



Sida's communications

2024–2026

1. Introduction

1.1 About the sub-strategy

This sub-strategy describes Sida's communication mission, which is focusing on illuminating the implementation and results of funded activities. Sida's communication also contributes to increased transparency. In this way, the Swedish public can see how taxpayers' money are used, while making it easier for external actors to evaluate, analyze and follow up the results of aid, in line with the Government's letter "Aid for a new era - Freedom, empowerment and sustainable growth".

Sida's external communication helps our audiences to learn more about how aid works, what results it produces, and what opportunities there are to work with Sida. Communicative employees and managers contribute to Sida achieving its objectives of developing results monitoring, communication and transparency, and make it clear that Sida works on behalf of the mandates of the government and the parliament.

The sub-strategy for Sida's communication applies to all communication with Sida as the sender. It is a resource for all employees in Sweden and abroad and it guides Sida's official communication in the editorial work, which in turn is coordinated by the Unit for Communications and Transparency. Outside Sweden, we communicate as part of Team Sweden, in close dialog and cooperation with the agencies abroad. Together we develop messages and content to provide a factual, accessible and transparent picture of Swedish development cooperation and its results.

1.2 The sub-strategy's structure

The sub-strategy is structured according to the following sections:

- Chapter 1 describes the external expectations on Sida's communication and the opportunities to achieve results through communication.
- Chapter 2 provides a brief description of the current situation and background to Sida's work on communication.
- Chapter 3 describes the purpose of the sub-strategy and its place in Sida's governance. It then describes the objectives and target groups for Sida's external and internal communication.
- Chapter 4 describes the capabilities that Sida needs to achieve its objectives.
- Chapter 5 first describes guiding principles for Sida's role and activities. This is followed by guiding principles for leadership and working methods.

1.3 Sida's opportunities to achieve results

Sida has a multifaceted and geographically dispersed operation that contributes to the objectives of Sida's operational strategy (2024-2026). Communication is an important tool in development cooperation that contributes to achieving results. By being transparent and telling the Swedish public and other prioritised target groups about the results of aid, Sida creates understanding and confidence that we are working in a responsible and effective way.

- By coordinating and structuring communication based on the objectives of the operational strategy, we can communicate as One Sida. This means that we communicate in a uniform way to create recognition and clarity for our target groups.
- For Sida's communication to be a strategic and effective tool, it must be adapted to the intended purpose and target group. Each target group has its own prerequisites and Sida's communication needs to be adapted accordingly if results is to be achieved.
- Transparency means that relevant and accurate information is both available and understandable for the reader. Targeted, explanatory and coordinated communication therefore contributes to increased transparency of Swedish aid. Transparency makes it easier for external actors to evaluate aid and enables Swedish taxpayers to gain an overview of Sweden's publicly funded aid and demand accountability. In addition, by publishing open data on Swedish aid, which are retrieved from Sida's systems, recipients can also follow the operations that affect them, and review the delivery.
- Communication makes it easier for Sida to achieve its goals and enables more people to learn about Swedish aid and its results. Everyone at the agency needs to communicate within their own area. When relevant, Sida clarifies that it is Sweden, through Sida, that implements Official Development Assistance (ODA) on behalf of the Government.

- Communication makes it possible for Sida to lead, develop and change operations in the desired direction. It is through communication that we create meaning, spread knowledge and strengthen relationships, while reducing the risk of speculation and concern. Communication is a prerequisite for us to do our work and builds internal pride.
- Sida's opportunity to raise awareness¹ about our activities, their outcomes and the countries in which we work are influenced by external factors on societal and individual levels. At the societal level, these include public debate, the public's news habits and various forms of information gathering. At the individual level, it is about interest, curiosity, perceived information needs and social pressure to master something, for example through school grades, in order for communicated information to become knowledge.²
- Through independent media, Sida cost-effectively reaches out to broad target groups that do not actively seek information about aid. By being transparent and providing good service to journalists, we enable them to scrutinize Sida's activities, increase public transparency and strengthen confidence in the agency. Communication needs to be adapted to the media's news criteria, such as timeliness or the unexpected. This entails certain limitations, as it is difficult to convey the complexity and long-term nature of aid.³

1.4 External expectations

The Government Agency Ordinance states that Sida must provide information on the agency's activities and monitor conditions outside the agency that are relevant to its operations. As an administrative authority, Sida must also live up to the government's core values of democracy, legality, objectivity, freedom of opinion, respect, efficiency and service.

The Government's strategic direction for Swedish aid, "Aid for a new era - Freedom, empowerment and sustainable growth", emphasizes that the Swedish public should be able to utilize from transparency in aid to ensure that the tax money spent on aid makes a difference. Sida is also expected to form part of Sweden's coherent voice when communicating internationally, through Team Sweden. Communication towards foreign target groups is expected to increase and should be factual, strategic and effective.

¹ Information exists independently of whether an individual takes note of it. Accurate information is a prerequisite to knowledge, but can only be developed into knowledge when an individual understands it or attributes some kind of meaning to it and integrates it into their existing understanding. Knowledge implies awareness that something exists, which is a weaker form of knowledge. (EBA 2021:06)

² Informerad eller kunnig? Utvärdering av insatser för information och kommunikation om bistånd 2010-2020 (EBA 2021:06)

³ Informerad eller kunnig? Utvärdering av insatser för information och kommunikation om bistånd 2010-2020 (EBA 2021:06) s.45-46

News is spreading faster than ever, and this increases expectations on Sida to both communicate and act on events in the outside world - from the public, from decision-makers and from the media. By being proactive, transparent and accessible in our communication, we strengthen trust in Sida and avoid the spread of rumors.

2. Current situation and background

2.1 Current situation

Disinformation and advocacy are challenging the possibilities to reach out with information. A polarized debate on many issues, with strong opinion formation, has led to a situation where traditional communication channels and methods do not work as before. When many global development trends also point in the wrong direction, it becomes more complex to communicate the results of aid. In this situation, it is increasingly important - and also more difficult - for Sweden and Sida to communicate support for the positive forces that hold back negative developments and defend the progress that has been made.

Since 1974, Sida has conducted opinion polls on Swedes' knowledge and attitudes to aid. In 2023, Sweden's work with aid and development was perceived as unclear to 47 percent of those surveyed. 41 percent believed they had a good understanding.⁴

There is a strong interest in more information about Swedish aid, with just over half of respondents saying they want to know more, while 35% do not.⁵

In 2022, two-thirds of the Swedish public knew that Sida is a government agency, while 17 percent thought that Sida is a voluntary organization. This is a clear increase compared to 2017, when only about half of the public knew that Sida is a government agency.

2.2 Background

Between 1960 and 2022, extreme poverty and child mortality in the world were radically reduced. During the same period of time, life expectancy has increased from 52 to 71 years.⁶ Many people around the world, including Sweden, are unaware of this progress. The Gapminder Foundation's international survey in 2019 showed that only 1 in 10 knew that extreme poverty was halved between 1998 and 2019. In contrast, 6 out of 10 incorrectly believed that extreme poverty had instead doubled.⁵

One of the reasons for this knowledge gap is that many people lack natural points of contact with Sweden's partner countries and with development aid. This has been one of the motives behind Sida's former mission to inform broad target groups in Sweden

⁴ Opinion - Sidas attitydmätning om utveckling och bistånd 2023, s.18

⁵ Ibid, s.20

⁶ Blir världen bättre? 2023, s.19.

about world development and the role of aid in it. As early as 1969, the then SIDA was tasked with creating understanding “for a new international perspective and awareness” and, up to and including 2023, has been tasked in various forms with increasing knowledge in Sweden about development issues and poverty reduction through public education and debate.⁷

Between 2000 and 2022, Sida’s appropriation item for information and communication activities varied between SEK 29 million (2008) and SEK 158 million (2020). The appropriation item and the associated strategy ended in 2023. From 2024, Sida’s communication mission is delimited to the statutory task of providing information about the agency’s work and making it clear that it is Sweden, through Sida, that implements aid. Communication is also a key tool in Sida’s mission to increase transparency so that Swedish citizens know how aid money is used and so that external actors can more easily evaluate and analyze aid.

Following a decision by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA), a transparency guarantee for Swedish aid has been in place since 2010. The transparency guarantee means that all public information about Swedish aid must be published on the internet, and the guarantee covers all authorities that handle money from expenditure area⁷ of the state budget.

Sida has published open data on aid on Openaid since 2010 and has had three tasks in relation to the transparency guarantee since 2011: (1) to coordinate and support other government agencies’ implementation of the transparency guarantee, (2) to be responsible for and develop the Openaid information service and (3) to adapt the information on Openaid in accordance with the Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).⁸

3. Purpose and desired state

3.1. How the sub-strategy is used

The purpose of the sub-strategy for communication is to create a common and clear picture of the objectives and working methods for Sida’s communication in order to facilitate practical implementation. The sub-strategy will also help Sida to carry out the assignments we receive from the Government.

The sub-strategy is also in itself a basis for communication with external parties and Sida’s clients.

The sub-strategy is based on Sida’s operational strategy and guides staff when planning communication activities within the framework of Sida’s operational planning. The activities are followed up in the

operational follow-up, where the impact of the sub-strategy is evaluated every three years.

3.2. Desired state 2026

The goal is for the agency’s departments to communicate as “One Sida”. This means that we communicate in a uniform way to create recognition and clarity for our target groups based on the objectives of the operational strategy (2024-2026). It also means adapting our communication to our different audiences. By offering support to employees, COM helps to ensure that they have basic competence in strategic communication, and can conduct a successful dialogue with our partners on issues that have normative significance for Sweden’s development cooperation. Sida shall be a communicative organization characterized by an open communication climate where different voices are valued and highlighted.

Sida’s external communication shall...

- Contribute to increased awareness of the implementation and results of Swedish aid through Sida
- Contribute to increased transparency in Swedish aid
- Contribute to increased awareness of opportunities to cooperate with or work for Sida.
- Contribute to maintaining and increasing confidence in Swedish aid and the Sida agency

Sida’s internal communication shall...

- Contribute to increased cohesion and dialogue in a geographically dispersed organization
- Increase the exchange of knowledge, experience and ideas within the organization
- Contribute to increased understanding of the organization and provide opportunities to contribute to its goals
- Be a tool for good and trust-based leadership
- Be regularly evaluated and thus contribute to continuous learning.

Target groups

There are several target groups for external communication. They include both direct recipients and those who pass on the information to others:

- Decision-makers
- The media
- Partners
- Potential employees
- Interested public in Sweden
- Teachers

⁷ Bygga kapacitet för ett effektivt bistånd - Historiska erfarenheter och samtida utmaningar, Jonas Ewald och Lennart Wohlgemuth (2022, Oktober) s.3

⁸ Sida has assessed the sample of information to be published in order for the transparency guarantee to be considered fulfilled [011921/23]. The publication to Openaid has been adjusted to absorb governance and balance transparency requirements and information security risks [024760/14, 043804/14, 010557/16, 046876/20, 2020-002838].

The internal communication is aimed at employees and managers at Sida in Sweden and at the overseas agencies. For the target groups at the foreign agencies, we have a collaboration with UD-KOM. As a staff member, you are both the target group, carrier and co-creator of the communication.

4. Competences, methods and learning

To achieve the goal of Sida's communication, the whole of Sida needs to communicate. The thematic priorities in the operational strategy (2024-2026) are a common starting point that helps us to communicate coherently, as "One Sida". These are the capabilities that Sida needs to further develop:

THE AGENCY'S ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE AS "ONE SIDA"

This means:

All staff need to have the ability to communicate with relevant audiences in their field of activity. Employees must ensure that all communication is agreed by the managers who bear the communicative responsibility. Anyone who speaks on behalf of Sida must ensure that the messages conveyed are those of the agency. In the event of media enquiries, the press service and the immediate manager must always be contacted. KOM's role is to create the conditions for Sida's employees to communicate strategically and in a way that is adapted to the target group.

In addition to communication skills, the staff at KOM also need to have pedagogical skills in order to be able to support other activities in an effective and efficient way.

All Sida's employees need to be familiar with and be able to use the tools and support available for communication. This is a prerequisite for us to be able to communicate in a consistent way and create recognition and clarity towards our target groups.

Communication is an important part of our crisis preparedness. In the event of incidents that affect Sida's employees and operations, it is important that all those affected receive rapid and factual information about the incident and the measures that Sida is taking.

Business intelligence, cooperation between different competencies and factual and relevant communication help us to manage undue influence of information.

THE ABILITY OF COMMUNICATIVE LEADERSHIP

This means:

Managers have a particularly important role in government communication. Communicative leadership is needed for Sida to be an organization that uses communication as a tool for increased achievement of

results. Therefore, the communication skills of managers and leaders are particularly important.

The established definition of communicative leadership:

- coaches and empowers employees
- creates structures that facilitate work
- sets clear expectations for quality, productivity, and professionalism
- is accessible, respectful and cares about employees
- solves problems, gives and seeks feedback and speaks up for their unit
- provides direction and helps others to achieve their goals
- consciously shapes messages and events

5. Guiding principles

5.1 Guiding principles for Sida's role and operations

SIDA COMMUNICATES FACTUALLY, STRATEGICALLY AND EFFECTIVELY ABOUT ITS ACTIVITIES

What?

Sida's role is to communicate objectively, strategically and effectively about the implementation of its own activities on behalf of the government and its results, based on the agency's operational strategy (2024 - 2026) and the principles of the government's core values.

Why?

Sida's operational strategy describes the agency's objectives, business environment analysis and working methods. By communicating on the basis of this strategy, we can communicate consistently as "One Sida".

The principles of democracy, legality, objectivity, free expression of opinion, respect, efficiency and service are the basis for all activities carried out by administrative authorities.

How?

To deal with new political governance of aid and adapt to a changing world, Sida is restructuring and reviewing its organization and working methods. The ambition is to speak consistently as One Sida. Strategic communication helps the organization to implement the change and helps all employees to feel involved.

According to the principle of efficiency and service, the agency should be accessible and provide service to citizens. This includes using careful and simple language, i.e. plain language.⁹ The Language Act also stipulates that the language used in public activities must be careful, simple and understandable.

⁹ Den statliga värdegrunden – gemensamma principer för en god förvaltning; Statskontoret, 2019, s. 33

SIDA CONTRIBUTES TO TEAM SWEDEN'S COMMUNICATION

What?

Team Sweden is a platform where Swedish authorities and other state-funded actors collaborate in a country or within a sector, based on their respective mandates and roles. Team Sweden collaborations take place both in Sweden and abroad.

Through Sida's increased focus on trade, the Government Offices, Business Sweden, the Swedish Export Credit Agency (EKN), Swedish Export Credit Corporation (SEK), Swedfund and the National Board of Trade are particularly important actors to cooperate with.

Why?

Swedish aid is intended to create the conditions for better living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression. At the same time, aid is one of the most important foreign policy tools for pursuing and safeguarding Swedish interests and meeting the challenges facing us and the world. The Government sees potential in finding synergies between aid and trade, as well as in making better use of the expertise of Swedish companies to meet the growing global challenges.

How?

Communication in close cooperation and dialog with the missions abroad and other actors in Team Sweden.

5.2. Guiding principles for leadership and working methods

SIDA'S COMMUNICATION IS STRATEGIC AND IMPLEMENTED BY THE WHOLE AGENCY

What?

The Agency's internal and external communication is coordinated centrally to ensure that it is coherent and strategic. The central communication unit works closely with the operational departments to jointly identify and highlight good examples and results.

Why?

A clear division of roles and responsibilities with clear lines of contact creates the conditions for successful communication. Everyone's skills are put to good use, resulting in increased job satisfaction and greater efficiency.

How?

Sida's working methods are clear and appropriate to support coherent communication. Centrally managed channels and communication support for Sida's employees form the basis for Sida's departments to be able to communicate strategically and in a target group-oriented manner.

THE COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT IS KNOWN AND USED THROUGHOUT SIDA

What?

Our communication should be planned with a clear purpose. It should be long-term and used to achieve our business objectives. We aim to communicate important information internally before communicating externally.

Our communication takes into account the needs of the target audience and we define our audiences as clearly as possible. Tone and wording are adapted to the target audience and context.

Why?

All employees are involved in influencing how Sida is perceived: as a government agency, employer and player in international development cooperation. Through coherent communication, our messages become clear and we create better conditions for succeeding in our mission.

Adapting our communication to Sida's target groups is a fundamental prerequisite for it to be comprehensible, reach and have the intended effect.

How?

The following guides and tools are available on the intranet and should be used in all communication with Sida as sender.

Graphic profile: Our graphic profile supports us in our communication, both in terms of content and message. It is important that Sida is easily recognized through its graphic design, and communication is also stronger when everyone speaks with the same voice.

Language guide: All the texts we write must be accessible and adapted to our target groups. We follow the Language Act and therefore use careful, simple and understandable language: plain language. This makes our communication effective and easier for everyone to understand, both internally and externally. Sida is a Swedish government agency and we therefore communicate in Swedish as a general rule.

Guide to images and films: We like to use images and films to tell people about our activities. This helps us to convey a credible picture of our activities and aid. We must comply with laws, rules, safety and ethics in their use. For example, we must handle personal data, consent and user rights correctly. Images and videos published digitally must also be accessible in accordance with the Accessibility Directive.

Communicative identity: We communicate in a way that strengthens the image of Sida as an effective and transparent government agency. We create trust by highlighting and communicating the results to which Swedish aid contributes. The previous communicative identity in the toolbox is adapted to Sida's communication mission.

SIDA'S COMMUNICATION IS CARRIED OUT THROUGH EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT CHANNELS

What?

We adapt and evolve our channel choices as the media landscape and platforms evolve and changing target group behaviour.

Why?

Sida should be present in the channels where our target groups are and where we are best placed to achieve results.

To reach our audiences, our communication needs to relate to the communication landscape and context they are in. There is a constant battle for the attention of target audiences. Therefore, our communication needs to be designed to cut through the information noise, showing Sida at the digital and communication forefront. This also helps us to communicate that Sida is a professional and modern government agency, which also contributes to the image of an attractive workplace.

How?

Sida.se: Anyone who wants to know more about Swedish development aid will find accurate and quality-assured information on sida.se. The purpose of the website is to provide our target groups with basic information about Sida's mission, how aid works, what it funds and what results it achieves. We describe the opportunities to cooperate with or work at Sida, and provide partners with material they need in their relationship with Sida. We work in an insight-based way and all content should have a clear purpose and target audience. To maintain control over content and reduce the risk of spreading misinformation, we prioritize content that has a long life and is continuously quality assured. Current events are highlighted on the homepage.

Openaid.se: Open data is published here showing what is financed, where, by whom and with what results, at the intervention and strategy level. Editorial and narrative texts on the implementation and results of Swedish aid are available on Sida.se. Openaid is part of Sida's extensive transparency work.

Social media: Sida uses social media to conduct dialogues, to reinforce messages communicated in other channels and to reach specific target groups. With more light-hearted and moving content, we capture the attention of young people. Social media is the most important news channel for young people, according to the Internet Foundation. Through other channels, we reach opinion leaders and decision-makers and keep in touch with industry players, in Sweden and internationally. Social media is also suitable for strengthening the image of Sida as an attractive workplace and spreading our vacancies. The general public in Sweden can also be reached here, for example by paying for posts aimed at specific target groups.

Press: Through continuous external monitoring, we match our activities with the media's areas of interest, and together each individual news item becomes part of the story about Sida's activities. The press service assesses which press activity is appropriate based on news value, timeliness and strategic importance. Press releases are handled promptly and formulated together with the expert spokesperson. DGs are informed before distribution. We use traditional media to reach a wide audience. This is where we have the best chance of reaching beyond those already interested in aid. We also work reactively and contribute to transparency through quick service to journalists.

Events and seminars: We organize and participate in arenas where we can reach target groups with in-depth information, engage in dialogue and exchange experiences. Sida also contributes our expertise to discussions on development cooperation implementation and challenges, together with our partners. Events with interactivity and multi-way communication have the greatest potential to increase target groups' knowledge.

6. Implementation

6.1 Implementation and monitoring

The sub-strategy, together with the operational strategy, sets the framework for Sida's official communication. In its annual operational and strategic plans, Sida sets out how its communication work is to be implemented. The plans are broken down into activities at departmental or unit level, as well as at the foreign offices.

The sub-strategy applies to everyone who works at Sida. Sida's departments should strive to contribute to the sub-strategy in their operational planning.

Channel strategies and other strategic documents will be developed to complement this sub-strategy



SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Visiting address: Rissneleden 110, 174 57 Sundbyberg
Postal address: Box 2025, SE-174 02 Sundbyberg, Sweden
Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64
E-mail: sida@sida.se Web: sida.se/en

