methods

Approach and theory of change

The evaluation approach is **theory-based** in that it has analysed normative dialogue in relation to an overarching ToC developed during the inception phase and based on scoping interviews, literature review and feedback from the evaluation steering group and reference group (see Figure 11 below). The ToC identifies varied pathways towards intermediate outcomes relating to: (i) internal conditions – the institutional capabilities within Sida and to Sida’s positioning among other Swedish actors/in Team Sweden; and (ii) partnerships: the selection, interactions with, and support to implementing partners and allies. For normative dialogue to have the desired effect, intermediate outcomes must contribute to providing an enabling environment for improved development results based on universal norms and Swedish development cooperation priorities. The ToC should be seen against a backdrop of contextual factors that will influence progress at all junctures and ultimately converge in key outcomes.

The ToR specifies an existing underlying ToC for normative dialogue in Sida which places emphasis on *changes of attitudes, relations, behaviours and norms* within key target groups as a means to achieving better development results. Such **target groups** for normative influence will depend on whether Sida is trying to influence implementing partners who receive financial support, or whether Sida is supporting allies of like-minded organisations, groups or movements in their ongoing normative work (in which case Sida’s normative dialogue with other stakeholders or policy-makers can play a complementary role to the work of partners). In other words, normative dialogue **can look different, involve complex change processes, and involve multiple actors and influencing parties** depending on the issue at hand and the context.

During the inception phase, the evaluation noted that the internal understanding of normative dialogue at Sida seems to have a rather narrow focus on the **Swedish perspective**. In the international context, and also in most cases at partner country level, Sweden is a relatively small player. The importance of financial leverage in underpinning dialogue is significant.

The inception report further noted the importance of distinguishing between situations in which partners can be held accountable to internationally agreed development goals and agreements and situations in which Sweden seeks outcomes that “**push the boundaries**” on existing norms and principles (e.g., LGBTQI issues, abortion rights).

The ToC in the ToR issued by Sida also builds on the underlying **assumption that through normative dialogue parties align their interest in ways that help produce better development results**. While this is an overarching aim, there may also be instances when promoting an identified normative priority may harm collaborative relationships needed to deliver results. The evaluation approach, therefore, sought to capture both unintended (positive and negative) effects of normative dialogue. It also sought to capture any changes in the nature of the partnership itself, e.g., through trust-building and alliance-building, and in how iterative normative dialogue with a set of actors contributed to continuous knowledge exchange that affected the framing of the normative agenda.

This is captured in the **revised ToC for the evaluation** by also specifying what factors may be influencing successful outcomes. The ToC for the evaluation takes a system perspective, i.e., that performance and effectiveness are affected by a set of interlinked sub-systems ('domains of change'). These sub-systems have their own dynamics and are nested in a larger interlinked 'eco-system' of actors. The level of alignment and quality of relationships within and across sub-systems affect the ultimate objective, i.e., to enable the delivery of development results based on universal norms and in line with Swedish development cooperation priorities.

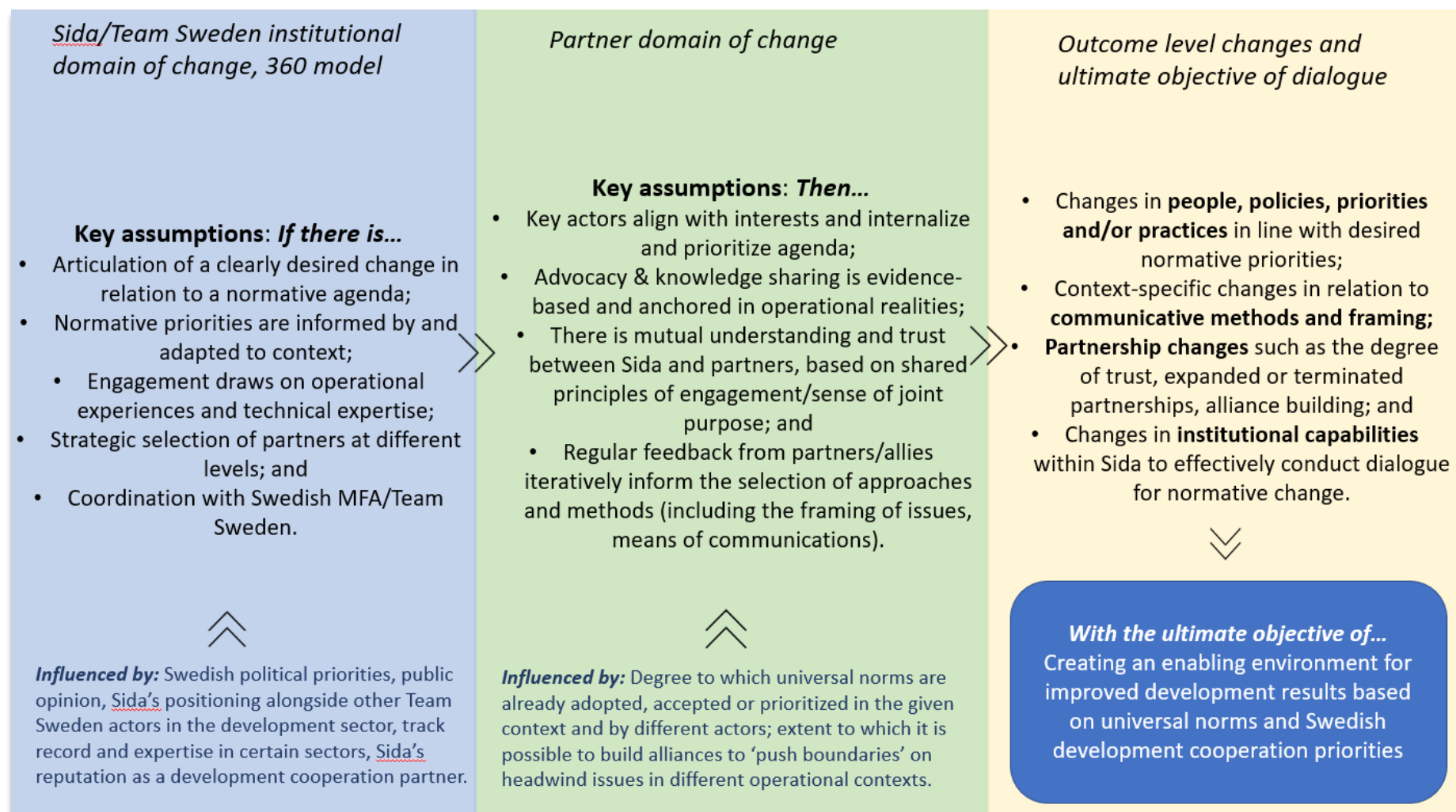


Figure 11 Theory of Change for the evaluation.

Methods

The evaluation's ToC has been the **basis for reflecting on assumptions around processes and contributions** in the different thematic case studies as well as at an overall level in order to answer the evaluation questions (Table 2).

Table 2 Evaluation questions and focus for analysis.

Evaluation question	Focus for analysis
Effectiveness questions	
EQ1: How likely is it that the normative dialogue has <i>contributed</i> to change?	The learning-orientation of this formative evaluation was noted to be important. The evaluation did not seek to do a comprehensive cataloguing of dialogue efforts but relied to a large extent on ‘stories of change’ that seemed significant to stakeholders (with positive or negative outcomes). Stakeholders rarely brought up examples of unsuccessful outcomes. Instead, a focus of the analysis was on ‘what,’ among ‘whom’ and ‘how’ intended change happened, and analysed what could have optimised normative dialogue efforts, thereby testing the assumptions spelled out in the evaluation ToC. Success, hindering factors, and mechanisms were analysed both in view of the specificities for each thematic case and across cases to find generalisable contribution trends across a wide range of norms, geopolitical contexts and ongoing (sometimes competing) normative dialogues led by different development cooperation actors.
EQ2: What are examples of <i>successful outcomes</i> of normative dialogue at Sida? What are examples of <i>unsuccessful outcomes</i> ?	
EQ3: Which key <i>success factors</i> and <i>mechanisms</i> can be identified? Which key factors and mechanisms can be identified as hindering successful normative dialogue?	
Efficiency questions	
EQ4: How does Sida’s <i>prioritisation, planning and follow-up</i> of normative dialogue affect the results of Sida’s normative dialogue?	The inception phase noted that a primary interest among the intended users of the evaluation (represented by the evaluation Steering Group and Reference Group) were questions related to Sida’s internal organisation, management, and steering of normative dialogue as a leverage tool for achieving better development results. The efficiency questions reflect this focus, which explicitly skews the findings and focus
EQ5: How does Sida’s <i>organisation</i> of the normative dialogue, i.e., roles, responsibilities, forum for dialogue, and timing affect the results of normative dialogue? How does Sida’s role in and	

<i>coordination within Team Sweden</i>, affect the results of Sida's normative dialogue? EQ6: How do approaches to normative dialogue, such as the <i>choice of cooperation partner</i> at different levels and the way the collaboration is conducted, affect the results? Specifically, in regard to choices at the country level and the so called 360-model? EQ7: How do <i>methods</i> within normative dialogue, such as the practice of different <i>communication means and messages</i> and the way Sida adapts them to local contexts, affect the results?	of analysis toward Sida's role and internal mechanisms instead of a deeper understanding of the multistakeholder nature of dialogues (also reflected in the purposive sampling). The choice of cooperation partner (reflected in EQ6) is considered one of the key 'approaches' in which Sida engages in normative dialogue. A focus of the analysis was, therefore, to look at both how normative dialogue is currently prioritised and managed within Sida (EQ4, EQ5), and how this, in turn, affects how Sida positions itself in relation to other Team Sweden actors and external partners (EQ6, EQ7).
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As defined in the ToR, **thematic case studies form the majority of the empirical data on which the evaluation is based**. The topics and geographical foci of these cases were proposed in the ToR based on internal discussions at Sida. The topics and other aspects of the scope of each case were subsequently refined in the inception phase through discussions with the evaluation reference group and steering group, as well as scoping interviews with key stakeholders.

Each of the four thematic case studies follow the same **analytical framework** and use the same ToC as reference to ensure consistency in data gathering. At the same time, it has been important to understand the diverse dynamics and characteristics for the different thematic focus areas and sub-areas⁸⁶ represented by the sample in the ToR, and how these influence approaches and methods used (including the choice of partners). Country contexts and examples were selected by Sida for each identified area as part of formulating the ToR to increase the level of comparability across the cases. This was further explored and agreed with the Sida evaluation steering group and reference group during the inception phase. It should be emphasised that the proposed sample of thematic cases and sub-cases in the ToR was the result of a discussion process within Sida before the start of the evaluation. Although the evaluation team proposed some modifications, and subsequently made further adjustments due to data

⁸⁶ As defined in the ToR, see Annex 1.

availability and findings from initial document review and scoping interviewees, the proposed sample was largely adhered to.

The case studies were developed to be applied in an inductive manner to inform the overall evaluation and its ToC, i.e., by extrapolating trends and contrasts from individual examples of normative dialogue processes, within country contexts, themes and types of partnerships. The cases, and the sampling upon which they are based, are not intended to provide comprehensive sectoral overviews. As per the evaluation design specified in the ToR, each thematic case focuses on specific sub-themes,⁸⁷ and covers (as applicable) normative dialogue at global, regional/multi-country and national levels:

- **Environment and climate change** with a focus on locally-led climate change adaptation and finance (LLCAF) at global level and with country examples from Kenya and Bangladesh;
- **Sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR)** with a focus on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) at a global level and regional and country SRHR efforts and policy processes in Africa with examples on access to safe and legal abortion in Liberia and ending child marriage in Mozambique;
- **Gender equality** with a focus on women's economic empowerment (WEE), with country examples from Mozambique, Bangladesh, Somalia, Tanzania and in multi-country programming; and
- **Democracy and human rights** with a focus on normative dialogue around LGBTQI issues at global, regional (Eastern Partnership countries) and national levels (Republic of Moldova).

The core methods of the evaluation combine the case-based approach with a tailored version of **outcome harvesting (OH)** to allow for a participatory and learning-oriented approach. The choice of method was considered appropriate given the somewhat 'fluid' boundaries of what normative dialogue is perceived to be, and what it is meant to achieve as an intentional practice within Sida. While policy dialogue has always been central to Sida's mandate, widespread use of normative dialogue as a leveraging tool to improve development results in line with Swedish priorities and as reflected in universal norms has only been an operational goal in Sida with dedicated staff time to coordinate and track its effects at an organisational level since 2019.⁸⁸

Outcome harvesting is an open-ended methodology as it is more inductive than deductive in its approach with an emphasis on finding **emerging patterns in outcomes**

⁸⁷ Determined and validated through scoping interviews undertaken during the inception phase.

⁸⁸ Currently housed in the department in Sida in charge of multilateral development cooperation and support to international organisations.

before formulating and further investigating causal pathways. Also, it was recognised and validated through scoping interviews in the inception phase that the nature of the causal pathways was likely to be very diverse, as were stakeholders' understandings of the concept of normative dialogue. Outcome harvesting was an effective method to capture the **breadth and diversity of what stakeholders themselves found significant** in using dialogue for normative change, and for working strategically to achieve development objectives in line with Swedish priorities.

Outcomes were recorded and clustered along a range **characteristics and variables** set out in the evaluation ToC (Annex 3). Changes that could be clearly associated with the efforts of normative dialogue and considered significant by stakeholders were recorded, following the definition of outcomes specified in the Outcome Harvesting methodology, namely, "an observable and significant change in a social actor's behaviour, relationships, activities, actions, policies and practice that has been achieved, and that has been influenced by the change agent."⁸⁹ The outcome was considered when Sida directly engaged in dialogue or played a significant role while indirectly engaging via intermediaries or partners. While outcome harvesting was used to record and cluster results and show what enabled these, the thematic cases went further in-depth in the analysis to determine what factors or institutional mechanisms within Sida enabled or hindered successful outcomes.

During the inception phase, a **review of background documentation provided by Sida** was undertaken, which continued throughout the evaluation period as partners and interviewees were asked to share documentation that validated their stories of change. Overall, the evaluation team noted the relative lack of available documentation that clearly indicates the intent, follow-up and results of dialogue efforts. Normative dialogue typically only makes up one (often less visible) part of broader cooperation or programming frameworks and is, therefore, less frequently documented. Available gaps were particularly pertinent in strategic choices, pivots, and methods and approaches used for normative dialogue. Instead, the evaluation has had to rely mainly on key informant interviews as the primary data source. Not surprisingly, major 'events' received more attention in reporting than ongoing, low-key aspects of dialogue and the important informal dialogue efforts critical for trust-building among like-minded allies, particularly around headwind issues.

Data science techniques were used during the inception phase with a source code developed for reading and analysing large amounts of data, including available web-

⁸⁹ Ricardo Wilson-Grau, Heather Britt. (2012, revised November 2013). *Outcome Harvesting*. Ford Foundation MENA office.

based data.⁹⁰ This involved a comparative analysis of the frequency with which Sida's annual strategy reports refer to normative dialogue, dialogue, advocacy, and strategic communication across three years (2020-2023), including variations among different units in Sida and in various country operations. An analysis was also undertaken of the official Twitter feeds from sampled embassies, Sida, the (then) Sida Director General and the MFA.⁹¹ Deeper use of the data science tools was, however, limited due to the lack of documentation specific to the application of normative dialogue where Sida could be clearly identified as playing a role in addition to advocacy work that partners were already engaged in.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs),⁹² both in-person (Mozambique, Moldova, Bangladesh, and Kenya) and those conducted digitally, applied semi-structured interviewing techniques to let the interviewees lead the conversation. This was done to capture what interviewees found most significant about a specific normative change process in which they had been involved and their perceptions of Sida's role (in line with the outcome harvesting methodology). In-depth interviews were undertaken in two phases: (i) during the inception phase to determine the boundaries and further refine the scope of the evaluation; and (ii) during the data gathering phase including for the thematic cases and other institutional key informants.⁹³ Stakeholders included key informants from Sida, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Swedish Embassies, like-minded donors and/or coordination partners, multilateral organisations, and external implementing partners (with a focus on case countries).

Focus group discussions were also held with Sida personnel representing different organisational functions at Sida headquarters. Participants were selected by the Sida evaluation steering group to give a broader organisational perspective of how normative dialogue is reflected across Sida's institutional functions. Along with KIIs conducted with embassy personnel, these focus group discussions gave additional

⁹⁰ The source code developed for this assignment was mainly written and executed in a Python environment (<https://www.python.org/>) using various third-party packages and dependencies for the different tasks. The following list contains the main and most essential Python packages: Analysis and data cleaning are executed and dependent on: Pandas (<https://pandas.pydata.org/>); Numpy (<https://numpy.org/>) SQLite is utilised for data storage (<https://www.sqlite.org/index.html>). Design and access to Twitter data are built and dependent on: Tweepy (<https://www.tweepy.org/>); and BeautifulSoup (<https://www.crummy.com/software/BeautifulSoup/bs4/doc/>). Visualisation of the results uses: Plotly (<https://plotly.com/>); Matplotlib (<https://matplotlib.org/>); Seaborn (<https://seaborn.pydata.org/>). Wordcloud (https://github.com/amueller/word_cloud); and Natural Language Processing that was conducted relied on the packages: spaCy (<https://spacy.io/>); NLTK (<https://www.nltk.org/>). NetworkX is used for analysing the connectivity in the collected data (<https://networkx.org/>).

⁹¹ 33508 tweets between 2015 and 2023 were scanned, of which roughly 7.2% mentioned one or more of the thematic areas covered by the cases for this evaluation.

⁹² For more details, see section 1.3.4 on the Evidence-base.

⁹³ These were purposively selected by Sida for their long experience in normative dialogue and included a number of Ambassadors with direct experience from normative dialogue at country level.

examples to support the data gathering primarily for the efficiency questions across the three learning areas in the ToR (Table 3). Two focus group discussions were held over two days at Sida headquarters in March 2023. The first gathered a selection of institutional functions responsible for *strategy, planning and management* of dialogue for normative change, while the second gathered staff accountable for *organisation and implementation* of dialogue for normative change.

Table 3 Stakeholder groups and functions of importance for different areas of learning.

Area for learning	Important stakeholder groups and functions
<i>Internal strategy processes</i> Priority setting, planning and follow up of normative dialogue at different levels of operation, development of strategic plans, strategy reporting, linking normative dialogue to an enabling environment for improved development results.	Planning coordinators (departmental), thematic policy leads, strategy development and planning at a corporate level (including senior management).
<i>Organisation and delivery</i> Management and coordination of normative dialogue as a stand-alone activity or as a complement to funded or non-funded engagement initiatives, and how it complements other types of influencing, capacity support and operations.	Unit heads, programme managers, results-based management unit and operational support, multilateral focal points. Through the cases focus group participants will be complemented by embassy-level heads of cooperation and relevant programme officers, members of Team Sweden, including any 'extended' Team Sweden members (Swedish authorities, framework CSOs, programme implementers etc.).
<i>Approaches and methods</i> Choice of engagement channels, partnership selection, communication means and methods (including via intermediaries, partners, or directly at technical or policy level), messaging, networking and relationship/trust-building activities.	Internal capacity development and support functions, methods development (corporate), partnership development and management, strategic communications support.

The **thematic areas and sub-areas of focus** for each of the four cases were selected by Sida and detailed in the ToR. These were further explored and assessed for their evaluability during the inception phase of the evaluation. KIIs were purposively selected within the scope and boundary of the four thematic cases. Additionally, some institutional key informants were purposively selected to feed into the process either through regular interactions via the evaluation reference group, or as other key

informants identified by Sida for their long history and engagement in normative dialogue. Additionally, external intermediaries were interviewed (Swedish framework CSOs, academia, help desks, think tanks, etc.).

The evaluation has applied a **highly iterative and participatory approach** through regular interactions with the evaluation Steering Group and Reference Group to encourage utility and engagement while also encouraging broad-based ownership of evaluation findings across organisational functions. The close interaction with users was particularly important given that there are **multiple interpretations** of what normative dialogue is, including how it could be optimised and used as a complementary tool to improve development effectiveness. Data analysis used a two-faceted approach. First, we analysed and openly discussed the credibility of the findings (source criticism) to confirm and ensure visibility regarding how the conclusions are drawn based on the evidence collected. Second, we promoted the participation of the evaluation Steering Group and Reference Group throughout the evaluation process to interpret results and contextualise them or draw out more strategic implications. This iterative learning process together with intended users within Sida, aimed to question our own interpretation of the findings by suggesting possible alternative conclusions. Comparisons across the case studies were important for understanding what could be generalised regarding causality and what could be valuable but idiosyncratic examples of change processes.

As for **the positionality of the evaluation team**, it consisted of members from 10 countries, two of whom have disabilities, and with a gender balance of five women and seven men. We consider that this could influence our perspectives on understanding Sida's position regarding norms and universality. This has, for example, led us to raise issues regarding the importance of bringing out the perspectives of national staff and local partners as central to the 360 model. The diversity of our team exemplifies NIRAS' commitment to ensuring that evaluations promote a diversity of voices in the development discourse. In this evaluation, the skills, expertise and lived experience of each team member contributed to the depth of analysis of varied socio-cultural perspectives, thematic areas and geographic regions covered in this global assignment. NIRAS believes that in addition to strong evaluation skills and in-depth relevant experience, evaluations are strengthened when the members come from diverse backgrounds, bring multiple perspectives, and engage in healthy internal debate that reflects international, national, and local discourse on development issues.

Limitations and challenges

Dialogue has always been an important element of Sida's development cooperation. Yet, it is only recognised **specifically** as a **tool to accelerate progress** towards the objectives given by the government in 2019 when it was included as an objective in

Sida's operational plan. Given that 'normative dialogue'⁹⁴ is a fairly new term, it is still poorly understood and is subjected to diverse interpretations across the organisation.

One interviewee told the evaluation team: "Tell me what it is, and I'll tell you if I am doing it." Statements such as this indicate the difficulty experienced by some key informants to relate to the subject and boundaries of what was being evaluated, often requiring the evaluation team to 'educate' interviewees on the definition and remit of the evaluation. In several cases, interviewees were unsure of whether they were allowed to have an opinion on the subject matter without first checking with their supervisor. It also meant that data was scarcer and less systematically captured before 2019.

The diversity of the four thematic cases provided a rich basis for learning but also generated **challenges in comparability**. The evaluation sought to overcome this by firmly anchoring analysis against the proposed ToC that emphasises enabling and hindering factors and pathways for change that determine 'what' was produced or achieved. Identifying and logging outcomes in a joint database also allowed for filtering the data to look at different variables across the cases while still keeping the full narrative and contextual specificities of the cases in mind.

Our reliance on **interviews** as the primary empirical evidence also carried limitations. Individuals, even those in key positions, may only see part of the picture. There is a risk that they over-emphasise their own influence or that of the organisation they represent. Moreover, some may not recognise their activities as constituting 'normative dialogue', even if others in Sida see these as strategic examples of the normative dialogue they are engaged in. Using KIIs and experiential evidence is often the only available source of data, and therefore could overstate what is in fact the modest role of Sweden as a small country in a broader geopolitical context. Validation and triangulation through additional stakeholder views and documentation sought to mitigate this risk.

The thematic cases were designed to look at normative dialogue from a **global, regional and country-level perspective**⁹⁵ and to highlight and assess synergies between different levels. This was based on an assumption in the ToR that such linkages would be possible to establish based on the themes and sub-themes specified in the ToR. While such linkages were found in some cases, the evaluation more often found that global positions regarding normative commitments had a modest role in dialogues centred around national norms. This limited the evaluation's ability to

⁹⁴ Linking dialogue specifically to normative change.

⁹⁵ See each of the four thematic cases in volume two of this report for an explanation of what was covered at each level for each respective case. The different levels are also further explained in the Inception Report (separate annex) for the evaluation and the ToR (Annex 1).

highlight and assess assumed synergies between different levels of operation in line with what is intended in the 360 model. The evaluation sought to harvest a wide range of outcomes at various levels, clustering them to identify where synergies between the global and national levels exist, and where such information exchange and coordination could be further strengthened. Where linkages could be established the evaluation sought to explore these further through the thematic cases.

During the **inception phase**, the evaluation team explored the use of various data science techniques to extract social media and web data, including harnessing data from Twitter. While the data was illustrative of how key persons, Sida departments or embassies were communicating about content of relevance for the evaluation, it proved to be difficult to connect this clearly and reliably to any other findings given the multitude of communications methods used for normative dialogue, and variations as to what social media works best in different country settings.

Finally, as is apparent in this report, the structure of the evaluation questions led the analysis to explore a number of **overlapping factors**. In responding to one evaluation question, the analysis has inevitably touched upon other questions. This has been recognised by the evaluation team throughout the evaluation process and was raised in discussions with the steering group and reference group. The extensive inception phase sought to untangle these factors, but some overlap remains. The evaluation has chosen to adhere as far as possible to the basic structure proposed in the ToR despite these overlaps.

Annex 3 Database for Observed Outcomes

Database for Observed Outcomes in the Formative Evaluation of Normative Dialogue at Sida 2015–2022

This form is to be used by Evaluation Team members to log all harvested outcomes recorded during the data gathering process. We will consider all identified changes that interviewees regard as significant at outcome or impact level – try to push interviewees to think beyond separate activities and outputs toward broader change processes. The changes can include those harvested from documentation only but will primarily be derived from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions – validated as far as possible by documentation and/or other stakeholder views. A few pointers to fill out the form:

- There will be one separate form per outcome (not one per interview), which will be consolidated into a database structured by categories of outcomes at the end of the data gathering. It is therefore important to only log one outcome per form.
- Some interviewees may refer to more than one outcome, in which case you will need to log several forms/outcomes for that interview.
- Other interviewees may not mention any outcome at all. If so, don't use this form. However, the transcript of the interview is still important to keep track of and share with the team (via email/ShareDrive) and the information will instead be captured in the narrative of the cases.
- Not all fields will be applicable or possible to fill out for every outcome. Only fill out what is relevant. There will be an opportunity to go back over your logged outcomes towards the end of data gathering to complement with additional information.

Note also that this is not an interview guide, but something that is filled out after interviews have been completed.

Outcomes as they are referred to in *Outcome Harvesting*⁹⁶ are defined as “an observable and significant change in a social actor’s behaviour, relationships, activities, actions, policies or practice that has been achieved, and that has been influenced by the change agent”.

1. Theme

Differentiate between case-specific outcomes and ‘other’ outcomes/examples. For instance, LLCAF=Locally Led Climate Adaptation versus ‘other’ outcomes in the field of environment.

- LLCAF
- WEE
- SRHR
- LGBTQ
- OTHER

2. Organisation

The organisation(s) who reports the outcome (if several, list all and note any divergence in opinion between different parties)

3. Gender of interviewee

- Female
- Male
- Other
- More than one person, please specify number for each gender:

4a. Level of operation

The level at which the outcome can be observed.

- Global
- Regional
- Country

⁹⁶ Ricardo Wilson-Grau, Heather Britt. (2012, revised November 2013). *Outcome Harvesting*. Ford Foundation MENA office.

4b. Specific country/ies

Note that more than one option can be selected.

- Armenia
- Azerbaijan
- Bangladesh
- Belarus
- Georgia
- Guatemala
- Kenya
- Liberia
- Moldova
- Mozambique
- Somalia
- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Ukraine
- Other, please specify

4c. Specific (Sida) region

Note that more than one option can be selected.

- Africa
- Asia
- Europe
- Latin America
- Middle East and North Africa
- Global

5. Outcome description

Be as specific as possible. Even activities/outputs can be noted if brought up as significant by the respondent (if so, specify).

6. Type of sources

Note that more than one option can be selected.

- Documentation
- KII
- Focus Group Discussion

7. Level of change

In relation to end beneficiaries

- Output or activity
- Outcome
- Impact

8a. Nature of observed change

Note that more than one option can be selected.

- People (in terms of awareness, skills, behaviour at individual level)
- Processes or priorities (at collective level)
- Policy
- Partnership(s)

8b. Explanation/justification for Nature of observed change

Explain the choice under question 8a and elaborate on how change at multiple levels interact if relevant.

9. Type of issue in context

- 1. Headwind - high level of contention/sensitive in context
- 2. Medium level of alignment
- 3. High/broad level of alignment
- 4. Facing widespread ignorance and/or low interest
- 5. Varied, explain:

10. Type of context in relation to outcome or issue

Note at country level only

- 1. Repressive
- 2. Open & transparent
- 3. Fragile/conflict
- n/a

11. Level of innovation in context

- 1. New to Sida and new to partners or context (breaking new ground)
- 2. New to Sida but not new to partners/in context (learning-oriented)
- 3. Not new to Sida but new to partners/context (persuasive)
- 4. Not new to Sida and not new to partners/context (perseverant)

12. Role played by Sida

Note that more than one option can be selected.

- 1. Driver of change (at the forefront)
- 2. Supporter of change via/alongside others (as a peer in an ongoing change process)
- 3. Changing the conditions without which the desired change cannot happen (background or preparatory work, strengthening evidence-base)
- 4. Financier of change processes

13. Perceived significance of Sida's role in relation to development results

Derived from key informant interviews but could be assigned by evaluator based on an assessment interview responses.

- Low
- Medium
- High

14. Justification for assigned significance

Specify source and how assessment was made in relation to previous question.

15. Approach to dialogue

Note that more than one option can be selected.

- 1. Direct engagement
- 2. Via intermediaries
- 3. Part of multi-donor initiatives

16. Reflection on choice of approach/significance of use of multiple approaches

17. Internal coordination mechanisms used within Sida, with Team Sweden (across functions, levels of operation)

Especially indicate the scope of 'Team Sweden' approaches

18. Organisational capabilities within Sida that affected dialogue outcomes

Note that more than one option can be selected.

- 1. Capability to adapt to context and self-renew in line with strategic priorities
- 2. Capability to balance diversity and coherence
- 3. Capability to commit and engage over time

- 4. Capability to create value to others
- 5. Capability to relate and attract others (alliance-building, trust-building)
- 6. Capability to generate knowledge and evidence to justify and generate evidence-driven consensus

19. Reflections on institutional capabilities and/or areas for recommended improvements

20. Relevant power dimensions (gender/ inclusion/ local leadership and ownership)

21. Reflections and recommendations in relation to power dimensions

22. Reflections on gaps and missed opportunities

Annex 4 List of People Consulted

	Name	Function	Organisation
Sida / MFA /Team Sweden /embassies			
1.	Respondent	Policy Lead, Human Rights and democracy, LGBTQI	Sida
2.	Respondent	Programme specialist, Human Rights & Democracy, LGBTQI	Sida
3.	Respondent	Programme Officer, Eastern Europe and Latin America Department	Sida
4.	Respondent	Environmental Hub, Nairobi	Embassy of Sweden, Kenya
5.	Respondent	Evaluator, Evaluation Unit	Sida
6.	Respondent	Head of Evaluation Unit	Sida
7.	Respondent	Senior Policy Specialist, INTEM	Sida
8.	Respondent	Planning coordinator, Hum/Asia Department	Sida
9.	Respondent	Strategy and planning	Sida
10.	Respondent	Head of Department, INTEM (former)	Sida
11.	Respondent	Head of Unit, Multilateral cooperation (former)	Sida
12.	Respondent	Head of Department, INTEM	Sida
13.	Respondent	Head of Unit, Effective implementation/Methods development (former)	Sida
14.	Respondent	Planning coordinator, INTEM	Sida
15.	Respondent	Planning coordinator, Partner	Sida
16.	Respondent	Head of unit, Multilateral cooperation	Sida
17.	Respondent	Lead policy specialist, SRHR	Sida
18.	Respondent	Lead policy specialist, gender equality (former)	Sida
19.	Respondent	Thematic advisor, SRHR	Sida
20.	Respondent	Senior Gender Policy Advisor, WEE specialist	Sida
21.	Respondent	Head of unit GLOBEK (multilateral economic support)	Sida

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22.	Respondent	Head of Development Cooperation	Embassy of Sweden, Somalia
23.	Respondent	Head of Development Cooperation	Embassy of Sweden, Bangladesh
24.	Respondent	Head of Development Cooperation	Embassy of Sweden, Liberia
25.	Respondent	Programme Officer	Embassy of Sweden, Liberia
26.	Respondent	Head of Development Cooperation	Embassy of Sweden, Guatemala
27.	Respondent	Lead policy specialist, Environment	Sida
28.	Respondent	Europe/Latin America	Sida
29.	Respondent	Europe/Latin America	Sida
30.	Respondent	Hum/Asia	Sida
31.	Respondent	Strategic partnerships	Sida
32.	Respondent	Director of the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa	Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa
33.	Respondent	Advisor, Unit for International Development Cooperation	MFA
34.	Respondent	Ambassador of Sweden, Mozambique	Embassy of Sweden, Mozambique
35.	Respondent	Former Ambassador of Sweden, Mozambique	MFA
36.	Respondent	Former Ambassador of Sweden, Mozambique	MFA
37.	Respondent	Head of Development Cooperation	Embassy of Sweden, Mozambique
38.	Respondent	Deputy Head of Development Cooperation Programme Officer	Embassy of Sweden, Mozambique
39.	Respondent	Deputy Head of Unit, SRHR Africa Unit	Embassy of Sweden, South Africa
40.	Respondent	Lead Policy Specialist Health/SRHR	Sida
41.	Respondent	Former Embassy of Sweden in Zambia, Regional team for SRHR, (now Professor, Lund University)	Embassy of Sweden, Zambia (and Lund University)
42.	Respondent	Thematic lead SRHR	Sida
43.	Respondent	Diplomat in Ethiopia	Sida
44.	Respondent	Swedish Ambassador for Global Health	MFA
45.	Respondent	Programme Specialist, Human Rights & Democracy, LGBTQI	Sida

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46.	Respondent	First Secretary	MFA, Permanent Mission of Sweden, Geneva
47.	Respondent	Permanent Representation of Sweden, New York	MFA
48.	Respondent	Specialist, Human Rights	MFA, HR/DEMO
49.	Respondent	Head of Development Cooperation,	Embassy of Sweden, Bangladesh
50.	Respondent	Programme Specialist, Embassy of Sweden Bangladesh	Embassy of Sweden, Bangladesh
51.	Respondent	Senior Programme Officer	Embassy of Sweden, Bangladesh
52.	Respondent	Multilateral Unit	Sida
53.	Respondent	Secretary of Rural Development and WEE – Embassy of Sweden, Mozambique	Embassy of Sweden, Mozambique
54.	Respondent	Lead for World Bank Multi-Sector Partnership	Embassy of Sweden, Somalia
55.	Respondent	Gender Specialist	Embassy of Sweden, Somalia
56.	Respondent	Program Manager – Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment Programme	Sida
57.	Respondent	First Secretary/Regional PM, Trade and Economic Development	Embassy of Sweden, Jordan
58.	Respondent	Worked with Joint ILP/UN Women Programme Promoting Productive Employment and Decent Work for Women in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine	Sida
59.	Respondent	Head of Development Cooperation	Embassy of Sweden, Guatemala
60.	Respondent	Gender Advisor	Sida
61.	Respondent	Capacity development, Department for partnerships and innovation	Sida
62.	Respondent	Senior Policy Advisor, Civil society	Sida
63.	Respondent	Deputy Head of Department	Sida
64.	Respondent	Methods support, strategy and planning	Sida
65.	Respondent	Senior Research Advisor	Sida
66.	Respondent	Senior Advisor for RBM	Sida
67.	Respondent	Co-ordinator /European Commission	Sida
68.	Respondent	Counsellor and Head of Cooperation	Sida

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69.	Respondent	Ambassador	Embassy of Sweden, Guatemala
70.	Respondent	Ambassador	Embassy of Sweden, Albania
71.	Respondent	Ambassador	Embassy of Sweden, Turkey
72.	Respondent	First Secretary	Embassy of Sweden, Moldova
73.	Respondent	Program Officer	Embassy of Sweden, Moldova
74.	Respondent	Political Affairs Officer	Embassy of Sweden, Moldova
75.	Respondent	Lead Policy Specialist, Environment	Sida
76.	Respondent	Senior Programme Specialist	Sida
77.	Respondent	Senior Programme Specialist, Unit for Global Cooperation on Environment, GLOBEN	Sida
78.	Respondent	Acting head of international programmes	The Swedish Chemicals Agency
79.	Respondent	Advisor	Sida
80.	Respondent	First Secretary/Senior Programme Manager	Embassy of Sweden, Kenya
81.	Respondent	Programme Officer	Embassy of Sweden, Bangladesh
82.	Respondent	Programme Officer	Sida
83.	Respondent	Programme Manager	Sida
84.	Respondent	Head of Development Cooperation	Embassy of Sweden, Kenya
85.	Respondent	Environmental Hub	Embassy of Sweden, Kenya
86.	Respondent	First Secretary & Deputy Head of Development Cooperation	Embassy of Sweden, Bangladesh
87.	Respondent	Lead Policy Specialist, Environment & Climate	Sida
88.	Respondent	Programme Officer	Embassy of Sweden, Kenya
Government			
89.	Respondent	Manager – Qualifications	ANEP (TVET)
90.	Respondent	The Economic Council	Office of the Prime Minister, Moldova
91.	Respondent	The Economic Council	Office of the Prime Minister, Moldova
92.	Respondent	Counsellor to the Prime-Minister/State Secretary to the Ministry of Development	Office of the Prime Minister, Moldova

		and Digitalisation/ former EBRD Country Manager/ Co-founder and Board member Association of Women Entrepreneurs from Moldova (AFAM)	
93.	Respondent	Policy and Political Affairs Officer	Embassy of the Netherlands, Moldova
94.	Respondent	President	The Equality Council, Moldova
95.	Respondent	Head of Department	Ministry of Social Protection, Government of the Republic of Moldova
96.	Respondent	Deputy Secretary, MOEFCC	Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MOFCC), Bangladesh
97.	Respondent	Joint Secretary of Local Government Division and Project Director, LoGIC	Local Government Division, Bangladesh
International organisations			
98.	Respondent	Medical Officer in the Department of the Family and Reproductive Health (FRH) Cluster	WHO
99.	Respondent	Regional Health Systems Adviser	UNFPA
100.	Respondent	Programme Manager	UNFPA, Mozambique
101.	Respondent	National Programme Specialist	UNFPA Liberia
102.	Respondent	Executive Director	Alliance for Financial Inclusion
103.	Respondent	Monitoring and Evaluation Analyst	Alliance for Financial Inclusion
104.	Respondent	Head of Gender Platform, Somalia	World Bank
105.	Respondent	Team Leader FLLoCA	World Bank
106.	Respondent	Rural Women's Economic Empowerment Programme Coordinator	FAO
107.	Respondent	Country Representative	UN Women, Moldova
108.	Respondent	Programme Manager	UN Women, Moldova
109.	Respondent	Programme Manager	UN Women, Moldova

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110.	Respondent	Programme Specialist, Climate Change	UN Women, Bangladesh
111.	Respondent	Project Coordinator LoGIC	UNDP, Bangladesh
112.	Respondent	Regional Advisor	UNCDF, Bangladesh
113.	Respondent	Programme Manager, LoCAL	UNCDF, Uganda
CSOs			
114.	Respondent	Secretary General	We Effect
115.	Respondent	Country Director	Amodefa/CECAP, Mozambique
116.	Respondent	Executive Director	MULEIDE, Mozambique
117.	Respondent	Country Director	IPAS, Mozambique
118.	Respondent	Advocacy Advisor	IPAS, Mozambique
119.	Respondent	Executive Director	Forum Mulher, Mozambique
120.	Respondent	Executive Director	ROSC, Mozambique
121.	Respondent	Executive Director	FORCOM, Mozambique
122.	Respondent	Executive Director	ILGA World
123.	Respondent	Advocacy Advisor	RFSL
124.	Respondent	Programme Manager	RFSL
125.	Respondent	Head of Eastern Europe Programme	RFSL
126.	Respondent	Advocacy Programme Manager	RFSL
127.	Respondent	Secretary General	Outright International
128.	Respondent	Regional Director (Central America)	We Effect
129.	Respondent	Programme Director – Rural Mayan Women’s Economic Empowerment Programme (Guatemala)	We Effect
130.	Respondent	Regional Gender Advisor	We Effect
131.	Respondent	Senior Research Officer	Africa Public Health Research Centre (APHRC)
132.	Respondent	Senior Research Officer	Africa Public Health Research Centre (APHRC)
133.	Respondent	Lobby and Advocacy Program Coordinator	GENDERDOC-M Information Center, Moldova

134.	Respondent	Former Executive Director	GENDERDOC-M Information Center, Moldova
135.	Respondent	Executive Director	East Europe Foundation
136.	Respondent	M&E Officer	East Europe Foundation
137.	Respondent	Executive Director	Women Law Center, Moldova
138.	Respondent	Program Coordinator	Women Law Center, Moldova
139.	Respondent	Festival Director	MOLDOX Film Festival, Moldova
140.	Respondent	Executive Director	Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), Bangladesh
141.	Respondent	Executive Director	Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI)
142.	Respondent	National Coordinator Kenya Platform For Climate Governance (PACJA)	Panafrican Climate Justice Alliance (PCJA)
143.	Respondent	Nature-Climate Policy Lead	IIED
Others			
144.	Respondent	Professor	Göteborg University
145.	Respondent	Deputy Director, Global Programs	External
146.	Respondent	Global Programs	External foundation
147.	Respondent	Former Project Director – WIN Mozambique	TechnoServe Inc.
148.	Respondent	Project Director – WIN Mozambique	TechnoServe Inc.
149.	Respondent	DMM Manager (WIN) Mozambique	Private sector
150.	Respondent	Director – Anima (WIN)	Media company
151.	Respondent	Manager – Nestle (WIN)	Private sector
152.	Respondent	Marketing Director – Moza Banco (WIN)	Private sector
153.	Respondent	Evaluation Specialist	ALNAP
154.	Respondent	Consultant	NCG Sweden, Gender Help Desk

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Formative Evaluation of Normative Dialogue at Sida, 2015–2022

Final report

The overall goal of the Formative Evaluation of Normative Dialogue at Sida (2015–2022) is “to promote learning about Sida’s work with normative dialogue, (...) identify key factors behind successful normative dialogue, (...) and help Sida increase the understanding of what works, what does not work, and why, as well as identifying both key bottlenecks and ways to improve”.

Drawing on four case studies as well as institutional interviews and focus group discussions, the evaluation recorded stories of change where Sida’s dialogue efforts contributed to concrete shifts in people’s attitudes, knowledge, or skills – at an individual level – and processes, policies, partnerships, or institutions at a more collective or systemic level. Sida uses normative dialogue to push boundaries of how normative agendas for development priorities are framed in line with universal values and as reflected in Swedish priorities and strategies. Perseverance over time, together with having like-minded partners, was considered a key factor for success. The evaluation found that Sida sometimes lacks clear internal direction or the capacity to engage directly in normative dialogue and that normative dialogue must be part of how Sida engages adaptively and strategically in a given context. The evaluation recommends that Sida’s leadership clarify its mandate and role when engaging in normative dialogue on key Swedish priorities, and this should be systematically communicated to staff. Moreover, leadership should regularly discuss Sida’s role in relation to normative priorities with the MFA and put in place mechanisms to link normative dialogue more clearly with enabling development results at all levels of operation.



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