

2026:2

Sida Evaluation

Verian and CMC

# Central Evaluation of Conflict Sensitivity in Sida's Development and Humanitarian Cooperation

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.

Sida Evaluation 2026:2

Commissioned by Sida, Evaluation Unit.

**Published by:** Sida, 2026

**Copyright:** Sida and the authors

**Date of final report:** 2025-12-18

**Art.no.:** Sida62847en

urn:nbn:se:sida-62847en

This publication can be downloaded/ordered from [www.Sida.se/publications](http://www.Sida.se/publications)

# Foreword

In 2023, the Sida Director General decided to commission a central evaluation to assess the integration of conflict sensitivity across Sida's development cooperation strategies and operations. The evaluation was initiated by Sida's Evaluation Unit at the Department for Operational Support, in collaboration with the Department for International Organisations and Policy Support. It was conducted by an independent evaluation team from February 2024 to December 2025.

This evaluation responds to Sida's strategic interest in understanding how its operations, both at the strategy and contribution levels, have influenced peace and conflict dynamics in the contexts where it works. While Sida has long recognised conflict sensitivity as mandatory requirements of its support, this evaluation marks the first comprehensive effort to assess its integration and effects across a diverse portfolio of strategies.

The need to analyse where relevant how Sida's work affect peace and conflicts still remains crucial in achieving effective and positive results of its contributions.

We hope that this evaluation will be of use to Sida's managers and programme managers in strategy implementation and contribution management, thematic specialists and advisors in peace and human security at Sida, as well as leadership and staff at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and others with an interest in conflict sensitivity in international development cooperation.

Sundbyberg, February 3, 2026

Lena Johansson de Château,

Chief Evaluator

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# Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
AMDT	Agricultural Markets Development Trust
AgriFoSe 2030	Agriculture for Food Security Programme
CDA	Collaborative for Development Action
CHRAGG	Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance
CMC	Conflict Management Consulting
CS	Conflict sensitivity
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organisations
EBA	Expert Group for Aid Studies
EDI	Ethiopian Development Initiative
EQ	Evaluation Question
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FBA	Folke Bernadotte Academy
FFF	Forest Farm Facility
FFS	UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilisation
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GPI	Global Peace Index
GSMA	GSM Association
HCA	Humanitarian Crisis Analyses
HoAREC	Horn of Africa Regional Environment Centre and Network
IDP	Internally displaced persons
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IHEC	Independent High Electoral Commission
IMS	International Media Support
ITC	International Trade Centre
KJP	Kigoma Joint Programme
LHRC	Legal and Human Rights Centre
LPI	Life & Peace Institute
LTSP	Land Tenure Support Programme
MDPA	Multi-Dimensional Poverty Analysis
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

NPO	National Programme Officers
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development / Development Assistance Committee
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PINGOs	Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organizations Forum
PMU	Swedish Pentecostal International Development Cooperation
RRI	Rights and Resources Initiative
SCORE	Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index
SED	Sustainable Economic Development
SIF	Stockholm Internet Forum
SMC	Swedish Mission Council
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STDF	Standards and Trade Development Facility
TAWLA	Tanzania Women Lawyers Association
TGNP	Tanzania Gender Networking Programme
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UFE	Utilisation-Focused Evaluation
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNDAP	United Nations Development Assistance Plan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDSV	Vida Digna Sin Violencia
WB	World Bank
WB-FCS	The World Bank Group's list of fragile and conflict-affected situations
WBT	Western Balkans and Türkiye
WE4F	Water and Energy for Food
YMCA/ZOA	Young Men's Christian Association / ZOA

# Preface

In 2023, Sida commissioned a central evaluation to assess the integration of conflict sensitivity across its development cooperation strategies and operations. The evaluation was initiated by Sida's Evaluation Unit at the Department for Operational Support, in collaboration with the Department for International Organisations and Policy Support.

This evaluation was conducted by an independent evaluation team from Verian and CMC between February 2024 and December 2025. The evaluation team included André Kahlmeyer, Johanna Lindström, Samantha Smith, Maria Hrimech, Georgia Plank, Nahla Arif, Japhet Makongo, Filmon Hailu, and Simla Dai. Penny Hawkins provided quality assurance and Danait Lemlemu and Martin Nilsson provided research support.

The evaluation responds to Sida's strategic interest in understanding how its operations, both at the strategy and contribution levels, have influenced peace and conflict dynamics in the contexts where it works. While Sida has long recognised conflict sensitivity as one of five mandatory development perspectives, this evaluation marked the first comprehensive effort to assess its integration and effects across a diverse portfolio of strategies.

The views, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the evaluators and do not necessarily reflect the views of Sida.

The evaluation team wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the Sida Embassies and units whose engagement, insights, and collaboration made this evaluation possible. We extend our appreciation to colleagues across Sida's country teams, geographic departments, and thematic units for their openness and support throughout the process.

We are deeply grateful to Sida's Steering Committee and Reference Group for their guidance, constructive reflections, and sustained engagement during all phases of the evaluation.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the implementing partners who generously shared their experiences, evidence, and practical learning. Finally, we warmly thank the community members in Ethiopia, Iraq, and Tanzania who participated in interviews and focus group discussions. Their willingness to share perspectives and lived experiences greatly enriched the depth and quality of this evaluation.

# Executive Summary

## INTRODUCTION

Many of the places where Sweden works face political tensions, social divisions or the long-lasting effects of violence. In these environments, development cooperation and humanitarian aid can either help calm tensions or unintentionally make them worse. Sida has therefore stated that all its work should be conflict sensitive. This means understanding the local context, considering how interventions might influence it, and acting in ways that avoid harm and support more peaceful conditions.

In this evaluation, we look at how well Sida has put these intentions into practice. Our purpose is to learn how Sida's work affects peace and conflict dynamics, what helps or hinders conflict-sensitive approaches, and how Sida can strengthen this perspective across its portfolio.

We studied how conflict sensitivity was integrated across nine strategies, selected to capture variation across contexts from acute conflict to relative stability: Six bilateral (Bolivia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Liberia, Myanmar, Tanzania), one regional (Western Balkans/Türkiye), one thematic (Sustainable Economic Development) and Humanitarian Aid. We conducted case studies and in-depth work in Ethiopia, Iraq and Tanzania.

## MAIN QUESTIONS

We answered three core questions:

1. Relevance: How well do Sida's strategies reflect and respond to the peace and conflict dynamics in each context, and how do they adapt when situations change?
2. Effectiveness: To what extent has the use of conflict sensitivity contributed to positive/negative outcomes, and why?
3. Impact: What overall impact has conflict-sensitive work had in the three case study countries? What did Sida contribute to?

## METHODOLOGY

We based our analysis on a global Theory of Change (ToC) for conflict sensitivity. The ToC outlines what Sida expects to achieve: first Sida understanding the context, then examining how interventions interact with that context, and finally adapting their work to provide responsive, risk-mitigating cooperation that avoids harm and supports peace. Together with Sida's strategy owners, we translated this global ToC into nine strategy-specific versions. We linked each ToC to an evaluation matrix that connected the questions to indicators and evidence sources. We also used a conflict perspective tool that turned the ToCs into practical guidance for data collection, using both quantitative and qualitative methods tailored to each context.



To understand impact, we applied a so-called contribution analysis approach. This allowed us to assess Sida's plausible contribution to observed changes in peace and conflict dynamics by examining Sida's role, the specific intervention, the influence of other actors and factors, and, where possible, verifying the findings through external sources.

Our data came from internal and external documents, previous evaluations of cross-cutting issues, online sources, surveys, interviews with a broad range of stakeholders, and field observations when it was safe and ethical. We also drew on our accumulated experience working with conflict sensitivity.

Throughout the process, we upheld ethical standards such as informed consent, confidentiality, "do no harm," and gender sensitivity.

The evaluation faced several limitations, including risks of positive selection bias, difficulties collecting data when some partners declined to participate or projects ended early, and challenges caused by missing ToCs or results frameworks, uneven and inconsistent reporting. Security and political constraints restricted travel, and it was hard to assess Sida's specific contribution because many actors shape conflict dynamics and external verification was limited. These factors reduce confidence in some findings, particularly on impact, though we indicate evidence strength throughout the report.

## FINDINGS

### **Relevance: How well do Sida's strategies reflect and respond to the peace and conflict dynamics in each context, and how do they adapt when situations change?**

Conflict sensitivity features across the nine strategies, but it is unevenly applied, with consequences for the extent to which strategies are able to adapt to changing contexts.

Conflict sensitivity is most robust in acute and post-conflict settings such as **Ethiopia, Myanmar, Liberia and Iraq**, where there are detailed analyses of tensions and drivers of violence, stand-alone conflict analyses beyond the standard Multi-Dimensional Poverty Analysis (MDPA), routine engagement with the dedicated Sida helpdesk and local actors, and adaptive urgency.

Ethiopia and Myanmar demonstrated high levels of strategic and operational adaptation in response to rapidly evolving contexts. This included reprogramming, partner shifts, and geographic adjustments. Liberia and Iraq adapted some contributions in response to political shifts and security risks, but strategic adaptation was more limited. In Iraq, early responsiveness waned after the Embassy closure.

In relatively stable settings (**Bolivia, Tanzania, Western Balkans/Türkiye**), integration is weaker: conflict analysis is folded into MDPA, updates are rare, and adaptation depends on partner initiative, and is largely limited to the contribution level. WBT showed low evidence of strategic or operational adaptation. Conflict sensitivity was treated as a secondary concern, and learning was not fed back into strategy.

Global and thematic portfolios show mixed patterns; the **Humanitarian Aid** strategy acknowledges risks but lacks systematic monitoring, while the **Sustainable Economic Development** strategy identifies conflict-prone themes without embedding them consistently in design. Humanitarian Aid adapted through partner-led

mechanisms, but Sida's own role in adaptation was limited. Sustainable Economic Development had examples of adaptive programming, but these were isolated and not part of a broader strategic shift.

A recurring issue across strategies is the weakness in monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems, which rarely include conflict-sensitive indicators, leaving peace dividends and potential harm invisible in results reporting. This includes the use of the conflict prevention marker: widely applied at appraisal but seldom revisited, limiting its utility as a management tool.

Partner selection emerges as a critical factor: where Sida chooses partners with proven conflict expertise and provides flexible funding, adaptation is stronger. Where partner capacity is weak, conflict sensitivity remains aspirational.

**Effectiveness: To what extent has the use of conflict sensitivity contributed to positive/negative outcomes, and why?**

Conflict sensitive implementation, where Sida and partners understands and adapts to the local context as it evolves, yields significant outcomes where explicit, anchored and resourced. The most apparent results are in areas of Peaceful and Inclusive Societies, and more generally across Human Rights, Democracy, Rule of Law, and Gender Equality, with partners designing programmes that avoid harm and build conditions for peaceful coexistence, trust and equitable resource distribution. But there are also examples across Environment, Climate and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources.

Examples include inclusive targeting in **Ethiopia** reducing inter-group tensions; support to safe elections in **Iraq** combined protection measures with institutional reforms to reduce violence against women in elections; legal support enabled communities to addressing land disputes, human rights abuses, and election-related grievances through peaceful protests, petitions to authorities, and legal processes in **Tanzania**.

In other contexts, Sida's conflict sensitive programming also produced potential positive results, even if these could not be validated to the same extent. Sida-supported local governance committees and secure civil society networks in **Myanmar** contributed to sustained community cooperation and protection of civic space under repression. Conflict-sensitive approaches reported helped contain polarisation and reduce the risk of escalation in **Bolivia**. Contributions supported local dispute resolution mechanisms and reinforced trust in governance structures in **Liberia**. There are also isolated examples across the other strategies.

However, practice remains uneven and there are also some negative outcomes. Gender-related backlash is acknowledged, and largely addressed when discovered, but rarely anticipated and tracked systematically. Other negative outcomes include unequal participant selection processes, which risks increased tensions. Effectiveness depends on flexibility and trust-based relationships with partners, staff and partner capacity and resources, access and use of internal resources, and a culture of reflection and learning. Where these conditions exist, results are achieved; where absent, conflict sensitivity becomes a formality.

### **Impact: What overall impact has conflict-sensitive work had in the three case study countries? What did Sida contribute to?**

A cautious appraisal of Sida's efforts reveals modest, credible local and sectoral impacts from well-integrated conflict sensitivity interventions but limited evidence of system-level change.

Plausible pathways to sustained social cohesion appear in **Ethiopia** through joint governance and peace infrastructure; conditions enabling recovery in **Iraq** via pluralistic media and stabilisation support, but these are tempered by risks posed by the exit; and reduced land grievances and strengthened refugee-host coexistence in **Tanzania** through complementary interventions.

Impact is most credible where peace and inclusion are explicit objectives, interventions address identified conflict drivers, and multiple activities converge to support shared objectives. Absent these conditions, effects remain fragmented and difficult to measure.

There was no evidence of long-term harm, in terms of Sida contributing to increased tensions. However, there was recurring risks of gender-related backlash, partner harm, and unequal targeting effects. Where these appear, they are rarely captured by formal systems, meaning that the evaluation may have missed examples of both negative and positives impacts. Those excluded from participation in projects or programmes often go unheard unless evaluators specifically seek them.

The abrupt exit from **Iraq** did cause potentially negative effects, because the exit was not well-communicated and managed.

Data scarcity remains a relevant impact challenge: without synthesising results from individual contributions into consistent sectoral or portfolio accounts Sida cannot determine if its strategy objectives are achieved or if conflict sensitivity systematically reinforces these change processes.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Sweden's development cooperation increasingly takes place in contexts marked by fragility, inequality, and social tension. Sida's integration of conflict sensitivity has helped improve the relevance and quality of its work, though practice remains uneven across portfolios. Across strategies, strong partner systems, flexible funding, and responsive staff have enabled positive results, but weak monitoring and limited strategic follow-up restrict learning and accountability.

- **Relevance:** Responsiveness and adaptation is strongest in acute or post-conflict conflict contexts; weaker in stable or thematic portfolios, but feedback loops between contribution and strategy levels and systematic monitoring and learning are weaknesses across strategies.
- **Effectiveness:** Positive outcomes are evident across strategies, but conflict sensitivity yields the most significant outcomes where explicit, anchored and resourced. There are also examples of short-term negative effects, mostly addressed in the short-term, but these remain undocumented due to weaknesses in monitoring systems.

- **Impact** is credible at local and sectoral levels but weak at system level; long-term transformation cannot be assessed with current evidence. There are recurring risks such as gender backlash, partner harm, unequal targeting effects, and negative effects of the exit from Iraq that need more proactive engagement from Sida.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### To ensure that conflict sensitivity is applied more consistently across all strategies:

- Introduce a minimum standard for applying conflict sensitivity in all strategies.
- Require an annual, proportionate update of conflict and context, with deeper analysis where conditions change quickly or risks are high.
- Establish simple mechanisms to ensure that learning and adjustments at project level are fed back into strategy-level decisions.

### To strengthen partner and internal capacity:

- Consider conflict-sensitivity capacity when selecting partners and provide tailored onboarding or support, particularly for local organisations.
- Introduce short, practice-oriented training sessions and set clear managerial expectations.

### To strengthen MEL systems:

- Introduce a small menu of optional conflict-sensitive indicators.
- Clarify the use of the existing conflict prevention marker.
- Request short, structured examples of conflict-sensitive adaptation through current reporting formats, from staff and partners.
- Strengthen strategy-level results frameworks and enable aggregation.

### To strengthen positive contributions to peace:

- Encourage each strategy to identify one or two opportunities within existing work to strengthen positive contributions to peace.

### To strengthen the anticipation and avoidance of recurring risks of increased tensions:

- Require advance analysis of backlash and distributional effects in sensitive areas, accompanied by mitigation measures, inclusive selection processes and simple feedback mechanisms.

### To ensure conflict sensitive exits from countries and programmes:

- Develop and apply conflict-sensitive exit guidance, including rapid conflict scans, clear communication with partners and communities, and coordination with other Swedish or international actors to support continuity where possible.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this evaluation is to increase knowledge and promote learning about the effects of Sida's operations on peace and conflict contexts, and to assess how Sida's integration of conflict sensitivity has contributed to positive or negative impacts. The evaluation is intended to inform Sida's prioritisation and management of conflict sensitivity across both strategy and contribution management processes. More specifically, the evaluation aims to:

- Provide input on how to integrate conflict sensitivity in the strategy cycle, with a focus on operationalisation, implementation, and monitoring.
- Contribute to learning on how conflict sensitivity can be effectively embedded in Sida's strategic choices, partner selection, and portfolio development.

## 1.2 SCOPE

The evaluation focuses on the integration of conflict sensitivity in Sida's operations, with particular attention to how strategic decisions and contributions (i.e. Sida funded projects and programmes) have been adapted to conflict contexts and identified conflict drivers and tensions.

Sida's approach to conflict sensitivity is to understand the conflict context, assess how its interventions interact with that context, and adapt strategies and programmes accordingly to avoid harm and strengthen positive contributions to peace (see Section 3 for further details).

While the evaluation does not assess individual contributions in isolation, it examines how contribution-level practice has influenced overall strategy implementation.

The evaluation covers a selection of nine strategies, including bilateral, regional, and thematic strategies, as well as the Strategy for Sweden's humanitarian aid. The selection criteria ensured coverage of:

- Strategies implemented in contexts with varying levels of conflict and peacefulness.
- Strategies with and without explicit objectives related to peaceful and inclusive societies.
- Strategies with different types of implementing partners and funding modalities.

The evaluation conducted in-depth case studies in Ethiopia, Iraq, and Tanzania. These countries were selected to represent varying levels of conflict and peacefulness, and to enable an assessment of impacts.

The evaluation covers Sida's integration of conflict sensitivity from 2016 onward. This time frame was selected because the conflict perspective became a mandatory part of Sida's operations in 2015, and integration efforts were systematised beginning in 2016. For each strategy, the evaluation considered both the current and preceding strategy periods where applicable, to capture the full trajectory of integration and adaptation over time.

For the three case study countries, the evaluation reviewed contributions and strategic processes from 2015 to 2025, allowing for an assessment of long-term outcomes and impacts. This extended time frame was necessary to evaluate the effects of conflict sensitivity integration, which often manifest over longer periods.

Note that the evaluation is focused exclusively on Sida's work with conflict sensitivity, meaning that the evaluation does not assess the strategies themselves, as they are Swedish government strategies, but rather how Sida operationalises the strategies. In addition, the work of the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) or other Swedish organisations, like the Swedish Institute in Istanbul, are not evaluated, even if these have specific mandates to contribute to the implementation of strategy objectives in some of the strategies selected for review.

### 1.3 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation was guided by three overarching evaluation questions (EQ), aligned with the OECD/DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, and impact:

- **Relevance:** EQ1: To what extent did the strategies respond to peace and conflict dynamics in their respective contexts, and continue to do so as circumstances changed? This was covered for all nine strategies.
- **Effectiveness:** EQ2: To what extent did the integration of conflict sensitivity in the implementation of the strategies contribute to outcomes? If so or not, why? This was covered for all nine strategies.
- **Impact:** EQ3: What was the overall impact of the integration of conflict sensitivity by Sida, Embassies of Sweden, and Sida's cooperation partners? What did Sida contribute to? This was only covered in the three case studies.

## 2 Approach and methodology

This section presents a summary of the approach and methodology applied.

### 2.1 OVERVIEW

At a general level, the evaluation utilisation-focused and focused on learning. Sida staff and partners were involved throughout, including in developing theories of change, selecting contributions, and validating findings. Ethical principles were followed, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and the Do No Harm principle, especially in conflict-affected areas<sup>1</sup>, and the evaluation also considered gender, in terms of how it was conducted (e.g. ensuring that we heard from women and men) and how data was analysed (e.g. gender consideration related to conflict sensitivity).

Based on our experience of Sida and other organisations' conflict-sensitive programming, relevant evaluations and studies, and discussions with Sida during the inception phase, we prepared a methodology suited to evaluate Sida's work with conflict sensitivity and the results of this work. Figure 1 provides an overview of the methodological approach.

The evaluation had, as described above, **three main questions**, which we further divided into several sub-questions. Some of these were descriptive, e.g. whether Sida did analysis X, or were aware of Y, others were of a more causal nature, e.g. what effects Sida's actions may have had, and some were analytical, e.g. what were the success factors.

A **global Theory of Change (ToC)** and an evaluation matrix provided the main analytical tools for the descriptive, causal and analytical questions. The **global ToC** described the actions by Sida and Sida's partners required to avoid contributing to conflict or help promote stability, and the possible outcomes of these actions. The global ToC was further refined into nine separate strategy-level ToCs that were adapted to their specific context (see section 2.2.1). The **evaluation matrix** aligned to the ToC and presented the data collection tools and sources and the analytical approach for the three EQs and sub-questions (see Annex 2). We developed a **conflict perspective tool** that operationalised the ToCs and evaluation matrix for practical data collection and analysis, with quantitative and qualitative indicators and sources of evidence, responding to descriptive, analytical and causal questions (see Annex 3). The tool was designed to be flexible across different contexts and guided the analysis at strategy and contribution level for the nine strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> Our approach is grounded in the UN Evaluation Group's (UNEG) *'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'*. UN Evaluation Group's *'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'* 2020.p.10  
<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866>



For the causal questions (e.g. related to EQ3 about impact) our method was based on so-called **contribution analysis**, where we analysed the potential contribution of Sida to observed changes in peace and conflict dynamics, by considering the role of Sida in the country and the specific intervention in question, the potential influence of other factors and actors, and verifying this through external sources where possible (see section 2.2.2).

We developed **assessments scales** (so called Rubrics – see section 2.2.3) to judge the level of Sida’s adaptation to the context (EQ1), significance of the changes we observed in peace and conflict dynamics (EQ2&3), Sida’s contribution (EQ3) to these changes and the strength of our evidence across the evaluation (EQ1,2,3).

We designed **sampling** to provide diversity and generalisation. We sampled nine strategies, aiming to provide a diverse sample, reflective of Swedish development cooperation. Within each strategy, we sampled a number of contributions (i.e. Sida funded projects and programmes), across different types of contributions (see section 2.3).

During the **data collection phase**, we collected data on the actions of Sida and Sida’s partners, and the resulting outcomes for each of the nine ToCs, by reviewing internal and external documentation for the strategy and for the sampled contributions, interviewing Sida staff and partners, and surveying Sida staff and partners. For three strategies, we undertook field visits to Ethiopia, Iraq and Tanzania, where we interviewed local partners, and project stakeholders, and interviewed and held focus groups with target community members (see section 2.4).

We **analysed** all data collected for each strategy-level ToC and then analysed findings across the nine strategies.



## 2 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Assignment	<b>Sida's work with conflict sensitivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase knowledge and promote learning about the effects of Sida's operations on peace and conflict contexts</li> <li>Assess how Sida's integration of conflict sensitivity has contributed to positive or negative impacts.</li> </ul>		
Evaluation Questions	<b>1. Relevance:</b> To what extent did the strategies respond to peace and conflict dynamics in their respective contexts, and continue to do so as circumstances changed? Operationalised through 7 descriptive and analytical sub-questions.	<b>2. Effectiveness:</b> To what extent did the integration of conflict sensitivity in the implementation of the strategies contribute to outcomes? If so or not, why? Operationalised through 9 descriptive and analytical sub-questions	<b>3. Impact:</b> What was the overall impact of the integration of conflict sensitivity by Sida, Embassies of Sweden, and Sida's cooperation partners? What did Sida contribute to? Operationalised through 8 casual sub-questions
Approach and analytical tools	<b>Theory-based approach:</b> Global ToC and nine strategy level ToCs <b>Evaluation matrix:</b> EQs, sub-questions, data collection tools & sources, analytical approach <b>Conflict perspective tool:</b> definition and indicators for each part of the TOC		
Assessment scales (Rubrics)	<b>Level of adaptation:</b> EQ1		<b>Contribution analysis:</b> Assessing Sida's contribution to impact  <b>Level of contribution:</b> EQ3
		<b>Significance of change:</b> EQ2 and 3	
	<b>Strength of evidence:</b> EQ1, 2, 3		
Strategies and contributions sampled and data collected	<b>Ethiopia, Iraq and Tanzania:</b> EQ 1, 2, 3. 12 contributions per strategy  <b>Document review:</b> Internal and external documentation <b>Interviews:</b> Sida staff, partners and others (experts) <b>Survey:</b> Partners and staff (only for Tanzania)		
	<b>Bolivia, Humanitarian, Liberia, Myanmar, Sustainable Economic Development, Western Balkans &amp; Turkey:</b> EQ1 & 2 8 contributions per strategy  <b>Document review:</b> Internal and external documentation <b>Interviews:</b> Sida staff, partners and others (experts) <b>Survey:</b> Partners and staff		<b>Field work:</b> 14 days in Ethiopia, Iraq and Tanzania <b>Visits</b> to project locations <b>Interviews</b> with local partners, local government officials, target community members, etc. <b>FGDs</b> with target communities
Analysis	<b>Analysis of evidence against strategy-level ToCs</b>  <b>Cross-strategy analysis</b>		

## 2.2 ANALYTICAL TOOLS APPLIED

This section presents the key analytical tools applied in the evaluation.

### 2.2.1 Theory of change

We developed a global ToC to guide the evaluation, alongside nine strategy-specific ToCs. These ToCs articulated the pathways through which Sida's integration of the conflict sensitivity was expected to contribute to peace and conflict outcomes, to avoiding negative impacts. We used these ToCs to frame data collection and analysis, and to test causal assumptions, and we refined them inductively throughout the process, treating them as evolving documents. To develop the ToCs, we drew on our own experience of supporting and evaluating conflict sensitive programming and other horizontal issues, reviewed relevant internal and external documentation on conflict sensitivity and on the evaluation of other cross-cutting issues<sup>2</sup>, and consulted with the Sida's Steering Committee. The ToCs were developed in a participatory way, often in a workshop with Sida staff and were approved by each strategy owner. They varied in terms of weight on different aspects of actions by Sida or partners, and in the specific long-term outcomes, impacts and assumptions identified. The nine narratives of the approved ToCs have been included in the annex of this report (Annex 7 for the six strategies not subject to case studies) and as separate county case studies.

The global ToC presents the three-step process of integration, where Sida and partners understand the context (outputs EQ1), understand and reflect on the two-way interaction between the context and Sida-funded activities (short-term outcomes – EQ1) and act on this understanding (medium term outcomes – EQ1), with the resulting long-term outcomes (EQ2) where Sida's development and humanitarian cooperation is more responsive to peace and conflict dynamics, mitigates risks of doing harm and contributes to conflict prevention and peacebuilding beyond its targeted peacebuilding contributions. The impact (EQ3) identifies the desired effects on peace and conflict dynamics. The ToC also shows a process of adaption and flexibility to changes in context (EQ1), which in turn is seen as a precondition for ongoing conflict sensitive programming.

Inputs show the human and financial resources required and the internal and external assumptions detail necessary preconditions. These assumptions include a mix of factors that have been proven to be necessary to integrate cross-cutting perspectives in previous evaluations (such as a policy framework, leadership,

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<sup>2</sup> Beyond the references cited in section 3.1, the ToC also draw on: Ingela Andersson. Sida's work with the conflict perspective. Presentation at start-up meeting for evaluation. February 2024; Alffram, H, et al (2020). Evaluation of the Application and Effects of a Human Rights Based Approach to Development: Lessons Learnt from Swedish Development Cooperation. What Works Well, Less Well and Why?, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Stockholm.

incentives, resources, learning culture)<sup>3</sup>, as well as factors that agreed in consultation with Sida (capacity and willingness of partners to apply guidelines, and guidelines tailored to the context). The strategy level ToCs in turn provide more elaborate detailed long-term outcomes and impacts by each strategy's main strategy objectives, with corresponding assumptions.

The **evaluation matrix** aligned to the ToC and presented the data collection tools and sources and the analytical approach for the three EQs and sub-questions (see Annex 2). We developed a **conflict perspective tool** that operationalised the ToCs and evaluation matrix for practical data collection and analysis, with quantitative and qualitative indicators and sources of evidence, responding to descriptive, analytical and causal questions (see Annex 3). The tool was designed to be flexible across different contexts and guided the analysis at strategy and contribution level for the nine strategies.

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<sup>3</sup> OECD, 2019, "Greening Development Co-operation. Lessons from the OECD Development Assistance", <https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/sida62291en-greening-development-cooperation-lessons-from-the-oecd-development-assistance.pdf>, p. 42, as well as previous work on conflict sensitivity and other cross-cutting issues by the evaluation team.

Inputs	Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sida guidance and procedures including Peace and Conflict Toolbox, Trac Help texts, etc.</li> <li>Human resources: Sida staff, (policy specialists, advisors/experts, and general staff with sufficient knowledge; partners' staff, and external experts.</li> <li>Financial resources.</li> <li>Training(s) for Sida staff (and as appropriate, partners) on the conflict perspective.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sida ensures MDPAs are conducted and updated regularly and include an analysis of conflicts and tensions.</li> <li>Sida ensures high-quality conflict analyses are conducted and updated regularly, which captures dividers and connectors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sida staff, based on the MDPA and conflict analysis, adapts and integrates the conflict perspective in strategies and portfolios of contributions to prevent/minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts.</li> <li>Sida assesses and selects partners that have the capacity to integrate the conflict perspective.</li> <li>Sida staff and partners have a common understanding of the conflict perspective.</li> <li>Sida staffs' dialogue with implementing partners emphasises Sida's conflict perspective and follows up its implementation.</li> <li>Partners analyse the two-way interaction between the contribution(s) and conflict dynamics/tensions (potential positive and negative resource transfers are considered).</li> <li>Sida monitor and evaluate the integration of the conflict perspective.</li> <li>Sida correctly uses and embeds the conflict prevention policy marker in the Sida strategy and contribution cycles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sida staff and partners' staff continuously adapt contributions based on their understanding of the two-way dynamics between conflict dynamics/tensions and the contribution(s) to prevent/minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts.</li> <li>Sida staff and partners' staff take steps to learn from monitoring, evaluation, and other evidence.</li> <li>Sida adapts strategies and strategy plans and their implementation, as and when required.</li> <li>Sida's development and humanitarian cooperation is more relevant and of higher quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sida's development and humanitarian cooperation is more responsive to peace and conflict dynamics, mitigates risks of doing harm and contributes to conflict prevention and peacebuilding beyond its targeted peacebuilding contributions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sida's development and humanitarian cooperation has prevented or mitigated negative impacts and maximised positive impacts.</li> </ul>
<b>Internal assumptions (Sida):</b> <i>Institutional systems fit for purpose to integrate the conflict perspective</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sweden has a suitable policy framework</li> <li>Sida demonstrates consistent leadership and sustained commitment.</li> <li>Incentives and accountability for Sida staff.</li> <li>Dialogue with partners supports integrating Sida's conflict perspective.</li> <li>Adequate financial and human resources.</li> <li>Sida has suitable MEL systems and fosters a learning culture throughout HQ and Embassies.</li> </ul>			<b>External assumptions (Sida and partners):</b> <i>Enabling environment</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing partners are willing and able to apply relevant guidelines.</li> <li>Implementing partners have suitable MEL systems and foster a culture of learning.</li> <li>Implementation guidelines are used meaningfully and tailored to contexts.</li> <li>Expected development impacts are tailored to the external environment and perception of Sweden and Sida.</li> </ul>		

### 2.2.2 Contribution analysis

To answer questions about impact, the evaluation applied **contribution analysis** to understand Sida's role in achieving observed long-term outcomes and impacts. This was essential in contexts where multiple internal and external factors influence peace and conflict dynamics. The full approach was only applied in the three case study countries: Ethiopia, Iraq and Tanzania, but the process up until step three of the six step approach below was the same across all strategies sampled.

1. **Define the contribution problem** – We clarified what change was expected and Sida's intended role.
2. **Elaborate theories of change (ToCs) for the nine strategies** – As detailed above, we mapped the pathways from conflict sensitivity activities to outcomes, and impacts in the case Ethiopia, Iraq and Tanzania, and detailed our assumptions along these pathways.
3. **Gather evidence against the ToCs and the EQs** – We collected data on each step of the ToCs, the identified assumptions and the EQs through interviews with Sida and agreement partners, surveys, internal strategy and contribution level documents, monitoring reports, and external sources, such as organisations' own conflict sensitivity policies or project level evaluations.
4. **Assemble contribution stories** – We developed narratives for the sampled contributions within the case study strategies, but only for those where there was a potential negative or positive outcome linked to conflict sensitivity. These narratives detailed the potential positive or negative outcome and the potential contribution of Sida and any specific assumptions linked to this, at this stage, based primarily on the perceptions of Sida staff and partners.
5. **Seek additional evidence** – We conducted field visits for case studies to seek out further evidence of achievement of long-term outcomes, impacts and the assumptions linked to these, and the role of Sida in this. This included project visit and interviews and FGDs with local partners and members of target communities benefitting from Sida support. Target communities were asked for tangible examples of how the project's activities had benefitted them and the role of different projects and actors. We also consulted with external stakeholders, where possible. These were mostly peripheral to the intervention, but with a stake in it, e.g. local government officials working adjacent to the funded contribution, but on one occasion completely without a stake in the intervention (an external expert).
6. **Revise and strengthen contribution stories** – We updated the narratives based on triangulated evidence. We tried to corroborate observed changes and stated contributions by Sida through independent, external resources, where possible. Our final assessment was based on a combination of available data sources and our own assessment of whether the evidence was reliable and reasonable, including consideration of factors such as the role of Sida in the country and the specific sector considered versus other donors, and the role of

alternative causes, such local capacity, political/security dynamics, and economic conditions. The use of external sources (documentation or consultation with experts) varied across the three cases:

- **Ethiopia:** We used project level evaluations where available to verify long-term outcomes and impacts. In addition, in many cases, partners at different levels, target community members, evaluations and more peripheral stakeholders, such as local government officials, provided a unified narrative that was convincing.
- **Iraq:** Whilst we used project level evaluations where available, we could not find relevant external sources providing evidence of long-term outcomes and impacts. For example, for the media support-related projects, we tried to find reports that could verify impact such as increased trust in media and strengthened resilience against disinformation, but none were available or they were too broad and unspecific to be linked in any meaningful way to a Sida media support project. The security situation did not allow us to conduct any kind of independent travel or interviews, including with persons external to the projects (experts or communities not receiving support).
- **Tanzania:** For the projects related to land use management, we consulted completely external sources, such as academic literature on reduction of land disputes and an expert on land use and dispute settlement. For other contributions, partners at different levels, target community members, evaluations and more peripheral stakeholders, such as local government officials, provided a unified narrative that was convincing.

This approach enabled us to assess Sida's relative contribution to observed outcomes and impacts, in a situation where many external and internal factors influence changes in peace and conflict dynamics. However, it should be noted that our analysis of Sida's contribution was mostly limited to the specific projects and it was challenging to aggregate to the level of strategies (see section 2.6). The analysis for the nine strategies resulted in nine internal deliverables, which provide evidence against the ToCs. For the Ethiopia, Iraq and Tanzania case studies, the contribution stories developed for sampled contributions are integrated into these separately attached reports. Section 6 includes one example per case study.

### 2.2.3 Assessment scales (Rubrics)

To systematically assess the quality and significance of the findings we developed four so-called rubrics, or assessment scales, to be applied throughout the evaluation. These helped us ensure consistency and transparency in our judgments about adaptation, outcomes, impact, and evidence strength. Each rubric used a three-level assessment scale and the aim was to apply these systematically across all strategies and case studies (see Table 1 and detailed definitions in Annex 4).

**Table 1. Four assessment scales**

Rubric	Purpose	Levels/Descriptions
<b>1. Level of adaptation (EQ1)</b>	Assesses how well a strategy adapts to relevant peace and conflict dynamics and whether changes are made in response to contextual shifts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Poor:</b> Context understanding not updated; implementation not tailored; no monitoring/learning; no changes made.</li> <li>• <b>Sufficient:</b> Context updated; negative effects considered; some monitoring/learning; some changes made.</li> <li>• <b>Good:</b> Context continuously updated; both negative and positive effects considered; systematic monitoring/learning; changes made as needed at all levels.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Significance of change (EQ2 &amp; 3)</b>	Assesses the significance of observed outcomes and impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Low:</b> Progress less than anticipated; not significant for large-scale/sustainable change.</li> <li>• <b>Medium:</b> Outcome somewhat important for peace/conflict dynamics.</li> <li>• <b>High:</b> Outcome important for peace/conflict dynamics.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Level of contribution (EQ3)</b>	Assesses the degree to which Sida contributed to impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Low:</b> Weak/indirect contribution.</li> <li>• <b>Medium:</b> Moderate contribution.</li> <li>• <b>High:</b> Strong, direct contribution.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Strength of evidence (EQ1, 2, 3)</b>	Assesses the reliability of evidence supporting findings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Low:</b> Only one reliable source (internal or external).</li> <li>• <b>Medium:</b> More than one reliable external source; can be externally validated.</li> <li>• <b>High:</b> Multiple reliable external sources; can be externally validated.</li> </ul>

During the analysis phase it became clear that the initial definition of the three levels was not detailed enough for some of the rubrics, which lead to inconsistencies in their application between different team members and questions of their application from the Sida Steering Committee at draft report stage. It was also not straightforward to synthesise the rubric across a whole strategy, as they were mostly applied for specific contributions. This means that the scales are applied more qualitatively across the report, with the following additional specifications:

#### **Level of adaptation**

We refined the rubric into four levels to allow for variation among the strategies evaluated and provide a motivation for this in section 4.

#### **Strength of evidence and source criticism**



We received comments on the draft final report regarding **source criticism** that required us clarify how we had applied the scales. The following principles were also applied:

**Selection process.** To mitigate the risks of positive selection bias, which might skew our findings towards positive findings and prevent us to observe potential negative results of Sida funding, the selection process (see section 2.3) applied was as independently as possible. While we selected the contributions relatively independently (with some support from Sida), we were dependent on Sida for the selection of strategies and on agreement partners to facilitate access to stakeholders and sites during fieldwork, especially in volatile regions such as Northern Iraq and parts of Ethiopia. While we instructed to select locations that demonstrated both positive and negative outcomes of conflict sensitivity and we emphasized that the evaluation requires a diverse selection of participants (age, women, youth, positive and negative views on a project etc.), we were still dependent on partners to facilitate access to target communities. As a result, there was a risk that partners may have selectively presented more successful or favourable examples of conflict sensitivity integration and overall project impact, potentially skewing the evidence base toward positive outcomes.

For example, for a humanitarian de-mining project outside Mosul, Iraq, a group of landowners was interviewed in a FGD. However, it was not possible to reach, for example, landowners whose land had not been included in de-mining. This may have meant that we did not discover particularly negative impacts.

On the other hand, where stakeholders (partners and target communities) confirmed negative outcomes or impacts, we assessed these as valid as it went against their interest.

We assess that the risk of positive selection bias occurred to a certain degree with most projects included in the field work, but the extent is not possible to assess. To mitigate this risk, where possible, we made efforts to triangulate evidence by also engaging with community and faith leaders, independent experts, and others who could provide broader perspectives beyond those curated by implementing partners. This was possible in Tanzania, but less so in Ethiopia and Iraq. Nevertheless, there has been a limit to the extent to which we have been able to validate all evidence and consequently indicates the level of confidence with findings through the strength of evidence rubric. Where there is a risk of positive selection bias, we do not mark high strength of evidence, unless we had other ways of validating findings.

**External sources.** We sought external sources to validated outcome or impact achieved and Sida's role. This included project level evaluations, other external reports, and respondents without a stake in the outcome. The most common source were project level evaluations, which we used where relevant and available. Most rare where other external documentation or external respondents without a stake in the project. These were used only in a few cases (see above for Tanzania). This was partly related to resource and logistical constraints, but also due to the nature of the evaluation, whereby the types of outcomes we were exploring where not necessarily included in evaluations or other types of reports. Where not external source are available, we do not mark high strength of evidence.



**Horizontal independence of sources.** We only apply the medium and highest strength of evidence when sources are based on different unconnected primary sources (i.e. they are horizontally independent). So, when a partner confirms what is already written in a partner report, we see treat these as the same source.

**Team expert judgement.** We relied on the expertise in our team to conduct interviews and assess the reliability of the evidence collected. Where medium and high strength of evidence is used, we have assessed that statements from project stakeholders are reasonably accurate, including considering the extent to which they are in a position to speak from their own experience or based statements on a reliable source. The team has experts with a deep knowledge of conflict sensitivity practices in different peace and conflict environments and thorough understanding of the peace and conflict dynamics in several of the countries under review and long experience of interviewing project stakeholder, including those benefiting from donor-funded development projects and programmes. The legitimate use of experts (especially subject matter or local experts) is a well-known practice in program evaluation.<sup>4</sup>

**Independently verifiable facts.** The strength of evidence is not always applied, for example where we could independently verify a specific statement or existence of a document, e.g. a conflict analysis and its contents. This can be seen in the conflict perspective tool where some of the indicators are just existence of x or y.

#### 2.2.4 Cross-case analysis

We also conducted a cross-case analysis. We did this collaboratively and iteratively once all strategy-level syntheses were completed, using a structured workshop format. This process enabled a comparative review of findings across strategies, with attention to recurring patterns related to country, context, strategic objectives, partner types, contribution types and sizes, staff competencies, organisational systems, and HQ support, external factors. Where evidence of adaptation, outcomes and impact was identified, the team explored lessons learned, including strengths and weaknesses in the respective theories of change. The analysis also surfaced key factors contributing to success or failure, alongside additional insights to inform future strategic choices.

## 2.3 SAMPLING STRATEGY

We sampled at three levels: first, we sampled nine strategies; second we selected a number of contributions within each of these, and, finally, we chose which stakeholders to interview. The sampling procedures for all these three levels are described below. The main was to generate findings that could be generalised with in a specific strategy and across Sida.

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<sup>4</sup> Entry in Michael Scriven, *'Evaluation Thesaurus'* (4th edn), 1991, SAGE Publications: EXPERTISE: The legitimate use of experts (especially subject matter or local experts) is a well-known practice in program evaluation.

**Selecting strategies.** Nine strategies were selected in consultation with Sida, based on criteria outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR), including:

- Representation of bilateral, regional, and thematic strategies
- Variation in conflict contexts and strategy objectives
- Diversity in implementing partners and funding modalities
- Availability and interest from Sida strategy unit/Embassy in participating in the evaluation.

The selected strategies are presented in Table 2. These provided contextual variation, further detailed in section 3.3. Three were pre-selected by Sida: Ethiopia, Iraq and Tanzania.

**Table 2. Selected strategies**

No	Type	Selection
1	Bilateral	Bolivia, 2021-2025
2	Bilateral	Ethiopia strategy, 2022-2026 Ethiopia strategy, 2016-2022
3	Thematic	Humanitarian Aid strategy, 2021-2025 Humanitarian Aid strategy, 2017-2020
4	Bilateral	Iraq strategy, 2022-2026 Iraq strategy, 2017-2021
5	Bilateral	Liberia, 2021-2025
6	Bilateral	Myanmar strategy, 2018-2023
7	Thematic	Sustainable Economic Development strategy, 2022-2026 Sustainable Economic Development strategy, 2018-2022
8	Bilateral	Tanzania strategy, 2020-2024 Tanzania strategy, 2013-2019
9	Regional	Western Balkans and Turkey/Türkiye (WBT) strategy, 2021-2027 <sup>5</sup>

The Swedish government decided to phase out bilateral development cooperation with several of the strategies selected for the evaluation:

- In July 2024, Sweden took the decision to officially end its bilateral development cooperation with Iraq, phasing out all projects by June 2025.
- In September 2025, Sweden took the decision to officially end its bilateral development cooperation with Myanmar, phasing out all projects by June 2026.
- In December 2025, Sweden took the decision to phase out bilateral development cooperation with Bolivia, Liberia, and Tanzania by end of August 2026.

**Selecting contributions.** We employed a purposive sampling approach to select contributions under each strategy. We consulted the Strategy units/Embassies, but the final selection was independent. Criteria included:

<sup>5</sup> When this strategy was initiated Sida still used the name Turkey. When official documentation is referred to, we therefore use the name Turkey. Everywhere else we use the official name Türkiye.

- Diverse application of the Conflict prevention policy marker ratings (0, 1, 2)
- Coverage of different strategy objectives (between 2-4 were covered under each strategy)
- Linkages to intended long-term outcomes in the ToCs
- Diversity of agreement partners
- Variation in size and duration
- Geographic distribution and accessibility (for case studies)

For the case study countries, we developed a long list of 24 contributions. These were narrowed to a shortlist of at least 12, based on discussions with the strategy unit/Embassy. A smaller subset was selected for field visits based on initial review of relevance, evidence availability, and security considerations. The sampled contributions are detailed in the case study reports.

For the other strategies, eight contributions were selected, out of a long list of 16. These are listed in the individual ToCs in Annex 7. The case studies were meant to include data collection related to EQ3 for the thematic strategies, with Humanitarian Aid being covered in Ethiopia or Iraq and the Sustainable Economic Development strategy covered in Tanzania. However, for several reasons this was not possible. Note that for security reasons, the contributions and partners sampled for Myanmar are not identified.

**Selecting stakeholders.** Stakeholders were selected based on their roles in strategy implementation and relevance to the evaluation questions. A detailed stakeholder engagement plan was developed for each case study (see Annexes 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3).

## 2.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND TOOLS

We used a mixed-methods approach to ensure triangulation and to balance the strengths and weaknesses of different methods. We employed the following data collection methods:

**Document review.** We reviewed a comprehensive set of documents, including Sida's strategic frameworks, operational plans, contribution-level reports, partner policies, external analyses, and internal reviews, to assess how conflict sensitivity was integrated and monitored across strategies and operations. This document review provided the foundation for our analytical framework and was instrumental in triangulating findings from interviews, surveys, and fieldwork. It also helped identify gaps in documentation, particularly regarding the follow-up of conflict sensitivity outcomes, which were addressed through primary data collection.

**Interviews.** We conducted semi-structured interviews, both remotely and in person, with a range of stakeholders, including:

- Sida staff at headquarters and Embassies. This included the majority of programme managers within a unit or Embassy for most strategies, the head of the relevant unit or Embassy, and policy specialists.
- Agreement partners and other implementing organisations. This included local government units, local CSOs, health centres, legal tribunals, local banks, cooperatives, and media outlets.

- Members of target communities. Most of these stakeholders had benefitted directly from Sida funding, but some were more external, such as faith leaders and community leaders.
- External actors. We interviewed some completely external respondents without a stake in Sida-funding, but only in a few cases.

Interview guides were tailored to each stakeholder group and aligned with the evaluation questions and ToCs (general interview guides are included in Annex 6; these were tailored to the interviewee). Interviews were recorded and transcribed where consent was given.

**Surveys.** We administered two online surveys. One targeted Sida programme managers, specialists, and National Programme Officers (NPOs). However, this was only used when interviews were not possible and consequently was sent to very few staff and had few responses. The other targeted agreement partners involved in the nine strategies. The surveys included primarily open-ended questions and focused on capturing data related to outcomes (EQ2), with some questions addressing relevance (EQ1). This was used as a complement to interviews, to broaden the range of stakeholders consulted (Annex 6 includes the two survey tools).

**Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).** We conducted FGDs during field visits in the case study countries. These discussions involved target community members and were designed to capture local perspectives on the effects of Sida's interventions. A member of the team (national or international) facilitated FGDs, with interpreters engaged as needed. We tried to ensure diversity in participant selection, ideally with women and youth only discussions to be carried out where needed and feasible to ensure quality of participation. This need for diversity was mentioned to all of Sida's implementing partners for selected contributions during preparation of the field work. However, in practice, the selection of interviewees and KII and FGD participants was often organised by implementing partners and we had no say in the final selection. For security reasons, for example, it was not possible to conduct independent interviews in locations such as Mosul, Iraq, and we had to rely on the efforts of implementing partners to make a fair selection of interviewees.

**Field visits.** Field missions were conducted in Ethiopia, Iraq, and Tanzania. Each mission involved 14 working days and included visits to capital cities and additional locations (between 5-8 locations were visited for each case study). The fieldwork focused on validating contribution stories, collecting additional evidence on outcomes and impacts, and engaging with stakeholders not accessible remotely. The case study reports include detail on the field visits conducted for each country. These are attached as separate country case studies.

#### 2.4.1 Summary of data collected

Table 3 presents all the data collected and analysed for the evaluation.

Table 3. Data collection for 9 strategies				
Description	Total	Ethiopia	Iraq	Tanzania
<b>Contributions</b>	<b>85</b>	12	12	12
<b>Document review</b>				
Internal	<b>818</b>	94	79	66

External	88	20	9	41
<b>Interviews</b>				
Sida staff	56	8	6	8
Partners (agreement partners and local partners)	142	29	12	47
External actors without a stake (experts)	4			1
<b>Survey</b>				
Partners	48			9
Sida staff	6			3
<b>Fieldwork (for case study countries)</b>				
Contributions	20	8	7	5
Project locations	19	9	8	5
Interviews with members of target communities	54	20	30	10
FGDs with target communities	23	13	2	7

## 2.5 LIMITATIONS

The evaluation encountered several methodological and contextual limitations that influenced the scope, depth, and generalisability of findings:

- **Some partners did not agree to participate.** Especially in Iraq, several previous implementing partners did not support the evaluation process, did not react to emails, neither from the evaluators nor from Sida staff, or agreed to interviews and calls but then several times did not show up. This led to five out of 12 contributions in Iraq not being reviewed in detail, despite the evaluators' and Sida's repeated attempts to contact implementing partners. For some previous implementing partners, previous staff members had left organisations and no immediate contacts were available. The assumption is that the unwillingness to participate in the evaluation may have been linked to Sida's premature exit from Iraq.
- **Lack of coverage of thematic strategies:** As noted above, the original plan was for field for to include data collection on EQ3 for the thematic strategies. However, did this not materialise. For Tanzania, potential Sustainable Economic Development contributions selected ended up not being possible to include due to USAID funding cuts and two closed projects with no Sida PO available to consult with. For Humanitarian Aid, the multi-annual, often global agreements with selected implementing partners did not include Iraq work that could be reviewed. For Ethiopia, this did not materialise due to miscommunication in the evaluation team, partly as a result of time constraints.

- Challenges in developing ToCs:** The theory-based approach involved the development of nine separate theories of change, together with the owners of the strategy in question. Despite the presence of ToCs in Sida's strategy documents, these are formulated only at the level of the strategy objectives and there are no explicit or implicit ToCs for conflict sensitivity or any other mainstreaming issue. Some strategy teams, particularly those that did not include a strategy objective around peace, found it difficult to consider conflict sensitivity in this way. This meant that the process was time and resource intensive, and in some cases, the ToCs had limited ownership from the strategy owner. It was also challenging to develop detailed impacts at the strategy level for Ethiopia, Iraq and Tanzania ToCs, without reviewing specific contributions, meaning that the ToCs were elaborated throughout the evaluation process.
- Challenges in evidencing long-term outcomes and impacts:** Many of the intended outcomes of conflict sensitivity integration, particularly those related to peace and conflict dynamics, require extended timeframes to materialise. Given the evaluation's retrospective scope and the relatively recent formalisation of conflict sensitivity within Sida (post-2016), it was difficult to establish clear causal links between Sida's actions and long-term changes. Due to lack of time of resources, the team was not able to comprehensively consult with external sources to assess the role of external factors in achieving outcomes and impacts. As result, section 6 considers Sida's contribution to impact is focused on short-term impact at the level of individual contributions, potential contribution to longer term impacts, as wells as avoidance of negative impacts and potential risks of negative harm.
- Difficulties in aggregating results from contribution to strategy and country levels:** As noted above, there are no pre-existing ToC for conflict sensitivity or any requirements for Sida to report on their conflict sensitivity work, beyond what is reported in specific contributions. This, coupled with variability in documentation quality, monitoring systems, and strategic focus across the nine strategies and three case study countries made it challenging to synthesise findings in a consistent and comparable manner. This limited the ability to draw generalisable conclusions within a strategy and across contexts. This also limited our ability to apply contribution analysis at the strategy level, which rely on tracing causal pathways from activities to outcomes and impacts, which could only be done at contribution level. Nevertheless, for EQ1 and partly EQ2, we deem that our evidence support general conclusions. For long-term outcomes and impacts, both negative and positive, general conclusions are more constrained.
- Limited access to stakeholders and marginalised voices:** In some, but not all contexts, particularly those affected by conflict or political sensitivities, access to key stakeholders, including local partners, government counterparts, and community members, was constrained. This limited our ability to fully capture diverse perspectives, especially from marginalised or hard-to-reach groups. This was partly the case in Ethiopia, where the most insecure areas were not included in the evaluation. Due to lack of time and resources, we also made a choice not to collect data from some target groups, e.g. children or victims of sexual abuse, as

such data collection requires additional ethical approval at country level. In Iraq, it was challenging to speak women in rural areas due to conservative traditions.

- **Issues with data access and recording:** Sida's documentation of conflict sensitivity assessments and follow-up actions was inconsistent. In many cases, relevant information was not systematically recorded in Trac or partner reports, requiring us to rely on tacit knowledge and interviews to reconstruct decision-making processes. For the WBT Strategy, we only had access to a regional conflict analysis when the first draft of the evaluation report was submitted. Conflict analysis for a total of five individual countries within the WBT strategy were shared and used for the second version of this evaluation report. In addition, the team has not had access to conflict analyses conducted by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- **Inconsistencies in gathering data on conflict sensitivity:** The use of Sida's Conflict Prevention Policy Marker varied across strategies and contributions and often conflated thematic peacebuilding objectives with mainstreamed conflict sensitivity. This made it difficult to isolate and assess the extent and quality of conflict sensitivity integration.
- **Uneven emphasis across thematic areas:** In strategies where conflict sensitivity was not an explicit or principal objective, documentation and reflection on this perspective were often limited. This uneven emphasis may have resulted in under-representation of relevant effects in those areas, compared to strategies with conflict sensitivity as a more central focus.

Some of these limitations are further touched upon in the report. Despite these limitations, we employed a robust mixed-methods approach, including document review, surveys, interviews, and fieldwork, to triangulate findings and ensure a credible and nuanced analysis of Sida's integration of conflict sensitivity. The rubric on strength of evidence is used to signal the rigour of findings.



## 3 Background

### 3.1 SIDA'S APPROACH TO CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

According to the Swedish government's instruction to Sida from 2015, Sida's operations and activities should be based on five perspectives<sup>6</sup>: the perspective of poor people on development; the rights perspective; the gender perspective; the environment and climate perspective; and the conflict perspective.

To Sida, the term 'conflict perspective' and conflict sensitivity are synonymous. Sida defines conflict sensitivity as the ability of an organisation to understand the context in which it operates, understand the two-way interaction between its interventions and that context, and act on this understanding to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on peace and conflict dynamics<sup>7</sup>. Conflict sensitivity, for the purposes of this evaluation, is understood as the deliberate, intentional, and systematic application of the conflict perspective, including attention to the interaction between Sida-supported contributions and peace and conflict dynamics in the operating context. Conflict sensitivity is more than just avoiding harm: it also includes maximising opportunities for positive effects on social cohesion, peace, and inclusion, both in contributions directly targeting conflict drivers (such as peacebuilding projects), as well as contributions in which conflict sensitivity is an issue addressed indirectly or as secondary objective.

Figure 22 shows the evolution of conflict sensitivity at Sida and supporting institutional architecture and tools.

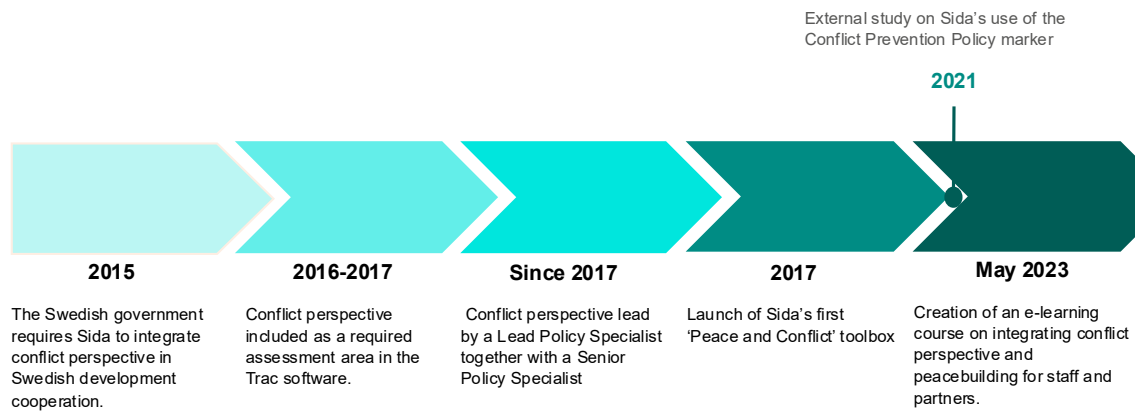
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<sup>6</sup> SFS 2015:378, Förordning om ändring i förordningen (2010:1080) med instruktion för Styrelsen för internationellt utvecklingssamarbete (Sida), SFS 2015:378 Förordning om ändring i förordningen (2010:1080) med instruktion för Styrelsen för internationellt utvecklingssamarbete (Sida) (lagboken.se)

<sup>7</sup> Sida (2023). Terms of Reference for the Central Evaluation of Sida's Work with the Conflict Perspective. Section 2.2, p. 9. Definition of conflict sensitivity and its three core principles.



Figure 2. The evolution of conflict sensitivity at Sida



Source: Evaluators' visualisation.

### 3.1.1 Core principles

Sida's approach to conflict sensitivity is grounded in three interrelated principles<sup>8</sup>:

1. **Understanding the context:** This involves conducting or drawing on conflict analyses to identify key actors, dynamics, and drivers of conflict and peace. Sida often uses its Multi-Dimensional Poverty Analysis (MDPA) tool, which includes a 'peace and conflict' dimension, and complements it with standalone conflict analyses commissioned through its Helpdesk on Human Security or other sources.
2. **Understanding the two-way interaction:** Sida recognises that its interventions, whether or not they are explicitly focused on peacebuilding, inevitably influence and are influenced by the conflict context. This includes assessing how interventions may exacerbate tensions or contribute to peace, and how the context may affect implementation and outcomes.
3. **Acting on that understanding:** Sida expects its staff and partners to adapt strategies, contributions, and implementation approaches based on conflict sensitivity considerations. This includes adjusting geographic or thematic focus, partner selection, and programme design to avoid harm and enhance positive contributions to peace.

### 3.1.2 Integration in strategy and contribution management

Conflict sensitivity is one of five mandatory development perspectives that Sida is required to integrate across all operations. It is expected to be embedded in:

1. **Strategy development and operationalisation:** Sida's guidelines require that conflict sensitivity be considered in the development of theories of change, strategic choices (e.g. geographic and thematic focus), and partner selection.

<sup>8</sup> Sida (2023). Terms of Reference for the Central Evaluation of Sida's Work with the Conflict Perspective. Section 2.2, p. 9. Definition of conflict sensitivity and its three core principles.

However, there are no standalone strategy objectives for conflict sensitivity, and its integration must be inferred from broader strategic documents and staff input.

2. **Contribution management:** Since 2016/2017, conflict sensitivity has been a required assessment area in Sida's contribution management system (Trac). Programme officers are expected to assess partners' institutional capacity and contextual awareness, and to follow up on risks and weaknesses during implementation.

### 3.1.3 Tools and support mechanisms

The integration of conflict sensitivity is supported by a range of institutional mechanisms:

- Help texts in trac<sup>9</sup>
- The Peace and Conflict Toolbox (updated in 2023) provides methodological guidance for integrating conflict sensitivity at both strategy and contribution levels<sup>10</sup>. This draws on Sida's and the Collaborative for Development Action's (CDA) categories<sup>11</sup> and identifies five types of resource transfer effects (both negative and positive): distribution effects, legitimisation effects, market effects, substitution effects and theft/diversion<sup>12</sup>.
- A mandatory e-learning course on conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding is available for Sida staff and partners.
- Sida's Helpdesk on Human Security and Humanitarian Assistance provides on-demand support for conflict analysis and integration.
- Policy specialists and focal points across departments and embassies are coordinated through the Human Security Hub.

Despite these efforts, internal reviews have highlighted inconsistencies in how conflict sensitivity is assessed, documented, and followed up<sup>13</sup>.

### 3.1.4 The conflict prevention marker

Sida uses a Conflict Prevention Policy Marker to track the integration of conflict sensitivity and the thematic area of 'conflict prevention, peace and security'.

Contributions are rated on a 0–2 scale:

- #2: Principal objective
- #1: Significant objective

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<sup>9</sup> Trac 7.0 helptexts (Stage 1, 2 and 3)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.sida.se/en/for-partners/methods-materials/peace-and-conflict-toolbox>

<sup>11</sup> Wallace, Marshall. From Principle to Practice: A User's Guide to Do No Harm. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Sida. Technical Support Unit. Integrated Conflict Perspective in Contribution Management – A Technical Note. April 2023

<sup>13</sup> Final report: Mapping of how Sida work's with an integrated conflict perspective, 2016.

- #0: Not targeted<sup>14</sup>

However, the marker conflates thematic and mainstreaming objectives, making it difficult to isolate conflict sensitivity. Internal reviews have found inconsistencies in how the marker is applied and documented, and that many contributions may be conflict sensitive without this being reflected in the documentation<sup>15</sup>.

### 3.1.5 Recent updates to Sida's instructions

On October 1, 2024, Sida launched a major organisational reform. This restructuring aimed to align Sida's operations with the Swedish Government's reform agenda, *Aid for a New Era: Freedom, Empowerment, and Sustainable Growth* (December 2023), and the *Strategy for Sweden's Foreign Trade, Investments, and Global Competitiveness* (November 2023)<sup>16</sup>. The reform reflects a growing emphasis on working in fragile contexts and strengthening synergies between aid, trade, and foreign policy.

Under the new structure:

- Sida's operational activities are now organised into five operational departments: three geographic (Africa; Europe; Latin America, Middle East, and Asia), one for global programmes, and one for humanitarian aid.
- Thematic expertise has been consolidated into support departments to provide cross-cutting guidance.

This reorganisation has implications for conflict sensitivity. While the term “conflict perspective” is no longer explicitly mentioned in Sida's formal instruction (Regulation 2025:269, effective May 15, 2025)<sup>17</sup>, the principles of conflict sensitivity are instead embedded in the agency's broader mandate. The instruction emphasises contributions to peace and security, risk management, and the need for flexible, context-responsive approaches. Specifically, paragraph 5:8 mandates that Sida “continuously assess and monitor risks at both the operational and strategic levels and manage any potential risks in dialogue with the relevant partner”. Because of this change at Sida, we also changed the wording in interviews with Sida staff and rather asked about the integration of conflict sensitivity, which remains relevant to Sida's work.

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<sup>14</sup> Sida's statistics handbook

<sup>15</sup> Helpdesk on Human Security and Humanitarian Assistance, Quality assurance of Sida conflict policy marker, 2021, Assignment Code: [SHD224].

<sup>16</sup> Sida. 2024. Operational Strategy (2024 – 2026)

<sup>17</sup> Government of Sweden (2025). Förordning (2025:269) med instruktion för Styrelsen för internationellt utvecklingssamarbete (Sida). Paragraph 5:8. New instruction replacing explicit mention of the conflict perspective with broader mandates on peace, security, and risk management.

## 3.2 NINE CONTEXTS

This evaluation examined the integration of conflict sensitivity across nine distinct strategy contexts, selected to reflect a diversity of geographic regions, thematic priorities, and levels of conflict. The selection included bilateral, regional, thematic, and humanitarian strategies, and was designed to ensure variation in conflict intensity, strategy objectives, and implementation modalities. By analysing these nine contexts, the evaluation aimed to generate insights that are both context-specific and broadly applicable across Sida's portfolio.

**Bolivia** has not experienced armed conflict since 1989, but it remains a country marked by deep-rooted societal tensions and polarisation. These tensions stem from structural inequalities in access to resources, representation, and opportunities, and are often expressed through public demonstrations and social mobilisation. Recent years have seen increasing political fragmentation, regional divides, and rising hostility from anti-rights groups, particularly targeting feminist and human rights movements. While the country is generally peaceful, the context is volatile, with conflict risks emerging around issues such as climate change, indigenous land rights, and gender justice<sup>18</sup>.

The 2021-2025 strategy for development cooperation with Bolivia has three objectives: 1) human rights, democracy and the rule of law and gender equality, 2) environment, climate and sustainable use of natural resources, and 3) inclusive economic development.<sup>19</sup> The conflict prevention marker ratings for disbursements are as follows (an average over the period 2019-2023): marker 0 - 74%, marker 1 - 20%, marker 2 - 6%.<sup>20</sup>

**Ethiopia's** conflict context has shifted dramatically in recent years. Once seen as a stabilising force in the Horn of Africa, the country has experienced escalating political tensions and violent conflict, most notably the civil war in Tigray (2020–2022), alongside ongoing insurgencies in Oromia and Amhara. These conflicts have been driven by deep-rooted issues such as ethnic federalism, marginalisation, land disputes, and weak accountability mechanisms. Although a peace agreement was signed in late 2022, the security situation remains volatile, with localised violence, displacement, and humanitarian needs persisting across multiple regions (see separate Ethiopia case study).

Key objectives of the Ethiopia strategies (2016-2022 and 2022-2026) have been to:

- Strengthen democracy, human rights, and the rule of law

<sup>18</sup> Silvia Escóbar de Pabón, Walter Arteaga Aguilar, Giovanna Hurtado Aponte, 'DESIGUALDADES Y POBREZA EN BOLIVIA: Una perspectiva multidimensional', 2019, p.23.

<sup>19</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, *Strategy for Sweden's development cooperation with Bolivia 2021–2025*, 2021.

<sup>20</sup> Sida statistics unit, 'Sida Central Evaluation of work with the conflict perspective – Step 1', February 2024.

- Promote peace, conflict prevention, and social cohesion (*Nb. FBA also plays a role here, primarily in support to formal democratic governance, but their work has not been evaluated in this assignment*)
- Advance gender equality and the rights of women and girls
- Support inclusive economic development and job creation
- Increase resilience to climate change and improve natural resource management
- Improve access to basic services (health, education, WASH, social protection)
- Support humanitarian needs and protection of vulnerable groups (including IDPs and conflict-affected populations)

With regards to the conflict prevention marker, an average of 51% of disbursements have marker 0, 36% marker 1 and 13% marker 2 over the period 2019-2023.

**Humanitarian Aid.** The humanitarian context addressed by Sweden's global strategy is defined by widespread and protracted crises, often in conflict-affected or fragile settings. Humanitarian needs are driven by armed conflict, natural disasters, and systemic vulnerabilities. While the strategy operates globally, it is implemented through long-term partnerships (usually five-year agreements) with experienced humanitarian actors in humanitarian crisis globally. These contexts are marked by high protection risks, limited access, and complex political dynamics.

The evaluation includes the 2017-2020 and the 2021-2025 strategies for humanitarian aid. The two main objectives in the strategy are 1) Improved ability to provide protection and assistance for crisis-affected people and, 2) Increased capacity, effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian system. With regards to the conflict prevention marker, an average of 32% of disbursements have marker 0, 63% marker 1 and 6% marker 2 over the period 2019-2023.

**Iraq** remains in a fragile post-conflict phase, with persistent risks of renewed violence. While large-scale conflict has subsided since the defeat of ISIS, the country continues to experience instability driven by identity politics, corruption, fragmented security structures, and weak state legitimacy. Regional influences and climate-related stressors further exacerbate tensions. Although some areas have stabilised, others, particularly in the north and south, remain volatile (see separate Iraq case study).

The 2022-26 strategy for Iraq has three strategy objectives: 1) peaceful and inclusive societies, 2) Human rights, democracy, the rule of law and gender equality, and 3) environment, climate and sustainable development.<sup>21</sup> FBA has a mandate to contribute to objective 1, but their work has not been evaluated in this assignment. With regards to the conflict prevention marker, in 2023, 17% of disbursements have conflict prevention marker 0, 36% marker 1 and 46% marker 2. The specific context was that the Swedish government decided to end its development cooperation with

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<sup>21</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, *Strategy for Sweden's development cooperation with Iraq 2022–2026*, 17 03 2022.

Iraq during the evaluation and before the Strategy expired in 2026. Several signed and ongoing projects with implementing partners were ended prematurely because of that political decision.

**Liberia** is a post-conflict country that has remained free from armed conflict in recent years, but it continues to face significant structural challenges. These include unresolved land ownership disputes, political and economic inequality, corruption, and gender-based violence. While the country has experienced relative stability, recent developments, such as increased societal tensions around harmful traditional practices like female genital mutilation and the evolving political landscape under a new government, have introduced new risks<sup>22</sup>.

The 2021-20256 strategy for Liberia has four strategy objectives: 1) Human rights, democracy and the rule of law and gender equality, 2) Peaceful and inclusive societies, 3) Inclusive economic development, and 4) Environment, climate and sustainable use of natural resources. FBA plays a role in the strategy, with specific mandates under objectives 1 and 2. Their work has not been included in this evaluation. With regards to the conflict marker, an average of 49% of disbursements have conflict marker 0, 41% marker 1 and 9% marker 2 over the period 2019-2023.

**Myanmar** has experienced internal conflict since independence in 1948, with tensions escalating dramatically following the military coup in February 2021. The coup triggered widespread violence, repression, and the emergence of parallel governance structures, including the National Unity Government and its armed wing, the People's Defence Force. Ethnic armed organisations continue to control parts of the country, and humanitarian needs have surged due to conflict and state collapse. The banking system is tightly controlled by the junta, complicating aid delivery. The situation remains highly volatile, with ongoing armed resistance and deepening political fragmentation<sup>23</sup>.

Swedish government's strategy for development cooperation with Myanmar for the period 2018-2022 (extended to 23) includes three strategy objectives: 1) Human rights, democracy, the rule of law and gender equality, 2) peaceful and inclusive societies, 3) Equitable health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.<sup>24</sup> FBA will contribute to the following objectives: 1) Strengthened capacity for inclusive peacebuilding and dialogue, 2) Improved respect for and application of the rule of law. Their work has not been evaluated in this assignment. The composition of the portfolio with Myanmar in 2023 according to the conflict prevention marker is: 8% of disbursements have conflict prevention marker 0, 72% have marker 1, and 20% have marker 2.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> SHD 120: Update of the conflict assessment of Liberia (from 2015), 27 April 2020; Multidimensional Poverty Analysis: LIBERIA, February 2019

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/rohingya-crisis-myanmar>

<sup>24</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, *Strategy for Sweden's development cooperation with Myanmar 2018–2022*, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Sida Statistics Team, *Central Evaluation of Sida's work with the conflict perspective – Step 1*, 22 02 2024

**Sustainable Economic Development.** The global context for sustainable economic development is increasingly shaped by fragility, inequality, and the destabilising effects of conflict, climate change, and economic shocks. Key conflict drivers include corruption, exclusion from economic opportunities, and weak governance<sup>26</sup>. While the strategy is not country-specific, it operates in nearly 100 countries, many of which are conflict-affected or at risk.

The 2022-2026 Strategy for Sweden's global development cooperation in sustainable economic development has nine strategic objectives<sup>27</sup>:

Employment, market development and trade

1. Improved conditions for productive employment and decent work.
2. Strengthening of women's economic empowerment.
3. Improved conditions for sustainable and inclusive market and private sector development, and sustainable business.
4. Improved conditions for sustainable and inclusive international trade.

Food security, sustainable agriculture, forestry and fishing, and social protection

5. Improved conditions for food security, sustainable food systems, increased productivity and sustainability in agriculture, forestry and fishing, and strengthened ownership and tenure rights to land and natural resources.
6. Improved conditions for universal social protection.

Domestic resource mobilisation, financial stability, and digital transformation

7. Strengthened domestic resource mobilisation through effective tax systems and reduced corruption.
8. A resilient financial sector and increased financial stability.
9. Inclusive, equitable and sustainable digital transformation.<sup>28</sup>

With regards to the conflict marker, an average of 77% have marker 0, 23% of disbursements have marker 1 and 0% marker 2 over the period 2019-2023<sup>29</sup>.

**Tanzania** is generally peaceful and politically stable but faces growing structural tensions. These include refugee influxes from Burundi and the DRC, authoritarian governance trends, shrinking civic space, and disputes over land and natural resources. While there is no active conflict, these dynamics have led to localised tensions, particularly in regions like Kigoma. The government's restrictive laws and centralised control have also limited civil society engagement. Although the context did not change dramatically during the evaluation period, the risks of conflict remain present, especially in areas affected by displacement and resource competition (see

<sup>26</sup> Annex to Government Decision of Strategy for Sweden's global development cooperation in sustainable economic development 2018-2022 (UD2018/09125/IU)

<sup>27</sup> These are very similar to the previous strategy period, although slightly renamed, reorganised and with different numbering.

<sup>28</sup> Annex to Government Decision of Strategy for Sweden's global development cooperation on sustainable economic development 2022-2026 (UD2022/11292)

<sup>29</sup> Sida statistics unit, 'Sida Central Evaluation of work with the conflict perspective – Step 1', February 2024.



separate Tanzania case study). The data collection and analysis for the case study was conducted before the violence connected to the election in 2025.

The Tanzania strategy (2020-2024) includes four strategy objectives: 1) Human rights, democracy, equality, and rule of law, 2) Education, 3) Inclusive economic development, and 4) Environment and climate. With regards to the conflict prevention policy marker, an average of 97% of disbursements have conflict marker 0, 3% conflict policy marker 1, and 0% conflict policy marker 2 during the period 2019-2023.

**Western Balkans and Türkiye (WBT).** The Western Balkans continue to grapple with the legacies of the 1990s wars, unresolved ethnic tensions, and political polarisation. While there is no active violent conflict, the region remains fragile, with risks stemming from nationalism, corruption, and socio-economic stagnation. Türkiye faces internal conflict with the PKK, authoritarian governance, and regional tensions due to its involvement in Syria<sup>30</sup>.

The Swedish government's Strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with the Western Balkans and Türkiye for 2021–2027 includes the following strategy objectives:

- Western Balkans: 1) Human rights, democracy, the rule of law and gender equality, 2) peaceful and inclusive societies, 3) Environmentally and climate-resilient sustainable development and sustainable use of natural resources,
- Türkiye: Human rights, democracy, the rule of law and gender equality.<sup>31</sup>

A Sida-internal complexity is that a total of seven countries are included in the strategy. Each strategy has its own funding and independent decision-processes and a majority of countries also has an individual country conflict analysis. An important implementer for everything related to “conflict” and “peaceful and inclusive societies” is also FBA, which was not included in the evaluation. The composition of the portfolio with Western Balkans and Türkiye in 2023 according to the conflict prevention marker is: 74% of disbursements have conflict prevention marker 0, 21% have marker 1, and 3% have marker 2.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Helpdesk on Human Security and Humanitarian Assistance, *'Regional conflict analysis of the Western Balkans'* (29 November 2021). p.5; Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, Uppsala Conflict Data Program: Turkey. Accessed 09 2024. <https://ucdp.uu.se/country/640>

<sup>31</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, *Strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2027*, 2021.

<sup>32</sup> Sida Statistics Team, *Central Evaluation of Sida's work with the conflict perspective – Step 1*, 22 02 2024



## 4 Relevance (EQ1)

In this section we explore **EQ1: To what extent do the strategies respond to peace and conflict dynamics in the contexts and thematic areas, and continue to do so if circumstances change?**

We examine the extent to which Sida's strategies are informed by and responsive to peace and conflict dynamics in their respective contexts. This includes assessing how well strategies are grounded in an understanding of local conflict environments and how effectively they adapt over time to contextual changes. The evaluation draws on a set of sub-questions (SQ), detailed in the evaluation matrix (Annex 2) that align with the outputs, and short term and medium-term outcomes outlined in the ToC.

The section explores whether the Sida unit or Embassy demonstrated a sound understanding of the context or thematic area, including whether this understanding was informed by a dedicated conflict analysis or integrated into broader analytical documents such as the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Analysis (MDPA), and whether these analyses were updated in response to evolving dynamics (SQ1.1). The section considers the evidence of how a conflict perspective was incorporated into the operationalization of strategies, for example, through commissioned conflict analyses, support from the helpdesk, or portfolio-level decisions like geographic focus (SQ1.2). Further, the section explores the processes established to integrate a conflict perspective and whether these mechanisms were responsive to changes in the peace and conflict context (SQ1.3), assessing the nature and adequacy of adaptations made at both the contribution and strategy levels in response to contextual shifts (SQ1.4), and how partner selection processes accounted for the conflict sensitivity capacities of implementing partners (SQ1.5). It also examines whether conflict analyses were conducted at the contribution level when necessary, either by partners themselves or with support from the Sida Helpdesk (SQ1.6). Finally, EQ1 evaluates the feedback loop between strategy and contribution levels, specifically whether adaptations at one level informed changes at the other, and whether such changes were sufficient (SQ1.7).

This evaluation covers nine strategies operating in diverse political, social, and conflict settings. EQ1 serves as a critical lens to assess how these strategies have adapted, or failed to adapt, to changing conditions. The analysis also considers the reliability of the evidence presented and, through cross-case analysis, examines the strategic prioritisation of conflict sensitivity and its integration with gender considerations, in line with Sida's gender-responsive approach.

## 4.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS BY STRATEGY

In summary, the evaluation's main response to each sub-question (SQ) in the evaluation matrix (Annex 2) and the overall judgement is presented Table 4. The sub-questions have been combined where relevant. We have also added a section on strategic framing and on gender and conflict sensitivity integration; the latter is treated only as part of the cross-case analysis which is presented in section 4.3.

**Table 4. Summary assessment of responsiveness and adaptation (EQ1, sub-questions and judgements)**

Strategy	Strategic framing	Conflict analysis and contextual understanding (SQ1.1)	Operationalisation & partner engagement (SQ 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6)	Strategy level MEL (SQ 1.3)	Adaptation & responsiveness (1.4, 1.7)	Gender & conflict sensitivity integration	Strength of evidence
<b>Bolivia</b>	Weak/implicit; background issue, "do no harm" principle, overshadowed by other priorities	MDPA used, but formal conflict analyses limited/outdated	Informal, partner-driven, relies on partners' contextual knowledge	Weak; lacks formal monitoring/reporting	Sufficient but limited; some partner-driven adaptations, not systematically linked to strategy	Acknowledged as cross-cutting, but integration into conflict analysis often superficial	High
<b>Ethiopia</b>	Strong/explicit; conflict sensitivity as strategic priority, integrated across objectives	Robust, continuous, internal/external sources, field intelligence	Integrated/adaptive; partner selection, contribution design, adaptive management	Community-based monitoring, field visits; formal MEL less developed; CP marker uneven	High; strategic and operational adaptation, reprogramming, partner shifts, geographic adjustments	Comprehensive; gender central in conflict analysis and programming	High
<b>Humanitarian Aid</b>	High-level commitment, explicit in strategy, inconsistent in practice	Uses Humanitarian Crisis Analyses (HCAs)	Relies on partners' internal systems/standards, Sida hands-off	Weak; lacks formal systems, learning ad hoc, CP marker seen as administrative	Sufficient but limited; adaptation through partner mechanisms, Sida's own role limited	Gender-sensitive approaches via humanitarian principles, but analysis often embedded in partner systems	High
<b>Iraq</b>	Moderate; included in objectives, integration uneven, adaptation reactive	Strong early, not consistently updated	Some integration in sensitive sectors, partner selection not always based on CS	Some monitoring mechanisms, not systematic, CP marker inconsistently applied	Moderate; some adaptation, early responsiveness waned after Embassy closure	Considered in broader analysis, less consistent at contribution level	High

## 4 RELEVANCE (EQ1)

Strategy	Strategic framing	Conflict analysis and contextual understanding (SQ1.1)	Operationalisation & partner engagement (SQ 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6)	Strategy level MEL (SQ 1.3)	Adaptation & responsiveness (1.4, 1.7)	Gender & conflict sensitivity integration	Strength of evidence
<b>Liberia</b>	Moderate; included in objectives, improved over time	Updated analyses, tools like SCORE used	Moderate; some monitoring, partner selection not always based on CS	Some monitoring mechanisms, not systematic, CP marker inconsistently applied	Moderate; some adaptation, not always systematic	Strong in some areas (e.g., GBV), explicit in MDPA, operationalized in some contributions	High
<b>Myanmar</b>	Strong/explicit; strategic priority, especially post-coup	Robust, continuous, internal/external sources, field intelligence	Integrated/adaptive; partner selection, contribution design, adaptive management	Structured/continuous; regular reviews, audits, learning sessions, CP marker integrated	High; strategic and operational adaptation, reprogramming, partner shifts, geographic adjustments	Comprehensive; gender central in conflict analysis and programming	High
<b>Sustainable Economic Development</b>	Weak/implicit; acknowledged but not consistently operationalized	Thematic analyses, brief/inconsistently applied	Some influence on partners (e.g., IFC, WE4F), not consistent focus in dialogue	Weak; lacks formal systems, learning ad hoc, CP marker inconsistently applied	Low; isolated adaptive programming, not part of broader strategic shift	Included in relation to economic empowerment, ambition for gender/conflict analysis not realized	Medium
<b>Tanzania</b>	Weak/implicit; background issue, “do no harm” principle, overshadowed by other priorities	MDPA used, formal conflict analyses limited/outdated	Informal, partner-driven, relies on partners’ contextual knowledge	Weak; lacks formal monitoring/reporting	Sufficient but limited; some partner-driven adaptations, not systematically linked to strategy	Acknowledged as cross-cutting, but integration into conflict analysis often superficial	High
<b>Western Balkans &amp; Türkiye (WBT)</b>	Weak/implicit; dedicated peace objective, but inconsistently applied, but larger role for FBA	Regional conflict analysis exists, as well as five national conflict analysis, but underutilized by staff	Limited/ad hoc; partner engagement informal, reliance on partner systems	Weak; lacks formal monitoring/reporting, learning not institutionalized, CP marker inconsistently applied	Low; minimal adaptation, mostly ad hoc, learning not fed back into strategy	Included as thematic focus, but not evident in conflict analysis	Medium

## 4.2 EVIDENCE FOR THE NINE STRATEGIES

This section presents evidence against each of the nine strategies, considering the extent to which the Embassies or units and their partners had a comprehensive understanding of the context or thematic area at both strategic and contribution level, whether this understanding influenced strategy operationalisation and whether changes in the peace and conflict context led to sufficient adaptations at contribution and strategy level to respond to these changes, and whether adaptations at the strategy level resulted in adaptations at the contribution level and vice versa.

### 4.2.1 Bolivia

The evaluation of the Bolivia strategy reveals a mixed picture regarding the integration of conflict sensitivity. Sida's approach to conflict sensitivity has evolved in response to a shifting political and social landscape. Historically perceived as a relatively peaceful country, Bolivia has, over the past three to five years, experienced growing societal polarization. This includes regional divides between the eastern and western parts of the country, political tensions between ruling and opposition factions, and internal splits within political movements, such as between the "Evistas" and "Arcistas." These dynamics have made the integration of conflict sensitivity increasingly relevant, particularly in sectors like climate change and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

The Bolivia strategy treats conflict more as a background societal process than a central strategic concern. The MDPa acknowledges underlying tensions and provides a detailed discussion of various conflict situations in the country, including disputes over access to and exploitation of natural resources, territorial competition for income redistribution, and conflicts due to transformations in the agricultural sector, as well as conflicts arising from the relationship between society and the state, characterized by deficits in ideological support, plurality, and institutional governance<sup>33</sup>. However, there is no explicit mention of the date of the last update to this understanding, despite the fact that interviews with Embassy staff indicated that over the past three to five years, discussions around conflict sensitivity have become increasingly relevant due to growing societal polarization. At the Embassy level, there is as such no structured mechanism for conducting or updating conflict analyses, nor for assessing the integration of conflict sensitivity.

Among Sida staff at the Embassy, understanding of CS varied significantly. While some were familiar with Sida's Peace and Conflict Toolbox and had been introduced to relevant tools, others had little to no exposure to the concept. This inconsistency appeared to be linked to the thematic areas staff were responsible for, with some unsure how CS should be applied at either the strategy or contribution level. Embassy

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<sup>33</sup> Bolivia/1. *Strategy documents\_Bolivia 2021–2025/2019 CEDLA MDPa Book*, page 22; Silvia Escóbar de Pabón, Walter Arteaga Aguilar, Giovanna Hurtado Aponte, 'DESIGUALDADES Y POBREZA EN BOLIVIA: Una perspectiva multidimensional', 2019.

staff generally viewed the responsibility for conflict analysis and sensitivity as lying with implementing partners. Their own role was largely advisory, suggesting or recommending that partners conduct conflict analyses to inform their work. They relied heavily on local partners to maintain a strong grasp of the evolving context, supported by regular dialogue and meetings. However, staff acknowledged that a clear, shared policy on integrating CS across all contributions would be beneficial for both Sida and its partners.

Monitoring and reporting on CS were also found to be weak. The Embassy lacked formal procedures to track how CS was being integrated or mainstreamed at either the strategy or contribution level. Instead, it is the partners who take the lead in monitoring contextual shifts and adapting their interventions to minimize harm and enhance positive impact. In fact, implementing partners were widely regarded as having a strong understanding of the local context and demonstrated a solid grasp of CS principles. Many had integrated CS into their contributions, particularly in thematic areas like climate change and sexual and reproductive health (SRH). While conflict analyses conducted by partners were sometimes shared with Sida staff, there was no evidence that these insights influenced strategy-level decisions. Instead, they informed individual contributions. Although we did not review these analyses directly we assessed that partners demonstrated a high level of analytical capacity, based on feedback from Embassy staff and interviews with implementing partners.

For example, Diakonia illustrated how it adapted its programming based on ongoing context analysis. Its approach, grounded in Do No Harm and rights-based principles, centred survivors of violence and worked collaboratively with government institutions to restore access to justice and reparations. Diakonia's conflict-sensitive programming identified both drivers of conflict, such as structural violence, and drivers of peace, including justice, good governance, and inclusion. This allowed them to influence key “connectors” and “dividers” shaping human rights and gender justice outcomes<sup>34</sup>.

Another partner working on violence against women also demonstrated a nuanced, multi-level conflict-sensitive approach. Recognising the sensitivity of the issue in Bolivia's cultural context, the project engaged men in discussions around masculinity, supported women's groups in building autonomy and accessing health services, and worked with municipal networks and institutions to promote anti-violence laws and budget allocations. This comprehensive strategy addressed entrenched gender norms at individual, collective, organisational, and institutional levels<sup>35</sup>.

In summary, Sida's adaptation to evolving conflict dynamics lacks a formalized process and is largely informal and partner-driven and only applied as relevant. However, the Embassy staff demonstrates adaptability to the changing context by choosing partners with deep local insight and know knowledge, tailoring its support

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<sup>34</sup> Evaluation of Diakonia's work on/in conflict, 2015-2019 – Final Report

<sup>35</sup> La Fundación UNIR Bolivia. Investigacion y analisis de conflictos.

to reflect access constraints and contextual risks, and maintaining neutrality in politically sensitive environments. While this adaptive approach is embedded in Sida's flexible, trust-based funding model, it is not formally codified. Although Sida's strategy reflects an awareness of peace and conflict dynamics, its response is not implemented in a systematic, monitored, or institutionalized manner.

**The level of responsiveness and adaptation is deemed to be sufficient for the context but could be improved as the context changes. The evidence for this assessment is deemed to be high, as it is based on multiple internal and external sources, horizontally independent.**

#### 4.2.2 Ethiopia

Sida's engagement in Ethiopia demonstrates a deliberate and well-informed approach to conflict sensitivity, grounded in a strong understanding of the country's complex and evolving conflict landscape. Embassy staff and leadership have actively sought to integrate conflict analysis into both strategic planning and programme implementation.

The Ethiopia strategy has demonstrated a strong and continuously updated understanding of the country's complex and evolving peace and conflict dynamics. Over the two strategy periods, Embassy staff have taken deliberate and sustained steps to understand the multifaceted nature of conflict in Ethiopia, drawing on internal conflict analyses (including two MDPAs and a 2022 conflict analysis)<sup>36</sup>, Human Security Helpdesk, external intelligence (such as OCHA reports and partner briefings), field visits and continuous collaboration between the Embassy's political and bilateral sections. Sida staff emphasized that their "nexus approach" was anchored in this analysis, particularly in sectors like land, forest, and water, where disputes are common. These insights were not static; staff regularly validated their understanding through dialogue with former partners and field-based intelligence.

Support from Sida headquarters, use of internal training and a culture of internal knowledge-sharing were also instrumental. The former Head of Mission noted that staff were well-supported and highly knowledgeable on conflict issues, while the conflict adviser praised the Embassy's proactive engagement with conflict sensitivity.

This conflict understanding has informed the operationalisation of the strategy, the composition of the portfolio, and day-to-day contribution management. The conflict perspective has been integrated across all four strategic objectives, with particular emphasis under the objective of Peaceful and Inclusive Societies. Embassy staff have used flexible and adaptive management practices to respond to contextual changes, including conflict-related access constraints and security threats.

Conflict sensitivity is a core consideration in Sida's partner assessments. Partners are expected to demonstrate "Do No Harm" principles and the ability to adapt to local dynamics. In high-risk areas, Sida has supported culturally appropriate partner

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<sup>36</sup> SHD256. Ethiopia Conflict Analysis. 07 October 2022, Multi-dimensional poverty analysis in Ethiopia, Berhanu Denu Consultancy Service, 16 January 2019

selection to avoid exacerbating tensions, for example, aligning religious affiliations of implementing partners with local communities in Oromia and Sidama. Implementing partners have shown strong awareness of how their activities and resource transfers can influence local tensions. Projects like UNICEF's cash transfers and Save the Children's inclusive targeting strategies are designed to mitigate conflict risks and promote social cohesion. Community-led solutions, such as the Ethiopian Development Initiative's (EDI) youth reconciliation efforts and OHCHR's interfaith dialogues, further illustrate how partners integrate conflict sensitivity into their work.

Sida staff maintain active dialogue with partners, especially during project design and review phases, to ensure conflict dynamics are considered. Training and support for partners have further strengthened conflict-sensitive programming. Sida has provided capacity-building opportunities and reinforced good practices through monitoring visits and collaborative forums. Partners with deep local networks, such as Life & Peace Institute (LPI) and Horn of Africa Regional Environment Centre and Network (HoAREC), have embraced conflict sensitivity as central to their models, benefiting from Sida's alignment and support. For example, Sida's peace and conflict adviser visited Life & Peace Institute in the field, providing hands-on engagement to discuss outreach strategies and opportunities to increase impact. This direct support built on LPI's already strong conflict sensitivity practice, helping to connect their local-level peacebuilding to regional and national influence.

The escalation of conflict in Tigray and other regions prompted a significant reorientation of the strategy. Drawing on updated conflict analyses, the Embassy adjusted its geographic and thematic focus, reprogramming contributions to address humanitarian needs and conflict sensitivity. There was also a deliberate shift toward larger, more flexible INGOs and multilaterals capable of operating in volatile regions. Coordination between the political and development sections of the Embassy ensured that programming remained aligned with the rapidly changing context.

Projects have demonstrated operational flexibility in response to conflict. Examples include Farm Africa relocating activities due to security risks, UNICEF shifting to humanitarian cash transfers, and EngenderHealth integrating GBV and mental health services in conflict-affected areas. Partners like Mercy Corps and UNFPA have adapted targeting and service delivery based on real-time feedback and evolving risks. Sida's strategic flexibility is evident in its willingness to approve reprogramming and budget reallocations in response to conflict. This adaptability, combined with open dialogue and a learning-oriented approach, has enabled Sida and its partners to remain responsive and relevant in a highly dynamic context.

Staff have promoted the integration of conflict perspectives through dialogue with partners, strategic guidance during reviews, and participatory monitoring visits. This has helped ensure that strategy implementation remains conflict-aware, even in the face of severe operational constraints.

Annual reviews, site visits, and community-based monitoring tools, such as feedback mechanisms and inclusive targeting committees, help track conflict-related risks and guide responsive action. Sida's conflict adviser also plays a key role in interpreting conflict analyses and advising on programme adjustments. Field visits are used to raise detailed, context-specific recommendations. These visits have led to



tangible adaptations, such as changes in meeting formats to enhance youth and women's participation, and the integration of trauma healing and peacebuilding components. While insecurity also limits physical access in some regions, adaptive monitoring strategies, such as remote verification, local staff engagement, and coordination with UN security services, ensure continued oversight. Sida's field-based staff are particularly valued for their contextual expertise and responsiveness by partners.

However, challenges remain. While conflict sensitivity is embedded in strategic thinking and contribution management, it is not consistently reflected in results frameworks or formal monitoring systems, limiting systematic assessment and learning. For example, one Sida project manager noted that while conflict sensitivity was "in our DNA," it was not clearly articulated in the programme logic or monitored as a distinct objective in the results. There is also uneven emphasis on conflict sensitivity in dialogue with partners over time, and evidence of adaptation at the strategy level, while present, is concentrated in certain contributions rather than across the full portfolio.

This inconsistency is also reflected in Sida's use of the conflict prevention marker. While some programme managers engage actively with the marker's criteria, others are less familiar with it or see it mainly as a procedural "tick box" in appraisal forms. In one case, a manager described the difficulty of applying the formal criteria when partners were clearly operating with strong conflict sensitivity in practice, but lacked the prescribed conflict analysis or formal peace and security objectives required for a higher score. In a minority of interviews, managers indicated that the marker was not a primary reference point for informing decision-making or monitoring integration of the conflict perspective.

In sum, Sida's Ethiopia portfolio reflects a mature and contextually grounded approach to conflict sensitivity. Through strategic flexibility, informed partner selection, adaptive programming, and continuous learning, Sida has positioned itself as a responsive and responsible actor in one of the world's most complex conflict environments. **The level of responsiveness and adaptation to a volatile and changing context is therefore deemed to be high. The evidence for this assessment is high, as it is based on multiple internal and external sources, horizontally independent.**

#### 4.2.3 Humanitarian Aid

Evidence shows that Sida's institutional awareness of the conflict perspective in humanitarian contexts is strong, but that its integration is not systematically or consistently monitored or reported.

The Humanitarian Aid strategy explicitly mentions the importance of conflict sensitivity and states that it is essential to upholding humanitarian principles and avoiding harm in crisis contexts. Sida-funded activities must not exacerbate violent conflict or cause increased tensions and reference the centrality of protection and adherence to humanitarian principles as operational expressions of conflict sensitivity. Most Sida staff interviewed agreed that conflict sensitivity is conceptually important and "always present" in humanitarian programming, especially in



protection-focused work or high-risk contexts such as Yemen, DRC, and Sudan. The humanitarian unit includes staff with conflict sensitivity expertise. Sida has made efforts to build internal capacity, including through e-learning, the conflict sensitivity toolbox, and internal guidance, but application varies. Staff said that Sida today no longer has a designated conflict sensitivity focal point in the humanitarian unit (as it had in the past), and that uptake of guidance depends on individual interest.

The strategy relies on (Sida's) Humanitarian Crisis Analyses (HCAs) and partner assessments rather than MDPAs. This includes a strong reliance on the pre-existing capacities of strategic humanitarian partners, which is consistent with the strategy's reliance on multi-year framework agreements, and which are also checked during the applications for long-term partnership agreements with humanitarian implementing partners. Partner capacity in conflict sensitivity is used as a relevant and required criterion in the selection and renewal of framework agreements. Geographic targeting and funding decisions are informed by partners' assessments and Sida's own review of conflict dynamics in crisis-affected countries.

Efforts to strengthen CS have largely relied on partners' existing systems and standards. Many partners, including UN agencies, INGOs, and Red Cross organisations, operate with embedded do-no-harm frameworks, humanitarian principles, and context analysis mechanisms. Partners like Islamic Relief and the Swedish Red Cross explained having internal CS systems in place, including dedicated conflict sensitivity toolkits, staff training, and systematic inclusion of conflict analysis in programme design. Islamic Relief mentioned that their humanitarian operations always begin with a context and conflict analysis, regardless of whether Sida requests it, and that they have specific systems in place to guide beneficiary selection, community engagement, and perception management, all of it in line with international humanitarian standards and conventions. Sida's strategy relies on these systems rather than requesting additional and parallel reporting. This contributes to efficiency but limits Sida's ability to track or learn from CS in a systematic way.

There is variation in how Sida engages with conflict sensitivity in different contexts. For example, in protracted or highly politicised crises, such as Yemen, CS is more explicitly considered in partner selection, risk assessment, and portfolio balance. But Sida also mentioned that this is often based on the experience and initiative of individual programme managers rather than standardised procedures.

Dialogue with partners is active, and Sida is described by implementing organisations as a flexible, engaged, and responsive donor, often "above average" compared to other donors. Both Islamic Relief and the Swedish Red Cross mentioned Sida's openness to discussing conflict dynamics and their own internal CS tools.

However, Sida does not require partners to report on conflict sensitivity beyond general references to protection and impartiality. Several Sida staff mentioned that although partners are required to report on issues like corruption or safeguarding, there is no systematic expectation to report on "doing harm" or "doing good" in relation to conflict dynamics. Some noted that Sida's annual contribution reviews include one page on conflict sensitivity, but that this often remains general and uncritical. Implementing partners also commented that Sida rarely requests in-depth

reporting on CS, and that dialogue on CS is less developed than on topics like protection, localisation, or financial accountability. This is partly due to the highly organised and well-developed international standards for humanitarian aid delivery. Internal tools such as the conflict prevention marker are applied inconsistently, and most staff do not use or consult them in any way after initial contribution appraisal.

The humanitarian strategy sets out clear expectations, but implementation practices in reality are based on a high level of trust-based delegation to partners. This model works well with experienced actors but creates challenges for internal accountability and learning. As one policy advisor noted, “if we asked partners to report on CS, they probably would. But we don’t ask”.

In summary, Sida’s Humanitarian Strategy shows a high-level commitment to conflict sensitivity, aligned with humanitarian principles and protection norms (or rather phrased in these humanitarian terms in practice). But the operationalisation of this commitment is uneven, with strong reliance on partner systems, inconsistent follow-up, and only limited structured learning.

**The level of responsiveness and adaption is assessed to be sufficient, but limited, and there is room for improvement to avoid over-reliance on partner systems. The evidence for this assessment is deemed to be high, as it is based on multiple internal and external sources, horizontally independent.**

#### 4.2.4 Iraq

The evaluation of Sida’s Iraq strategy reveals a mixed picture of achievement and missed opportunities. From the outset, Sida staff demonstrated a strong awareness of conflict dynamics, particularly during the early and middle years of the strategy. This awareness translated into tangible outputs such as the use of MDPAs and conflict-specific analyses<sup>37</sup>, which were integrated into planning across various sectors. These analyses identified key conflict drivers, including identity-based politics, corruption, state legitimacy, and climate-related grievances, and were especially influential in contributions aligned with the strategy’s first objective: promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

However, the institutionalisation of these outputs across the portfolio was uneven. In some cases, like the UNDP’s Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), Sida successfully encouraged a shift beyond infrastructure to include social cohesion and reintegration. Similarly, in collaboration with FAO, Sida promoted conflict-aware practices in climate-affected regions of southern Iraq. Yet, the FAO project lacked a formal conflict analysis and suffered from communication gaps with non-beneficiaries, which created perception risks. Sida’s early withdrawal from Iraq further compounded these issues, potentially damaging its reputation and that of its partners.

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<sup>37</sup> Multidimensional Poverty Analysis 2020, 09.09.2020; Multidimensional Poverty Analysis Iraq 2022, Working Paper, 13.04.2022. Saferworld et al, Assessing integration of conflict sensitivity in the Iraq portfolio, 29 April 2020.

Sida's partner selection process increasingly prioritised conflict sensitivity, particularly in politically sensitive areas such as independent media and electoral support. Contributions from organisations like Internews and IMS incorporated strong Do No Harm principles and risk mitigation strategies, especially concerning journalist safety and politically charged content. Risk analysis was also embedded in some contributions, such as the electoral support programme with UNAMI, where Sida flagged reputational risks. However, in other cases like UNMAS, while initial conflict analysis was robust, there was limited follow-up on how risks evolved over time. Field reports indicated that the prioritisation of demining zones by national authorities lacked transparency, potentially exacerbating conflict through unequal access to land and services.

The conflict prevention marker was applied consistently, with nearly half of 2023 disbursements marked as having conflict prevention as a principal objective. Yet, the marker was rarely updated after initial appraisals and was not actively used for monitoring. In many instances, conflict sensitivity was assumed to be covered under broader frameworks like protection or impartiality, without revisiting these assumptions as contexts changed.

Dialogue with partners on conflict sensitivity was frequent but informal, relying heavily on the initiative of individual programme officers and their relationships with partners. While this trust-based approach was appreciated, IMS, for example, praised Sida's openness during annual reviews, the lack of a standardised follow-up framework limited the consistency and depth of these discussions. Moreover, although some staff embedded conflict sensitivity into their daily work, there was little cross-programmatic learning or use of feedback loops to adjust the broader portfolio. The strategy's operationalisation had assumed an in-country presence, which ceased after mid-2023, and the early termination of the strategy further hindered efforts to sustain and institutionalise these practices.

Sida and its partners did maintain an understanding of conflict dynamics and integrated this into contribution design and dialogue. This was particularly evident in early strategy implementation and in contributions like FFS, UNMAS, UNAMI, Internews, and IMS. However, the use of the conflict prevention marker as a monitoring tool was inconsistent, and updates were rare. Dialogue on conflict sensitivity was more structured in politically sensitive sectors but lacked uniformity across the portfolio. For instance, while IMS had regular check-ins with Sida on security and editorial risks, FAO's agricultural projects lacked a formal conflict sensitivity framework, leaving them vulnerable to risks such as community exclusion.

Some partners, particularly international NGOs and UN agencies with internal conflict sensitivity frameworks, adapted their implementation in response to evolving dynamics. Internews and IMS adjusted their content and methods to avoid political targeting and enhance safety, while FAO modified its approach in response to community concerns in Najaf. However, not all contributions demonstrated this level of responsiveness. In the case of UNMAS, the prioritisation of demining zones remained opaque and centrally controlled by the Iraqi government, limiting Sida's ability to ensure equitable outcomes.

Crucially, there was little evidence that learning at the contribution level informed strategic adjustments. While programme officers engaged with partners on conflict sensitivity, this did not translate into broader portfolio changes or strategic shifts. No significant geographic or sectoral reallocation occurred based on insights from the field. The closure of the Embassy and the shift to remote work after 2023, followed by the early exit decision in 2024, further weakened feedback mechanisms and the ability to institutionalise learning.

**Thus, while the Iraq strategy demonstrated responsiveness in design and early implementation, its capacity to adapt as circumstances changed was limited by operational constraints, making the overall level of responsiveness and adaptation moderate. The evidence for this assessment is deemed to be high, as it is based on multiple externally validated sources.**

#### 4.2.5 Liberia

There is evidence of an ongoing integrated strategy level analysis, operationalisation, plan and implementation with regards to conflict sensitivity at the Embassy in Liberia.

The Embassy has dedicated human resources, including a programme officer focused on Human Security, and has drawn on the Sida Helpdesk and FBA to conduct and update conflict analyses. Based on the interviews with Embassy staff in Liberia, the Swedish Embassy employs various strategies to maintain and update its understanding of the context in Liberia. Analyses are not static; they are revisited and revised in response to evolving dynamics, as seen in the 2024 update that responded to political changes and new government priorities<sup>38</sup>. Sources include external reports and internal analyses<sup>39</sup>, and continuous dialogue with partners. For example, the Embassy relies on the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index (SCORE), UN analyses, and reports from the Peacebuilding Fund. Some Embassy staff noted that the analysis has improved over time; before the most recent strategy period, it did not always kept pace with Liberia's transition to a post-conflict context. The 2024 EBA evaluation noted a need for better alignment with local priorities and more timely updates to strategic assumptions<sup>40</sup>.

Ongoing conflict analysis was central to shaping the strategy, by identifying land disputes, centralization of governance, corruption, inequality, and gender-based violence as core conflict drivers. These areas are clearly covered by the strategy, which includes four strategic objectives (Human rights, democracy and the rule of law and gender equality; Peaceful and inclusive societies; Inclusive economic

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<sup>38</sup> SHD 120: Update of the conflict assessment of Liberia (from 2015), 27 April 2020; Multidimensional Poverty Analysis: LIBERIA, February 2019; Analysis of Conflict Dynamics in Liberia, Prepared for Folke Bernadotte Academy Ref 24-0074, Caitlin Ryan and Johann von Alvensleben, University of Groningen, the Netherlands

October 2024

<sup>39</sup> Travel Report. Liberia 3-10 December 2022. Maja Permerup. Africa Department

<sup>40</sup> The-Expert-Group-for-Aid-Studies-EBA\_Report-2024-02

development; and Environment, climate and sustainable use of natural resources). The Embassy notes that during the last strategy process, there was an active debate about issues around conflict sensitivity and how to integrate it across the portfolio, leading to the system whereby strategy objective 1 (peaceful and inclusive societies) is a secondary objective for many contributions. The strategy plan from 2024 mentions that 16 contributions within three strategic objectives other than Peaceful and inclusive societies contribute to peace building and have specific aims to target conflict tensions<sup>41</sup>. According to staff interviewed, there is an ongoing debate about whether to continue with this approach for the next strategy, i.e. integrating conflict sensitivity across all goals, or to maintain a separate strategic objective on peaceful and inclusive societies. The Embassy has experienced both approaches and is reflecting on how to avoid siloed or superficial integration.

Staff and partners interviewed show an understanding of conflict sensitivity but to varying degree and not always fully in line with the Sida understanding, where both potential positive and negative impacts are considered. Of the eight contributions reviewed, not all had a separate conflict analysis, but in appraisal and follow up documentation, there is generally a recognition of the context around peace and conflict in Liberia related to the intervention, even if this is not always considered specifically as a topic to have dialogue regarding or a need to follow up on. Several contributions do show in-depth awareness of conflict dynamics and take steps to mitigate risks, including partners such as CENTAL, The Carter Center, Lantmäteriet, YMCA/ZOA, Liberia Feeder Roads, which is managed by the Ministry of Public Works.

Staff note that the dialogue is sometimes ad hoc and person dependent and acknowledges the need for more structured and continuous engagement with partners on conflict sensitivity. They also acknowledge systemic challenges, including limited time and resources to follow up on conflict sensitivity across all interventions. Local partners are generally seen as having strong contextual knowledge, which supports conflict-sensitive approaches even if not always explicitly framed as such. There is limited evidence that the Embassy assesses and selects partners based on their willingness and capacity to integrate the conflict perspective in their work. Rather the partnerships are founded on other reasons, and where there has been limited capacity, the Embassy has worked with the partner to develop this capacity (Lantmäteriet) or assessed that the capacity is sufficient (The Carter Center, YMCA/ZOA), or decided that capacity in this area is not what is most important for effectiveness of a particular contribution (including a public financial management programme managed by the World Bank (WB) and UNICEF's Liberia country programme).

The Embassy has made some changes at the contribution level in response to changes in context, providing evidence of adaptability. For example, the Liberia feeder road project was adjusted to address potential negative conflicts related to

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<sup>41</sup> Strategiplan för Liberia 2024-2026, dated 2023-11-xx; Strategic Plan for Liberia 2022-2024, dated 2021-12-02; Strategiplan för Liberia 2021-2023, dated 2020-11-11.

geographical distribution. However, this is stated to be based on both infrastructure needs and political pressure related to the new government administration and their constituencies. The Embassy has also been flexible in adapting to increased security needs as a result of a changing context related to the most recent election. There was also an example where the Embassy strategically modulated its visibility, maintaining a national advocacy role on FGM together with UN Women, while minimizing its presence in community-level interventions to avoid triggering conflict related to Western influence on traditional values. However, for these adaptations at the contribution level, the strength of evidence is low.

When it comes to monitoring and reporting there are several weaknesses. There are no formal procedures to monitor and report at the strategy level. The Embassy has been working to establish some, including using SCORE at the country level to follow up on indicators of social cohesion, but this work is disincentivised by the fact that there is no need or requirement to report on the conflict perspective in strategy reporting. There is also recognition that while some efforts have likely prevented harm (e.g., peaceful elections), more could be done to systematically track and evaluate the impact of conflict-sensitive programming. There is confusion around how to use the conflict prevention marker, with POs paying little attention to it (sometimes not even knowing what the marker on their contribution is) and how it should be applied, and it is not used to follow up on conflict sensitivity. The marker does not reflect the actual integration of conflict sensitivity.

There is less evidence when it comes to direct strategy level changes because of specific changes at the contribution level, however, over time, implementation of the strategy has been adaptive to a changing context, with Liberia moving on from a post-conflict context. **As such the level of adaptation is deemed to be moderate. The Liberia strategy has responded to peace and conflict dynamics in the context to a reasonable extent and has made some adaptations in response to changes in circumstances. However, there is room for improvement in monitoring, reporting, and ensuring that all partners have the capacity to integrate the conflict perspective. The evidence for this assessment is deemed to be high, as it is based on multiple externally validated sources.**

#### 4.2.6 Myanmar

The Myanmar Section Office have undertaken significant efforts to understand the conflict and peace dynamics as a foundation for the strategy process both pre- and post-coup, drawing on both analytical products from the Human Security and Humanitarian Assistance Helpdesk and use of reliable international, national, and local sources, and consultations with partners and other donors. Sida's internal analyses and commissioned independent expert analyses' identification of root causes, conflict triggers, stakeholders and change actors, and dividers and connectors



were in keeping with available reputable opensource information on the context.<sup>42</sup> Sida staff maintain close dialogue with partners and draw on helpdesk support to ensure that contributions are contextually grounded. The Section is diligent in maintaining a good understanding of the conflict and peace dynamics at contribution level and have drawn on expertise through the Helpdesk to ensure that contributions in the portfolio have a good understanding of the peace and conflict dynamics and specific circumstances of the theme/sector they target.<sup>43</sup> This is further substantiated by interviews with partners, who stated that they found Sida staff to have a good understanding of the context and were committed to staying well-informed of the situation.<sup>44</sup> Sida staff noted in interviews that regular dialogue with partners, and research and analysis produced and or published by partners was particularly helpful for staying up to date with sub-national and local conflict dynamics that were fluid and fast changing.<sup>45</sup> Partners in Myanmar also had a good understanding of the context, which was evidenced by strong conflict analyses conducted at contribution level, independent evaluations,<sup>46</sup> and for two, uptake of their reporting,<sup>47</sup> or research and analysis products by international and local actors working on Myanmar.<sup>48</sup>

The Myanmar Section Office has shown a strong commitment to integrating the conflict perspective at strategy level and its operationalisation. This is demonstrated consistent evidence in documentation and interviews with Sida staff and partners that conflict sensitivity was prioritised in the geographic composition of the portfolio, counterparts to engage with in and on Myanmar, and for the selection of partners.<sup>49</sup> The Section Office has even been recognised for their good practices in external publications.<sup>50</sup> In comparison to other strategies reviewed during the evaluation, the partners in the sample from the Myanmar portfolio had conflict analyses and thorough sections on conflict sensitivity (their understanding of it, processes and

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<sup>42</sup> Review of open-source publications by International Crisis Group, Asia Foundation, Council on Foreign Affairs, USIP, PRIO and ACLED.

<sup>43</sup> Human Security and Humanitarian Assistance Helpdesk. 2024. Internal Sida document - Analysis of the Responsiveness of the Swedish Bilateral Development Cooperation to the Conflict Context(s) in Myanmar; Human Security and Humanitarian Assistance Helpdesk. 2021. Internal Sida document - Mapping and analysis of Gender Equality and Nexus/Tiple Nexus in the Myanmar 2018-2022 Development Cooperation Strategy.

<sup>44</sup> Interviews with four partners working on various themes (both with a peacebuilding goal and not) in different areas of the context.

<sup>45</sup> Interviews with Sida staff.

<sup>46</sup> All partners had been evaluated during the contribution lifespan.

<sup>47</sup> Reporting and media communications conducted by Sida supported partners and downstream partners have been picked up by local and international news and contribute to the information landscape on Myanmar.

<sup>48</sup> For example, research and analysis conducted or published by a Sida partner, has been referenced and or cited in peer-reviewed academic journals, and publications by respected and influential organisations such as the Asia Development Bank, and the Asia Foundation.

<sup>49</sup> Internal Sida strategy level documents (plans and reports 2018-2022), and contribution documentation for four partners.

<sup>50</sup> Adam Burke, Tabea Campbell Pauli and Simon Richards (2024), Lessons from Foreign Assistance for Peacebuilding in Myanmar. International Peace Support and Effective Peacebuilding in Myanmar paper series (The Asia Foundation), p.16.,

practices) as part of their application documentation, detailed policies for selecting downstream partners in terms of their conflict sensitivity capacity and on their character, affiliations and values.<sup>51</sup> Partners also mentioned in interviews that Sida stood out from other donors in its approach and regular engagements initiated by Sida to informally discuss evolving peace and conflict context and conflict sensitivity concerns.<sup>52</sup>

The strategy's implementation was shaped by dramatic shifts in the country's political and security landscape. The 2021 military coup, the rise of the National Unity Government and its armed wing, the proliferation of Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs)<sup>53</sup>, and the spread of armed conflict all contributed to a highly volatile environment<sup>54</sup>. Humanitarian needs surged due to COVID-19, internal displacement, and natural disasters, while access to affected populations became increasingly difficult. Despite these challenges, Sida and its partners identified opportunities for change, including a new generation of politically engaged youth, growing cross-ethnic solidarity, and increased openness among some EAOs to human rights and democratic principles.

In response, Sida made significant adaptations at both the strategy and contribution levels. Strategically, the Swedish government took a firm stance against legitimising the junta, prompting a full review of development cooperation. Sida conducted a new risk assessment, heightened its risk classification, and increased dialogue with partners about risk management. It also deployed more Swedish staff with security clearance, adopted alternative payment methods, budgeted for physical and digital security, and adjusted its approach to field visits. Programming that involved the central government or supported its governance capacity was phased out entirely. Sida also drew on expertise from other strategies, such as the Sustainable Peace strategy, to strengthen its conflict sensitivity<sup>55</sup>.

At the contribution level, partners mirrored these adaptations. They relocated operations, adopted hybrid and digital methods, and followed localisation principles. Some phased out downstream partners unable to adapt, while others revised project goals and counterparts to reflect the new reality. For example, projects that previously aimed to build central government capacity or support anti-corruption efforts were reoriented. Partners also invested in internal conflict sensitivity by hiring new staff and offering support to downstream partners. One partner, unfamiliar with conflict-

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<sup>51</sup> Internal contribution documentation for four partners and partner documentation.

<sup>52</sup> Interviews with four partners.

<sup>53</sup> Civil War in Myanmar. By the Center for Preventive Action. Updated October 1, 2025, available at Global Conflict Tracker.

<sup>54</sup> ACLED's methodology on Myanmar. A guide to ACLED's Myanmar methodology on key armed actors, anti-coup demonstrations, and violence in Rakhine state. 3 March 2023. Last updated: 4 November 2024.

<sup>55</sup> According to Swedish Embassy internal strategy and contribution documentation 2021-2023, interviews with Sida staff, and partner staff.



affected contexts, received proactive support from Sida to build its capacity and continue operating safely and effectively.

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning were central to the Myanmar strategy. Unlike many other strategies where conflict sensitivity is considered mainly at the start, in Myanmar it was monitored throughout the contribution lifecycle. Both “do no harm” and “do good” aspects were tracked and reported in appraisals, midterm reviews, and completion memos. Sida and partners described their relationship as trust-based, allowing for open discussions about implementation challenges and conflict sensitivity concerns. This flexibility was especially important for managing downstream partners.

At the strategy level, Sida consistently monitored conflict sensitivity and linked contextual changes to strategic implications. Reports addressed risks such as misuse of funds, accessibility issues, and complex funding structures. In response, Sida sought support from headquarters for corruption risk assessments and commissioned independent audits. The Section Office also used Helpdesk products and cross-strategy expertise to assess whether the portfolio remained appropriate. Staff interviews confirmed that lessons from independent evaluations were taken seriously, with one example being a partner-hosted discussion to share learning<sup>56</sup>.

In summary, Sida’s Myanmar strategy exemplified a deeply embedded, adaptive, and context-sensitive approach to conflict sensitivity. The strategy was responsive to a rapidly evolving environment and proactive in shaping contributions that were ethically grounded, strategically aligned, and operationally flexible. **The level of adaptation is considered high. The evidence for this assessment is deemed to be high, as it is based on several different external sources, independently verified.**

#### 4.2.7 Sustainable Economic Development

The Sustainable Economic Development strategy for 2022–2026 reflects Sida’s ambition to integrate conflict sensitivity into its work on sustainable economic development, but the evaluation reveals that this integration is partial, context-dependent, and inconsistently institutionalized.

While the strategy plan explicitly prioritizes conflict sensitivity<sup>57</sup> and strategy itself acknowledges the impact of conflicts on poverty and economic development, emphasising the importance of conflict prevention and peacebuilding<sup>58</sup>, its operationalisation across interventions and strategic objectives remains uneven. Conflict sensitivity is acknowledged by Sida staff as important, yet it is often overshadowed by other cross-cutting priorities such as gender equality and environmental sustainability, which benefit from clearer government mandates and dedicated strategy objectives. The thematic and global nature of the strategy further

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<sup>56</sup> Swedish embassy internal document - strategy plans and reports 2018-2023.

<sup>57</sup> GLOBEC Strategy plan 2022-2026, Strategy for Sweden’s global development cooperation on sustainable economic development

<sup>58</sup> Strategy for Sweden’s global development cooperation on sustainable economic development, 2022-2026

complicates prioritization, as peace and conflict are not principal objectives in most interventions. In practice, only a small fraction of contributions, about 1.2%, have conflict as a principal marker, and 10% as significant<sup>59</sup>. This has increased from 2023 where about 0.3% of interventions have conflict as a principal marker, and 8.8% as significant<sup>60</sup>. The strategy operationalisation includes thematic conflict analyses<sup>61</sup>, particularly in areas like women's economic empowerment, trade and digitalisation, but these are very brief, and it is difficult to assess their quality as a result.

According to interviews with Sida staff, efforts to strengthen implementation have included internal seminars, e-trainings, and helpdesk support, but uptake is largely driven by individual initiative. Sida staff and partners generally share a common understanding of the conflict perspective, and partners report that Sida's flexible funding model allows for adaptive responses. However, conflict is not always a formal topic in partner dialogue, and Sida's influence varies. In some cases, Sida staff mentioned that they have successfully advocated for stronger integration of gender and poverty dimensions, but conflict sensitivity has not received the same emphasis. Sida staff noted that many global partners (e.g., International Finance Corporation (IFC), International Trade Centre (ITC), Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI)) already operate in conflict-affected contexts and have their own frameworks for managing risks. Sida's role is often limited to confirming that these frameworks exist, rather than shaping them.

There are examples of adaptive programming in response to conflict risks reported in interviews with Sida staff and partners. For instance, Sida's dialogue with USAID under the Water and Energy for Food (WE4F) programme led to the development of a Water Accounting Tool to mitigate groundwater overuse risks. Similarly, Sida raised concerns with IFC following an independent report on conflict risks<sup>62</sup>, prompting increased staffing and resources for conflict-sensitive work in fragile contexts. However, formal monitoring of conflict sensitivity remains weak, and these examples have not been verified by external resources.

Some partners, such as RRI and SLU Global who manage the Agriculture for Food Security (AgriFoSe2030) programme, state that they have their adjusted programming in response to conflict dynamics. RRI's work on indigenous land rights in DR Congo is cited as a positive example, though both Sida and RRI acknowledge the need for more explicit analysis. AgriFoSe2030 has adapted its programming to address tensions, and its rigorous monitoring system is seen as capable of identifying potential harm. WE4F also reallocated funds in Lebanon to support food production in refugee camps, demonstrating responsiveness to conflict-related needs.

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<sup>59</sup> Modifierad fördjupad strategirapport. Resultatrapportering för hela strategiperioden. Strategin för globalt hållbar ekonomisk utveckling 2022-2026. Ärendenummer: 25/000389

<sup>60</sup> Strategirapport för Strategin för Globalt Hållbar Ekonomisk utveckling 2022-2026. Lägesuppdatering av strategigenomförandet per den 15 mars 2024, samt resultat sedan den senaste strategirapporteringen.

<sup>61</sup> Theories of Change for Strategy Objectives 2, 4 and 9.

<sup>62</sup> Ganson, B., Jamison, A.S., & Henisz, W.J. (2023). IFC Projects And Increased Armed Conflict.

Despite these examples, the evaluation found limited evidence of systematic follow-up or learning from conflict sensitivity monitoring. The conflict prevention marker is tracked annually, but its interpretation varies among staff, and its use in strategy and contribution cycles is inconsistent. Sida attempts to follow up through partner reporting and risk analyses, but there is a reliance on partners to identify and communicate conflict-related issues. This creates a gap in Sida's ability to proactively manage conflict sensitivity across the portfolio.

Across the strategy's specific objectives, integration of conflict sensitivity varies, as evidenced by review of internal contribution documentation and interviews with staff and partners. Under Objective 2 (women's economic empowerment), there is awareness of unintended consequences such as gender-based violence, but little evidence that conflict analyses considering gender dynamics are systematically conducted, despite this being an ambition<sup>63</sup>. Some partners, like Women's World Banking and the Forest Farm Facility, acknowledge conflict risks, but lack formal approaches. Others, like IFAD's Financing Facility for Remittances, do not address conflict sensitivity at all.

Under Objective 3 (private sector development), some projects like WE4F and RRI integrate conflict sensitivity, while others, such as GSMA, do not. Objective 4 (international trade) shows conceptual understanding of trade's potential to reduce conflict, but few documented outcomes. ITC stands out for its strategic focus on conflict sensitivity, conducting analyses and adapting tools for fragile contexts. In contrast, STDF does not address conflict risks.

Objective 9 (digital transformation) presents a mixed picture. While some projects, like GSMA, have indirect links to conflict sensitivity, others, such as the World Bank's Digital Development Partnership and the Stockholm Internet Forum, explicitly explore the intersection of digitalization and conflict. These initiatives include mapping ICT sector impacts in conflict zones and supporting digital empowerment for women in Nigeria.

In summary, the Sustainable Economic Development strategy demonstrates a growing awareness of conflict sensitivity, with pockets of good practice and adaptive responses. However, the integration remains uneven, and formal mechanisms for monitoring, learning, and strategic adaptation are limited. **The level of responsiveness and adaptation is therefore deemed to be low, and not in line with stated ambition. However, for this global strategy, it is unclear exactly how much more Sida should focus on integration considering the review has found no evidence of harm caused and where there have been risks of negative effects, Sida has taken action to learn (e.g. IFC). The evidence for this assessment is deemed to be medium, as it is based on several internal and external sources, but sufficiently validated across this diverse strategy.**

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<sup>63</sup> Theory of Change for GLOBEC strategy objective 2

#### 4.2.8 Tanzania

Tanzania presents a nuanced picture. At the strategy level, the Tanzanian strategy team had a good understanding of the context and made sufficient efforts to inform their work at key points throughout the strategy lifecycle. A conflict analysis was deemed unnecessary. Instead, the MDPA served as the main analytical foundation, identifying key conflict drivers such as land disputes, competition over natural resources, tensions between host communities and refugees in Kigoma, and structural violence related to gender dynamics<sup>64</sup>. However, this approach aligns with other donors and partners, including the UN and World Bank, who also did not see the need for a separate conflict analysis. The MDPA's findings were supported by other donor tools, partner analyses, and independent assessments<sup>65</sup>, and interviews confirmed its sufficiency for integrating conflict sensitivity. There is also evidence that this understanding was regularly updated through engagement with partners and review of external sources at key points in the strategy cycle.

In terms of conflict sensitivity there appears to have been a good understanding of the concept at the strategy level. Both an understanding of the context and conflict sensitivity can be seen in the operationalisation and implementation of the strategy, evidenced by the composition of the portfolio, geographic spread, and to some degree in selection of partners. Conflict sensitivity capacity was considered in the selection of partners, but it was not a main focus. Even though the strategy does not have an explicit strategic objective area for conflict resolution or peacebuilding work usually expressed “peaceful and inclusive societies”, contributions addressed key conflict drivers identified in the MDPA and were targeted geographic areas where there were such issues, including natural resource-based conflicts, and tensions between refugee and host communities.

During this and the former strategy period changes were made at the strategy level to adapt to developments in the context. The most significant adaptations were made to the work under strategic area objective ‘1: Human rights, democracy, rule of law, gender equality’ as authoritarian tendencies manifested in repressive laws and practices towards the operation of NGOs and civil society increased the risks for many Sida partners both in terms of the physical safety and psychological wellbeing of staff and those associated with the partners, and their ability to fulfil the goals of the contribution. As a result, work had to be reframed, and goals adjusted to the changing context. Other adaptations include adjusting several contributions to address concerns in relation to upcoming elections and tensions in Zanzibar, and in relation to refugee influxes.

At the contribution level, Sida staff generally maintained an understanding of the context through following media, analyses from partners who conducted research on

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<sup>64</sup> Sida, *MDPA Tanzania*, November 2023. Chronic Poverty Advisory Network, Overseas Development Institute, ‘Tanzania – Reflection on Multi-dimensional Poverty Analysis’, 4 February 2021.

<sup>65</sup> UN Tanzania, *Situation Analysis Tanzania for UNDP II*, UN Tanzania, Kigoma Joint Programme document.

different issues in Tanzania, consultations with partners and other donors, and field visits. Knowledge of the concept of conflict sensitivity varies across staff and tends to be higher among those that work on human rights and democracy or social protection or have worked on other contexts that were fragile or conflict-affected/post-conflict. In general, the do-no-harm of conflict sensitivity has been institutionalised at Sida and the “conflict perspective” part of contribution appraisals were usually written from a do-no-harm-perspective without consideration of the “do-good” aspects of conflict sensitivity.

It is possible that there were missed opportunities in terms of conflict prevention, conflict reduction, and seizing opportunities to maximise social cohesion due to the different levels of understanding amongst Sida staff of conflict sensitivity. For instance, in one contribution that dealt with environmental and climate change issues, an increase in the incidences of landslides led to internal displacement that heightened resource-related tensions in neighbouring communities. In an interview with the partner, they reflected that they could have included an activity on community cohesion as part of the contribution instead of focusing solely on the technical aspects. It is not clear whether it would have been appropriate or useful to include an additional activity in this particular contribution, but it was an interesting reflection.

In terms of processes for Sida the integration of conflict sensitivity is front-end focused as consideration of it is a mandatory part of the contribution appraisal documentation, however with no formal place or requirement for it to be reported on in the conclusion on performance or completion memo, monitoring and evaluation is ad hoc. It can occur as part of the partner dialogue but tends to be reactive to issues as they arise.

Overall partners were deemed to have a good understanding of the context and some degree of understanding of the concept of conflict sensitivity. Generally, there was no formal context analysis process conducted as part of contribution design, the exception to this was the UN and World Bank, that conducted both national level and contribution level analyses. In regard to conflict sensitivity processes, it was typically dependent on the partner’s institutional context, for example larger multilateral partners (who also tended to receive larger funding) had more formal processes, policies, and regular feedback mechanisms for programme participants and the community, such as complaints boxes etc. Smaller NGOs and CSOs had fewer formal processes but were embedded in the community context and had well-established informal connections. Partners that were not familiar with the terminology of conflict sensitivity were nevertheless implementing the do-no-harm aspect. Several commented in interviews that the conflict sensitivity lens was useful and relevant to their work, as even though there wasn’t an armed conflict underway, there were community-level and household tensions to consider.

Sida and partners were found to be adaptive at contribution level and partners reported that Sida was a flexible and supportive donor. For example, supporting the inclusion of a new activity in an existing contribution to foster refugee-host community integration and cohesion in response to tension caused by increased refugee influxes. Or, adjusting a contribution to include engagement with community

and faith leaders to address backlashes resulting from Sida-supported work on gender equality.

The main weakness in the processes for conflict sensitivity aside from a lack of formal reporting requirements for Sida and partners, is that information is largely partner dependent. Sida's ability to know if negative effects are occurring or positive effects are being achieved, is largely dependent on the partner's ability to identify these effects and their willingness to report them. Both Sida and partner staff reported in interviews that they felt they had a trust-based partnership that fostered open and honest dialogue, but it is nevertheless worth noting that monitoring and evaluation could be improved. A safeguard to this is Sida field visits with downstream partners and the community leaders and members where staff may be able to notice/receive feedback in relation to conflict sensitivity effects directly. Though during the case study there was no evidence that this has been an effective avenue for receiving information.

The conflict prevention marker was not implemented in accordance with the peace and security handbook. Most programme officers were unsure how it should be assigned. It was not used to monitor the integration of the conflict perspective at either the strategy nor the contribution level.

Overall, while Sida's Tanzania strategy demonstrated adaptability and contextual awareness, especially in response to political and operational risks, the integration of conflict sensitivity could be strengthened through more consistent application, formalized monitoring processes, and greater emphasis on both preventing harm and actively promoting peace and social cohesion. **The level of adaptation is deemed sufficient for the context, but limited. The evidence for this assessment is deemed to be high, as it is based on multiple externally validated sources.**

#### 4.2.9 Western Balkans and Türkiye

The 2021–2027 strategy for Sweden's cooperation with the Western Balkans and Türkiye (WBT) introduced a more explicit focus on conflict sensitivity than its predecessor, particularly through the inclusion of a dedicated support area for "peaceful and inclusive societies".<sup>66</sup> A regional conflict analysis was commissioned, as well as individual conflict analysis for five countries within the WBT Strategy<sup>67</sup>. The strategy's operationalisation plan says that results in this area should be realistic and emphasises preventing negative developments and supporting actors who can contribute to reconciliation over the long term. But in reality, Sida's integration of

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<sup>66</sup> It is important to mention that FBA has an important role in implementing the support area „peaceful and inclusive societies“ of the strategy, but were not included in this evaluation; neither was the work of the Swedish Institute in Istanbul.

<sup>67</sup> Saferworld et al., Regional conflict analysis of the Western Balkans, November 2021. Saferworld et al., Actor mapping for peaceful and inclusive societies in the Western Balkans and updated conflict analysis, June 2024; Saferworld et al., North Macedonia Conflict Analysis, September 2021; Embassy of Sweden Belgrade, Serbia Conflict Analysis, January 2024; Saferworld et al., Albania Conflict Analysis, May 2021; Saferworld et al., Conflict Analysis of Bosnia and Herzegovina, November 2021; Saferworld et al., Kosovo Conflict Analysis, March 2021



conflict sensitivity at the strategy level has been partial, context-dependent, and not always consistently operationalised.

Sida staff acknowledged the relevance of conflict dynamics (more often “tensions” than “conflicts” being used as term) across the region, including politicisation of institutions, corruption, public mistrust, shrinking civic space, and historical grievances, but these were rarely addressed through formal strategic planning, conflict analyses, or structured risk management. Internal tools such as the MDPA, peace and conflict toolbox, and conflict prevention markers are used inconsistently across the seven units implementing the strategy. Some staff were unaware of the existing regional conflict analysis or unsure how to apply conflict markers meaningfully. For example, the MDPA process in Bosnia and Herzegovina was started but not completed, and some officers reported not having spent much time or thought on the selection of the conflict marker when appraising new contributions. Training and helpdesk support were available but underutilised, with capacity-building largely left to individual initiative.

Several Sida staff described conflict sensitivity as important but secondary to other priorities, especially EU integration and thematic focuses such as gender, environment, and governance. Staff often viewed conflict sensitivity as implicit in their work or as a general “do no harm” principle. Several interviewees noted that gender and environmental perspectives had more formal support and visibility due to Swedish government priorities, while conflict was “not a principal objective” in most programming, as one officer said. The “conflict perspective” section in contribution appraisal documents, for example, was sometimes just filled to “tick the box”, but with rather short and generic text instead of a deeper analysis, if it had been a priority.

Among implementing partners, awareness and capacity to manage conflict sensitivity varied. Some partners, such as a long-standing human rights organisation in Türkiye, demonstrated a deep and structured approach to managing operational risk, citing harassment, reputational pressure, and trauma exposure among staff and clients. They expressed appreciation for Sida’s long-term, respectful partnership and reported regular, open dialogue on risk management. Another implementing partner, Bankwatch documented both internal and external political risks in their work, especially around controversial and high-profile energy and infrastructure projects, and maintained regular contact with Sida to update and adjust activities.

Sida’s influence on partner’s practice also varied. In many technically oriented or multilateral programmes, such as private sector development in BiH or tax reform in Albania, there was only some structured discussion of conflict risks. In several cases, Sida staff relied on implementing partners’ systems and standards (e.g. World Bank or Swedish agencies), and there was no clear expectation that these partners would apply a conflict-sensitive lens beyond fiduciary or performance risks.

There is limited evidence that Sida staff and partners jointly analysed how their interventions might interact with conflict dynamics or adapted contributions accordingly. The relevant section in the appraisal document, for example, was underdeveloped and rather generic in the reviewed samples. Positive examples, such as Sida’s insistence on publishing the taxpayer perception survey in Albania, which the implementing partner initially did not want, or the secure operational model

developed by the Turkish human rights partner, were specific and localised in individual projects and often at the initiative of the implementing partner's experience. These adaptations were also seen more as “project risk containment” than as dedicated efforts to influence or reduce larger tensions or conflict drivers in society.

Conflict prevention markers were assigned during the contribution cycle but applied and used inconsistently. Some staff viewed them as administrative rather than analytical tools, and interpretation of what constitutes marker 0, 1, or 2 varied. There is no evidence that marker scores were used to monitor trends or inform strategy implementation, assigning them was rather seen as a “ticking-box-exercise” with no further implication for project implementation or monitoring afterwards. Most staff interviewed would not be aware of the conflict marker assigned to their project.

The evaluation did not find any documented evidence that strategy-level implementation has been revised or adapted in response to changes in the peace and conflict context. Learning and adaptation processes, including reflection between bilateral and regional teams, were mentioned in interviews, but they seemed ad hoc. Sida staff mentioned occasional meetings and information sharing, but not structured processes for learning across countries or feeding contribution-level insights into strategy-level decision-making.

While there is anecdotal evidence of adaptive measures at the contribution level, the WBT strategy overall did not show an adaptive approach to the evolving conflict risks in the region or in individual countries. Instead, response to context remained ad hoc and driven by individual initiative, with limited institutional learning or strategic shifts. **Strategic level adaptation is deemed to be low. The evidence for this assessment is deemed to be medium, as it is based on more than one source, including external, but not independently validated.**

## 4.3 CROSS-STRATEGY ANALYSIS

This section presents an analysis of the nine strategies across the sub-questions detailed in the beginning of section 4 and elaborates on Table 4.

### 4.3.1 Strategic intent and framing

Sida's strategic intent to integrate conflict sensitivity varies significantly across contexts, reflecting differences in conflict intensity, political environments, and thematic priorities. In some strategies, particularly in acute conflict settings like Ethiopia and Myanmar, conflict sensitivity is explicitly framed as a core strategic priority, embedded in objectives and operational plans.

In contrast, in more stable or politically sensitive contexts such as Tanzania, Bolivia, and the Western Balkans and Türkiye (WBT), conflict sensitivity is often treated as a secondary or implicit concern, overshadowed by other priorities like EU integration, gender equality, or environmental sustainability. Global strategies, such as Humanitarian Aid and Sustainable Economic Development, also reflect this variation, with high-level commitments not always translating into consistent operationalisation.



- **Strong and explicit framing:** Ethiopia and Myanmar stand out for embedding conflict sensitivity as a strategic priority. Ethiopia's strategy was anchored in conflict analysis and integrated across all objectives, while Myanmar's strategy explicitly responded to the post-coup conflict landscape with a clear stance against legitimising the junta.
- **Moderate framing:** Liberia and Iraq included conflict sensitivity in strategic objectives and used conflict analysis to inform planning. The Humanitarian Aid strategy explicitly prioritised conflict sensitivity in line with humanitarian principles.
- **Weak or implicit framing:** In Tanzania, Bolivia, and the Western Balkans and Türkiye (WBT), conflict sensitivity was acknowledged but not central. It was often treated as a background issue or a "do no harm" principle, with limited strategic follow-through. In WBT, despite a dedicated peace objective, conflict sensitivity was inconsistently applied and deprioritised in favour of EU integration and thematic goals. The Sustainable Economic Development strategy acknowledged its importance but struggled to operationalise it consistently across a diverse portfolio.

#### 4.3.2 Conflict analysis and contextual understanding

Across the nine strategies reviewed, there is a varied but generally good understanding of context and peace and conflict dynamics at both strategic and contribution levels. At the strategy level, several Swedish embassies demonstrate a strong and evolving understanding of peace and conflict dynamics in the contexts where they operate and a strong commitment to integrating conflict sensitivity into their strategic planning and operational frameworks. Familiarity with the concept and terminology of conflict sensitivity differed across strategies and within teams. At the contribution level, several strategies show strong and evolving understanding of peace and conflict dynamics related to specific contributions. Conflict analyses are conducted as part of contributions in many cases, and staff and partners reflect an in-depth understanding of the context in which they work. However, this varies across and within strategies, often related to the salience of peace and conflict dynamics in the overall country context, but also the salience within specific areas of the Sida portfolio. In several cases, conflict analyses are not updated regularly or failed to capture emerging dynamics. This limits the relevance of strategic planning and reduces the effectiveness of MEL systems.

- **Comprehensive and ongoing analysis:** Ethiopia and Myanmar demonstrated robust and continuous conflict analysis, drawing on internal tools (e.g., Conflict analysis), external sources, and field intelligence. Liberia also showed improvement, with updated analyses and use of tools like SCORE.
- **Partial or inconsistent analysis:** In Iraq, conflict analysis was strong early on but not consistently updated. In Tanzania and Bolivia, MDPA was used, but formal conflict analyses were limited or outdated. WBT had a regional conflict analysis and five individual country-level conflict analysis, but many staff were unaware of it or did not use it. The Sustainable Economic Development strategy used

thematic conflict analyses that were brief and inconsistently applied. Humanitarian Aid relied on Humanitarian Crisis Analyses (HCAs).

### 4.3.3 Operationalisation and partner engagement

Across the nine Sida strategies reviewed, there is consistent evidence that the conflict perspective has been integrated into the operationalisation of the strategies, albeit with varying depth and consistency. However, there is more limited evidence of this analysis influencing overall portfolio level decisions, such as sectoral or geographical focus, and partner selection, apart from some specific cases. Where conflict dynamics were salient, well understood and regularly updated, Sida was able to tailor its programming to mitigate risks, enhance relevance, and seize opportunities for peacebuilding. For these strategies, Embassy staff also present a nuanced understanding of the local context and key conflict drivers and they reflect, to varying degree, on changes to the context and its implications for the Embassy's portfolio. Support for capacity-building is also uneven, limiting the ability of partners to adapt effectively.

- **Integrated and adaptive:** Ethiopia and Myanmar operationalised conflict sensitivity through partner selection, contribution design, and adaptive management. Partners were expected to demonstrate conflict sensitivity, and Sida provided training and support.
- **Moderate integration:** Liberia and Iraq showed some integration, particularly in politically sensitive sectors. However, partner selection was not always based on conflict sensitivity, and adaptations were often driven by individual contributions rather than strategic intent. Humanitarian Aid relied on partners' internal systems and standards, with Sida playing a supportive but hands-off role.
- **Limited or ad hoc integration:** In Tanzania, Bolivia, and WBT, conflict sensitivity was inconsistently applied. Partner engagement was often informal, and Sida relied heavily on partners' contextual knowledge without structured expectations or follow-up. Sustainable Economic Development showed some influence on partners (e.g., IFC, WE4F), but conflict sensitivity was not a consistent focus in partner dialogue.

### 4.3.4 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

MEL systems are increasingly used to capture changes in the peace and conflict context and to inform strategic and operational adaptations. In conflict-affected settings, these adaptations are frequent and nuanced, often involving shifts in geographic focus, reallocation of resources, and revised contribution objectives. In more stable contexts, adaptations tend to be more ad hoc and are often driven by periodic reviews rather than immediate conflict triggers. However, at a general level, MEL systems and use of the conflict prevention marker were inconsistent. Learning is often informal and not institutionalised, reducing Sida's ability to learn from failure and replicate success.

- **Structured and continuous:** Myanmar led in integrating conflict sensitivity into monitoring and evaluation, with regular reviews, audits, and learning sessions.

The CP marker was also integrated into reporting. Ethiopia used community-based monitoring and field visits to inform adaptations, but conflict sensitivity was less integrated into formal MEL systems. In Ethiopia, application of the conflict prevention marker was uneven. While some programme managers engaged with its criteria, others used it mainly as part of appraisal procedures, meaning it played a limited role in ongoing monitoring of conflict sensitivity.

- **Emerging practices:** Liberia and Iraq had some monitoring mechanisms, but these were not systematic. In Liberia, there was an attempt to use SCORE at the country level, but this had not been institutionalised due to a lack of a formal requirement to report on conflict sensitivity. The CP marker was not applied consistently.
- **Weak or absent systems:** Tanzania, Bolivia, WBT, lacked formal monitoring and reporting processes. Sustainable Economic Development and Humanitarian Aid lacked formal systems at contribution and strategy level, instead relying on partner systems. There was confusion or inconsistency in applying the marker. It was often seen as administrative rather than analytical. Learning was ad hoc and not institutionalised.

#### 4.3.5 Adaptation and responsiveness

Adaptation and responsiveness are critical indicators of how well Sida strategies translate conflict sensitivity into practice. This dimension examines whether and how strategies and contributions have been adjusted in response to evolving conflict dynamics, political shifts, or operational constraints. It also considers the extent to which Sida and its partners demonstrate flexibility in programme design, implementation, and resource allocation. While some strategies, particularly in high-risk or post-conflict contexts like Ethiopia and Myanmar, show strong evidence of strategic and operational adaptation, others rely more on ad hoc or partner-driven adjustments. However, at a general level, the feedback loop between strategic and contribution-level adaptations is often weak. Changes at one level do not always inform the other. Adaptation to changing contexts occurred, but was often uneven or informal, and mostly at contribution level, rather than at strategy level.

- **High adaptation:** Ethiopia and Myanmar demonstrated high levels of strategic and operational adaptation in response to conflict dynamics. This included reprogramming, partner shifts, and geographic adjustments.
- **Moderate adaptation:** Liberia and Iraq adapted some contributions in response to political shifts and security risks, but strategic adaptation was limited. In Iraq, early responsiveness waned after the Embassy closure.
- **Sufficient but limited adaptation:** Tanzania and Bolivia showed some contribution-level adaptations, often driven by partners. However, these were not systematically linked to strategy-level changes. Humanitarian Aid adapted through partner-led mechanisms, but Sida's own role in adaptation was limited.
- **Low adaptation:** WBT showed low evidence of strategic or operational adaptation. Conflict sensitivity was treated as a secondary concern, and learning was not fed back into strategy. Sustainable Economic Development had examples

of adaptive programming, but these were isolated and not part of a broader strategic shift.

#### 4.3.6 Gender and conflict sensitivity

The integration of gender analysis into the understanding of peace and conflict dynamics is a critical dimension of conflict sensitivity. It ensures that strategies not only recognize the differentiated impacts of conflict on women, men, and gender-diverse groups but also identify opportunities to promote gender equality as a pathway to peace. Across the nine Sida strategies reviewed, the extent and quality of gender integration varied significantly. Note that this analysis is necessarily partial since the evaluation has not included an exhaustive analysis of gender mainstreaming, and the focus is on the intersection between gender and conflict sensitivity. Several strategies demonstrated strong integration of gender analysis into their conflict assessments and actions. In Liberia, gender-based violence was explicitly identified as a key conflict driver, and the MDPa included a nuanced understanding of how gender intersects with land disputes, governance, and social cohesion<sup>68</sup>. Contributions such as the one with UN Women that focused on FGM further operationalized this analysis, addressing gender-related risks and promoting inclusive dialogue.

Ethiopia also stands out for its comprehensive approach. The strategy incorporated gender considerations into its conflict analysis, particularly in relation to ethnic federalism, displacement, and access to services. Gender-based violence and the role of women in peacebuilding were central themes, and the Embassy actively engaged in dialogue with partners to ensure gender-sensitive programming. Embassy staff linked gender-sensitive peacebuilding to national transitional justice and reform processes and provided partners with guidance on integrating gender into conflict-sensitive design and monitoring.

Myanmar's strategy, particularly in the post-coup context, integrated gender analysis through its focus on civil society and resistance movements. Women's roles in community resilience and political activism were acknowledged, and contributions reflected an awareness of the gendered impacts of repression and conflict.

In Iraq, gender was considered in the broader conflict analysis, especially in relation to identity politics and the exclusion of women from political processes. However, the integration was less consistent at the contribution level, and opportunities to link gender equality more explicitly to peacebuilding were not always fully realized.

Other strategies showed more limited or uneven integration, which is also related to their lack of focus on conflict sensitivity. The Sustainable Economic Development strategy included gender dynamics in relation to economic empowerment, with an ambition to ensure that all contributions in the area had a specific gender and conflict analysis, but this was not evident in the contributions reviewed.

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<sup>68</sup> SHD 120: Update of the conflict assessment of Liberia (from 2015), 27 April 2020.

In Bolivia and Tanzania, gender was acknowledged as a cross-cutting issue, but its integration into conflict analysis was often superficial. In Bolivia, for example, gender equality is a strategic objective, yet the MDPA did not consistently explore how gender norms and inequalities contribute to social tensions. However, there was still acknowledgement and integration of gender-focused conflict sensitive programming in individual contributions but led by partners themselves. Similarly, in Tanzania, while gender was mentioned in relation to social change and potential backlash, there was limited evidence of systematic gender analysis in the context of conflict dynamics. Finally, the Western Balkans and Türkiye strategy included gender as a focus and this was also included in the five individual conflict analysis for countries in the WBT.

The Humanitarian Aid strategy emphasized protection and gender-sensitive approaches through its adherence to humanitarian principles. However, gender analysis was often embedded within partner systems rather than explicitly articulated in Sida's own conflict assessments, making it difficult to assess whether these analyses were integrated or not.

## 5 Effectiveness (EQ2)

In this section we provide a response to **EQ2: To what extent is the integration of conflict sensitivity in the implementation of the strategies contributing to outcomes? And if so/not, why?** We consider all the sub-questions identified in evaluation matrix (Annex 2). The analytical focus is both on outcomes directly linked to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and on broader development outcomes shaped by how conflict dynamics have been considered and addressed in the implementation of strategies.

The analysis follows directly from the presentation under EQ1 and is based on evidence collected through review of documents, interviews and surveys against the long-term outcomes in the ToCs for all of the nine strategies included in this evaluation, as well as field work for the case study strategies (SQ2.1), including the significance of these changes (SQ2.5). This includes whether there is any evidence of initial changes in peace and conflict dynamics as a result of implementation of Sida's strategy objectives (either positive or negative, intended or unintended), including the potential for reduced tensions or social cohesion, particularly for those cases where field work was not undertaken (SQ2.4). For Ethiopia, Iraq and Tanzania, this is then further detailed under EQ3, where Sida's contribution to these changes is further considered.

This section also considers whether the assumptions linking outputs to short, medium and long-term outcomes held true in practice (SQ2.3), identifying key enabling factors and barriers that have influenced the achievement of desired outcomes (SQ2.6). In doing so, we assess the role of Sida's internal systems, such as the use of the conflict prevention marker, and the extent to which this tool has been used to monitor and guide the integration of the conflict perspective, following on from the analysis in section 4 above (SQ2.7). The section explores whether contributions assessed as lacking a conflict perspective have led to unintended negative outcomes (SQ2.8), and what factors may have mitigated such risks (SQ2.9). It also explores whether contributions assessed as conflict sensitive have been able to avoid harm and maximise positive impacts on peace and conflict dynamics (SQ2.9). Finally, it assesses the reliability of the evidence presented (SQ2.2).

Across the nine strategies evaluated, the integration of conflict sensitivity into implementation has produced a very diverse pattern of results. There are clear examples where Sida's contributions have mitigated harm, strengthened peacebuilding, or enabled conflict-sensitive development outcomes. There are also contexts where limited integration of conflict sensitivity, because of a lack of prioritisation, weak monitoring, or low institutionalisation, has led to short-term negative effects, missed opportunities or contributed to shallow implementation. These patterns are explored in depth below.

## 5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS BY STRATEGY

A detailed response to all EQ2 sub-questions (SQ) is included in Section 5.2 and a cross-case analysis in section 5.3. In summary, the evaluation's main response to each sub-question and the overall judgement is the presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Summary assessment of outcomes from integration of conflict sensitivity (EQ2 and sub-questions)**

Strategy	Evidence of change (SQ 2.1)	Strength of evidence (SQ 2.2)	Key assumptions in ToC (held / not held) (SQ 2.3)	Evidence of change in peace & conflict dynamics (SQ2.4)	Significance of observed change (SQ2.5)	Opportunities & barriers (SQ 2.6)	Use of Conflict Prevention Marker (SQ 2.7)	Negative outcomes where CS lacking / mitigated? (SQ2.8)	Positive outcomes where CS integrated? (SQ 2.9)	Overall judgement
<b>Bolivia</b>	Partner-level results: social cohesion, gender justice	Low to medium	Embassy ownership not held	Positive, partner-driven	Medium	Strong partners; absent formal processes	Not used	No harm	Reduced polarisation, cohesion platforms	Positive but not institutionalised
<b>Ethiopia</b>	Documented at all levels: reduced tensions, joint resource management, inclusion, GBV prevention	High	Continuous analysis held; partner capacity mostly held	Clear positive effects on cohesion and trust; limited (potential) negatives, mitigated through adaptation	High	Strong contextual understanding, flexible management; weak indicators	Inconsistent but used	Risk of exacerbating tensions between communities, mitigated through adaptation	Reconciliation, adaptive programming, inclusion	Strong, systematised CS integration and outcomes
<b>Humanitarian Aid</b>	Partner-level results; strong Do No Harm adherence	Low	Partner systems held; Sida tracking not held	Positive (trust, inclusion); no negatives	Low to medium	Excellent partners; weak Sida oversight	Inconsistent	None observed	Equitable access, impartiality	Conceptually strong, weak monitoring
<b>Iraq</b>	Media safety, electoral integrity, local reintegration	Medium	Stable engagement not held	Positive locally, limited scale	Medium	Early good practice; exit cut continuity	Initially applied; later neglected	Exit caused disruption	Pluralistic media, safer elections	Positive but uneven, constrained by exit



## 5 EFFECTIVENESS (EQ2)

Strategy	Evidence of change (SQ 2.1)	Strength of evidence (SQ 2.2)	Key assumptions in ToC (held / not held) (SQ 2.3)	Evidence of change in peace & conflict dynamics (SQ2.4)	Significance of observed change (SQ2.5)	Opportunities & barriers (SQ 2.6)	Use of Conflict Prevention Marker (SQ 2.7)	Negative outcomes where CS lacking / mitigated? (SQ2.8)	Positive outcomes where CS integrated? (SQ 2.9)	Overall judgement
<b>Liberia</b>	Access to justice, anti-corruption, FGM, infrastructure, land rights	Low to medium	Staff capacity and leadership partly held; incentives, monitoring not held	Positive local cohesion; some negatives	Low to medium	Dedicated staff; weak MEL and learning	Inconsistent understanding and use	Minor short term, largely mitigated	Social cohesion, peaceful elections support	Promising but uneven, ad hoc follow-up
<b>Myanmar</b>	Sustained civic capacity, harm avoidance, adaptive post-coup	Medium	Partner resilience held; state cooperation not held	Positive at local level; prevented harm under repression	Medium to high	High contextual volatility; strong partner networks; limited access	Applied variably	Potential risk to partners mitigated by adaptation	Social cohesion, safe aid delivery	Highly adaptive, positive outcomes despite constraints
<b>Sustainable Economic Development</b>	Scattered results (land, water, dialogue)	Low	Leadership and resources not held; partners apply CS partly held	Limited change; no harm documented	Low/difficult to assess	Flexible funding; low prioritisation	Applied formally only and consistently	Not detected	Adaptive cases (RRI, WE4F)	Partial integration; diffuse outcomes
<b>Tanzania</b>	Local outcomes: reduced refugee-host tensions, improved land governance	Medium to high	MDPA adequate held; shared understanding partly held	Positive local dynamics; limited national effects	High, but localised	Trust-based partnerships; weak monitoring, variable staff capacity	Rarely used	Short-term harms, largely mitigated	Cohesive refugee-host relations, reduced land conflicts	Locally significant, unsystematic CS
<b>WBT</b>	Limited evidence; isolated adaptive measures	Low to medium	Regional coherence not held	Few observed changes	Low	Fragmented management, low ownership	Inconsistent	None identified	Minimal, localised	Fragmented, reactive; minimal evidence



## 5.2 EVIDENCE FOR THE NINE STRATEGIES

### 5.2.1 Bolivia

The integration of CS into strategy implementation in Bolivia has contributed positively to several outcomes, though the extent and significance of these results vary depending on the partners involved and the thematic areas addressed. There is clear evidence that CS has shaped interventions and fostered social cohesion in specific cases, but this is largely confined to contributions led by partners with high contextual knowledge and established CS practices.

While Sida in Bolivia does not follow a systematic or institutionalized process for mainstreaming CS, implementing partners have demonstrated significant ownership and applied the approach in ways that have meaningfully influenced their interventions. The **evidence** base for this assessment is of **low to medium** strength, drawing on interviews with Sida staff and implementing partners, as well as documentation such as the MDPA and contribution-level documentation, but not externally validated for all evidence. The **significance** of observed changes is also assessed as **medium**. Bolivia is not experiencing active violent conflict, yet societal polarisation and thematic tensions, particularly around gender, land, and indigenous rights, make conflict sensitivity highly relevant.

Examples of medium and long-term outcomes linked to CS integration include:

- **Improved municipal service delivery through context-driven adaptation – Implementing partners** such as Diakonia and those involved in the Vida Digna Sin Violencia (VDSV) project conduct regular conflict or context analyses and adapt their strategies accordingly. These adaptations, grounded in Do No Harm and rights-based principles, have according to the partner and the Embassy, helped prevent harm and foster social cohesion.<sup>69</sup> For example, in Atocha, contextual monitoring and facilitated dialogue resolved a local governance issue impeding municipal services for women, resulting in improved transparency and accountability.
- **Reduced risks and stronger local systems in sensitive thematic areas – In thematic areas** such as violence against women, reproductive rights, and gender justice, partners have reportedly used CS to shape interventions across multiple levels, from individual to institutional, ensuring they do not exacerbate local tensions but instead contribute to building more inclusive and just local systems.
- **Enhanced social cohesion and reduced polarisation at regional level – The “I Believe, and I Defend” initiative**, led by Diakonia and Bolivian partners,

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<sup>69</sup> Sida Bolivia, *Strategy for Sweden's Development Cooperation with Bolivia 2021–2025*, Government Offices of Sweden, 2021. Conflict sensitivity and rights-based principles are identified as central to the strategy's operationalisation.

demonstrates how CS integration can address regional drives of division.<sup>70</sup> Through interreligious dialogue and counter-narrative strategies, the programme tackles hate speech and polarization. The regional alliance and the creation of a conflict transformation platform illustrates the strategic value of CS in promoting sustainable social cohesion, even if the extent to which this has been achieved cannot be validated.

Importantly, there is no evidence of harm caused by Sida's contributions in Bolivia. However, the absence of a formalised approach to conflict sensitivity within the Embassy itself limits the reach and sustainability of positive outcomes. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms on CS outcomes are not in place, meaning CS outcomes are not systematically tracked or used to inform broader portfolio management. In practice, CS integration is largely partner-led, dependent on their initiative, contextual knowledge and adaptive capacity.

Enabling factors include strong contextual knowledge and adaptive management of implementing partners, use of the MDPA as a contextual reference (even if not regularly updated), and Sida's flexible, trust-based funding model.

Constraining factors include lack of internal Embassy capacity and formal processes within Sida, no structured learning loops between contributions and strategy, and limited use of the conflict prevention marker as a monitoring tool.

In summary, conflict sensitivity is contributing to tangible, locally significant positive outcomes in Bolivia, particularly where partners possess strong contextual expertise and established CS approaches. However, the lack of internal capacity and formal processes within Sida limits the potential for scaling or sustaining these results across the broader portfolio.

### 5.2.2 Ethiopia

The integration of conflict sensitivity (CS) into Ethiopia's strategy implementation has made a meaningful, though uneven, contribution to outcomes at the project, portfolio, and in some cases, strategic objective levels. The **significance** of observed changes is **high**: Sida and partners have adapted meaningfully to a volatile and fragmented conflict landscape, producing tangible results in peacebuilding, social cohesion, and harm mitigation. The strength of the **evidence** base is **high** – it draws on extensive documentation, fieldwork, and interviews with Sida staff, implementing partners, and beneficiaries. Multiple sources confirm the effectiveness of Sida's approach, though evidence on long-term, aggregated outcomes is sometimes anecdotal and localised.

While there is no evidence of negative outcomes, the contribution of CS is strongest where it is systematically integrated into programme design, management, and adaptation processes. In these cases, CS has supported more inclusive and

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<sup>70</sup> Diakonia, *Regional Programme Report on "I Believe, and I Defend"*, 2023. Includes documentation of interfaith dialogue and counter-hate speech initiatives in Bolivia and six other Latin American countries.

context-aware interventions, strengthened local ownership, and reduced the risk of doing harm.

Examples of medium and long-term outcomes linked to CS integration include (see separate Ethiopia case study):

- **Reduced tensions and improved social cohesion through inclusive targeting** – Partners have analysed and adapted to the two-way interaction between their interventions and local conflict dynamics. UNICEF, for example, applied inclusive targeting approaches to reduce tension between host communities and internally displaced persons (IDPs). This has helped maintain community acceptance and prevent resentment over resource allocation in contested areas.
- **Strengthened cooperation and resource governance in conflict-affected areas** – Livelihood and land-use interventions by Farm Africa and HoAREC applied CS principles to design conflict-sensitive approaches for shared resource management. Joint management structures have reduced disputes over natural resources and improved trust between communities, contributing to local stability.<sup>71</sup>
- **Expanded participation and reconciliation through peacebuilding initiatives** – Interfaith and youth-focused peacebuilding efforts by the Life & Peace Institute and PMU have broadened participation in dialogue processes, including the involvement of groups previously excluded due to political or ethnic divisions. These initiatives have supported reconciliation and prevented escalation of inter-group violence in sensitive areas.

Sida's internal systems – including the Human Security Helpdesk and conflict sensitivity training – have equipped staff and partners to operate effectively in complex environments. Flexible contribution management has allowed real-time adaptations, such as relocating activities or shifting modalities in response to security risks. The sustained commitment of Sida staff, particularly those with regional expertise, has helped keep CS integration a priority throughout the strategy cycle. Inconsistent integration of CS across all contributions has led to missed opportunities for deeper and more widespread impact. Some partners embedded conflict analysis into programme design, while others relied on general risk management frameworks without explicit CS components. Access constraints and security risks have also limited Sida's ability to monitor contributions in certain regions, particularly those experiencing active conflict.

Conflict sensitivity has influenced many positive, locally significant changes in Ethiopia, from reducing tensions and strengthening cooperation to supporting reconciliation. However, the absence of CS indicators in results frameworks and limited systematic reporting mean that broader strategic-level effects are harder to measure. Overall, CS is making a meaningful but uneven contribution to Ethiopia's

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<sup>71</sup> Farm Africa, *Contribution Story: Supporting Local Conflict Transformation in Abijata-Shalla National Park*, 2023. Supported by Sida under the Ethiopia cooperation strategy.

strategic outcomes, with greater potential if integration becomes more systematic and tracked at the portfolio level.

### 5.2.3 Humanitarian Strategy

Sida's implementation of the Humanitarian Strategy demonstrates a strong conceptual awareness of CS and a clear commitment to "do no harm," expressed through its protection lens and other humanitarian principles. The strategy operates almost exclusively in high-risk, conflict-affected contexts, and partners are expected to avoid exacerbating conflict through targeting, beneficiary selection, and engagement with conflict parties. The strength of the **evidence** base is **low**, and the **significance** of observed changes is assessed as **low to medium**: there are some positive, partner-led outcomes in trust-building, inclusion, and impartial access, but these are localised and anecdotal, with no systematic tracking or aggregation at portfolio level.

Examples of reported medium and long-term outcomes linked to CS integration include:

- **Improved trust and inclusion through community engagement** – In Pakistan, Islamic Relief used Sida funding to strengthen community–government dialogue and promote women's participation in local decision-making, despite cultural resistance. Their approach included beneficiary selection based on perceived fairness and active coordination with local actors to prevent politicisation or diversion of aid<sup>72</sup>.
- **Rebuilding relationships in post-conflict communities** – In the DRC, the Norwegian Refugee Council integrated local-level dialogue into humanitarian support, helping to rebuild trust between communities after conflict and ensuring needs assessments were inclusive and participatory<sup>73</sup>.
- **Maintaining impartial access in contested environments** – In Yemen, Sida adjusted funding based on a partner's ability to operate impartially across conflict lines, using field visits and contextual awareness to guide decisions in politically sensitive and tribal areas.

Positive contributions have been supported by partners' own well-developed CS frameworks and humanitarian principles, Sida's selection of experienced humanitarian actors through long-term agreements, and a flexible, trust-based funding model that enables adaptive responses in volatile contexts.

However, Sida does not require partners to report on changes in peace and conflict dynamics, or on how adaptations have contributed to reduced tensions or greater cohesion. Monitoring and reporting focus mainly on humanitarian needs, delivery, and access. Internal tools such as the conflict prevention marker and CS guidance are applied inconsistently. At the portfolio level, there is no formalised approach to

<sup>72</sup> Islamic Relief Worldwide, *Conflict Sensitivity and Protection in Humanitarian Programming – Pakistan Country Report*, 2023.

<sup>73</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, *Final Report: Peacebuilding Through Shelter in Eastern DRC*, 2022.

measuring or aggregating CS-related outcomes, which limits both learning and accountability.

There is no evidence of harm from Sida's humanitarian contributions, and there are examples of positive, conflict-sensitive practices contributing to trust, inclusion, and impartial access. However, these remain anecdotal and partner-led, with little systematic tracking or learning. As a result, while CS integration is conceptually strong and embedded in partner selection and humanitarian principles, its contribution to strategic, long-term outcomes such as enhanced social cohesion or reduced protection risks cannot be fully assessed.

#### 5.2.4 Iraq

The integration of CS into Sida's Iraq portfolio has contributed to positive, locally significant outcomes, particularly where partners have combined their own CS approaches with Sida's flexible and adaptive funding. The **significance** of observed changes is assessed as **medium**: CS has been embedded in several contributions in ways that have strengthened inclusion, trust, and access in highly fragmented and politically sensitive contexts, but results remain localised and inconsistently tracked. The strength of the **evidence** base is **medium**, drawing on interviews with Sida staff and implementing partners, field work, contribution-level reports, and relevant contextual analysis, with external validation for some contributions.

Examples of medium and long-term outcomes linked to CS integration include (see separate Iraq case study):

- **Enabling access to land and services through mine clearance and risk education** – UNMAS applied CS by integrating local stakeholder engagement into clearance planning, reducing disputes over land use and enabling displaced populations to return and safely access services<sup>74</sup>.
- **Strengthening independent journalism and protecting media actors** – IMS and Internews used CS-informed approaches to bolster independent media and protect journalists, including training on reporting in conflict-sensitive ways to avoid inflaming tensions.
- **Reducing violence against women in elections and building institutional safeguards** – Through collaboration with UNAMI and IHEC, Sida-supported initiatives addressed electoral violence against women, combining protection measures with institutional reforms to promote safer political participation<sup>75</sup>.
- **Improving conditions for return in stabilisation contexts** – The UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilisation (FFS) used CS principles to design infrastructure and service projects aimed at facilitating returns. However,

<sup>74</sup> UNMAS Iraq, *Annual Programme Report*, 2022. Summarises achievements in land release and explosive ordnance risk education linked to post-conflict recovery.

<sup>75</sup> United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), *Final Report on Electoral Assistance and Gender-Based Violence Mitigation*, 2023.

integration of social cohesion components was uneven, limiting broader peacebuilding impact.

Positive contributions have been enabled by the strong contextual knowledge of implementing partners, the use of participatory conflict analysis, and Sida's flexibility in adapting contribution agreements to shifting conflict dynamics. Established partner relationships and trust-based funding have supported rapid reprogramming in response to localised flare-ups or political changes.

However, the integration of CS remains uneven across the portfolio. In some cases, partners have relied on general risk management or protection frameworks without explicit CS components, limiting the ability to anticipate or mitigate conflict-related risks. Reporting systems rarely capture how adaptations influence local peace and conflict dynamics, and there are no CS-specific indicators in results frameworks. This makes it difficult to assess broader strategic-level effects or aggregate learning across contributions.

There is no evidence of direct harm caused by Sida's Iraq contributions, but the absence of systematic tracking and portfolio-level analysis means potential negative outcomes could go unnoticed. For instance, in the UNMAS contribution above, the partner noted that there might have been a risk of uneven targeting, but this could not be verified. In addition, the effect of Sweden's withdrawal from Iraq is unclear (see section 6 where this is further considered). Overall, CS integration in Iraq has produced clear, localised benefits in inclusion, access, and trust-building when projects were ongoing, but greater consistency and measurement would be needed to assess and scale these contributions across the portfolio.

### 5.2.5 Liberia

The integration of conflict sensitivity (CS) into the Liberia strategy has contributed to some positive outcomes and harm mitigation, though the extent and significance of these changes are difficult to assess conclusively. The **significance** of observed changes is assessed as **low to medium**: while there are credible examples of locally meaningful results, these are not systematically monitored or validated, and links to strategic-level objectives are not always clear. The **evidence** base is assessed as **low to medium**, drawing on internal documentation, partner interviews, and contribution-level evaluations, but with some examples relying on single sources.

Examples of medium and long-term outcomes linked to CS integration include:

- **Reducing violent conflict and strengthening local dispute resolution through conflict resolution in the informal justice system** – The Carter Center's intervention has contributed to fewer conflicts resulting in violence and strengthened the capacities of local leaders to resolve disputes and navigate the justice system, according to an independent evaluation of this intervention<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> The Carter Center, *Evaluation of the Access to Justice Project – Liberia*, 2023. Highlights conflict mitigation through informal justice system engagement.



- **Addressing corruption and promoting peaceful coexistence** – Cental’s anti-corruption work targets corruption as a driver of past conflict and supports mediation and advocacy to foster peaceful coexistence. While promising, the broader impact on systemic corruption remains unclear and undocumented<sup>77</sup>.
- **Shifting norms and fostering national dialogue on harmful practices** – According to the Embassy, UN Women’s support contributed to public commitments to end harmful traditional practices, increased national dialogue on FGM, and the announcement of a national ban by traditional leaders. These shifts are seen as incremental but meaningful, though not independently validated.
- **Supporting social cohesion through infrastructure development** – The Liberia feeder road project has reportedly fostered cohesion within and between villages connected by the roads, though these outcomes are not documented in formal reporting<sup>78</sup>.
- **Reducing land-related tensions through support to land titling** – Lantmäteriet may have contributed in a small way to resolving land disputes by clarifying legal ownership, reducing land-related conflict, though its broader influence on peace dynamics is limited<sup>79</sup>.

There is also evidence of potential negative outcomes or missed opportunities:

- **Unequal benefits in mediation processes** – ForumCiv’s initial mediation in land disputes sometimes benefited only one side, causing dissatisfaction in other communities before the approach was revised.
- **Perceived regional imbalance in partner selection** – The World Bank’s partner selection in the Public Financial Management project may have inadvertently created tensions due to perceived regional imbalances, though no direct harm was reported.

While no direct harm was reported, these examples also highlight limitations of monitoring systems, as the examples are mostly first-hand accounts from Embassy staff, rather than risks identified and reported on in internal documentation. Positive contributions have been supported by Sida’s flexible funding model, which has enabled adaptive management; the Embassy’s strong contextual knowledge

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<sup>77</sup> According to their own testimony, Cental has intervened in various situations to mitigate conflicts. This includes mediated disputes in communities and schools, advocated for legal and financial transparency, and integrated gender considerations into their work. However, this has not been included in reporting to the Embassy or in reports found on their website.

<sup>78</sup> Written submission by Ministry of Public Works to email requesting interview. A Sida travel report mention the potential for social cohesion, Travel Report. Liberia 3-10 December 2022. Maja Permerup. Africa Department

<sup>79</sup> According to a recent evaluation, there is potential for the project to have a positive impact on reducing land-related conflict if it can expedite surveys, cadastral services, and the issuance of Title Deeds, particularly in the community areas. Mid-Term Evaluation of the Project “Capacity Building For Inclusive Land Administration and Management In Liberia” (ILAMP). However, the Embassy noted that the potential for this was not as great as originally envisaged.



through regular analysis and partner dialogue; and the integration of a conflict perspective across all strategic objectives, which kept the topic high on the agenda for all Embassy staff. The presence of a dedicated programme officer for human security and access to the Human Security Helpdesk has also provided technical support.

However, barriers have limited the strategy's effectiveness. Monitoring and evaluation systems have not consistently tracked CS outcomes; the conflict prevention marker is poorly understood and inconsistently applied; partner selection has not always prioritised CS capacity; and there is limited evidence of structured learning or feedback loops between contributions and the strategy. While the Embassy has shown adaptability, changes have often been ad hoc rather than systematically informed by conflict analysis.

Overall, the Liberia strategy has contributed to positive, context-relevant outcomes and avoided serious harm in a fragile context. However, the lack of systematic monitoring and inconsistent partner capacity limit the ability to assess the full significance of these changes or to aggregate learning at the strategic level.

### 5.2.6 Myanmar

The integration of conflict sensitivity into Sida's Myanmar strategy has contributed to important positive outcomes, particularly in harm avoidance, community cohesion, and sustaining civil society under extreme pressure. The **significance** of observed changes is assessed as **medium**: results are locally meaningful and sometimes strategic in nature, but long-term sustainability remains uncertain due to the volatile and repressive context. The **evidence** base is also assessed as **medium**, drawing on multiple reliable sources, including internal documentation, partner reports, and interviews with independent experts, that are credible and triangulated, but not always validated by recipients or systematically tracked across all contributions.

Examples of medium and long-term outcomes linked to CS integration include:

- **Strengthening community cohesion through inclusive governance** - Sida-supported Community Development Committees (CDCs) have fostered trust and cooperation among diverse groups. After three years of engagement, all participants reported improved intercommunal relations, suggesting a durable impact on social cohesion<sup>80</sup>.
- **Protecting civil society and leadership capacity under repression** – Sida support to civil society networks provided emergency assistance, training, and mental health services to over 1,000 community leaders and activists, enabling them to continue their work and sustain civic space despite intensified surveillance and threats<sup>81</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> Embassy of Sweden, internal contribution documents for contributions 3 and 4. Interviews with partners 3 and 4.

<sup>81</sup> Embassy of Sweden, internal contribution documents for contributions 3 and 4. Interviews with partners 3 and 4.

- **Ensuring impartial aid delivery in a militarised environment** – Sida and partners interviewed reported development of alternative aid distribution channels, such as partner-led networks and informal community-based delivery, to bypass military-controlled systems and prevent diversion, ensuring assistance reached intended populations.

Positive results have been supported by Sida's strong contextual understanding, maintained through regular consultations with partners and use of trusted local and international sources; the prioritisation of CS capacity in partner selection; and the availability of monitoring and learning mechanisms at both the strategy and contribution levels, including independent evaluations and regular risk assessments. However, significant barriers persist. The fragmented conflict landscape, multiple armed actors, and overlapping governance systems create high risks of unintended harm. Military control over the banking system severely limits financial flexibility, complicates aid delivery, and increases operational risks. While no direct negative outcomes have been reported, physical and digital security threats to partners remain acute, and potential latent harms may be difficult to detect in the short term.

Overall, Sida's adaptive, principled approach in Myanmar has mitigated harm and sustained conflict-sensitive programming under extreme constraints. While the outcomes achieved are significant given the context, the absence of systematic aggregation and the unpredictability of the environment limit the ability to assess their durability and strategic reach.

### 5.2.7 Sustainable Economic Development (Global Strategy)

The integration of conflict sensitivity (CS) into the Sustainable Economic Development strategy has contributed to several potential positive outcomes, though results vary widely across the portfolio. The **significance** of observed changes is **low and cannot be fully assessed**, and the strength of the **evidence** base is **low** for all long-term outcomes, as they have not been documented through evaluations and some rely on single sources. Positive results are concentrated in contributions where partners have demonstrated strong contextual awareness and adaptive capacity.

Examples of potential medium and long-term outcomes linked to CS integration include:

- **Addressing land injustices and fostering constructive state–community engagement** – In interviews, the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) noted their support for communities in Kenya to document historical land injustices and submit claims to the National Land Commission, enabling redress through formal channels while maintaining engagement with government actors. In Asia, RRI's emergency fund evolved into a comprehensive rapid response system, including legal, health, and psychosocial support, helping communities respond quickly to threats and prevent escalation. In Colombia, RRI supported indigenous organisations to participate in national peace dialogues, elevating ethnic perspectives and enabling constructive state, community engagement. None of these outcomes, however, have been documented in Sida's reporting.

- **Mitigating resource-related tensions through water management** – According to Sida, the Water and Energy for Food (WE4F) initiative developed a water accounting tool to promote sustainable water use, which may have contributed to conflict mitigation in water-stressed contexts. The evaluation report, however, does not explicitly link Sida’s CS efforts to these results<sup>82</sup>.
- **Facilitating dialogue and adaptive programming in volatile contexts** – In interviews, it was noted that the Agriculture for Food Security 2030 (AgriFoSe2030) programme fostered dialogue between high-level policymakers and smallholder farmers in Kenya, resulting in land allocations for project use and improved mutual understanding. In Burkina Faso and Kenya, project teams adjusted fieldwork timelines in response to political unrest and elections, avoiding exposure to volatile situations. However, none of these outcomes were documented in reporting to Sida.

Importantly, there is no evidence of harm caused by Sida’s contributions under this strategy. However, many contributions lacked explicit conflict analyses, and CS was often addressed through general risk management rather than dedicated frameworks, limiting its reach and consistency.

Enabling factors include Sida’s flexible funding model, which has allowed adaptive responses to shifting contexts. In some contributions, partners’ established relationships and contextual expertise have supported proactive adaptation to potential risks.

Constraining factors include limited resources within the responsible unit, the absence of a structured system for requesting advice on Sida’s development perspectives (including CS), and the relatively low prioritisation of CS compared to cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and the environment, which have stronger government mandates. The lack of systematic follow-up at strategy level means positive and negative outcomes may be underreported, and opportunities for portfolio-wide learning are missed.

In summary, while CS integration within the Sustainable Economic Development strategy may have contributed to some positive, locally significant outcomes, these remain concentrated in a small number of contributions and are not systematically tracked or aggregated. Greater prioritisation, structured support, and consistent application of CS principles would be required to enhance strategic-level outcomes.

### 5.2.8 Tanzania

The integration of conflict sensitivity (CS) into the Tanzania strategy has contributed to both positive outcomes and the mitigation of negative effects. The **significance** of observed changes is assessed as **high**, with evidence that CS integration has improved local legitimacy, community acceptance, and reduced grievances in specific

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<sup>82</sup> Water and Energy for Food (WE4F): A Grand Challenge for Development. Final Evaluation Report. Final Report: June 28, 2024

interventions. However, these results have not been systematically prioritised, monitored, or aggregated at the strategy level. The **evidence** base is assessed as **medium to high**, drawing on interviews, fieldwork, and internal and external documentation.

Examples of positive medium and long-term outcomes at contribution level (see separate Tanzania case study):

- **Adapting initiatives to address local tensions** – According to interviews with the Embassy, partners and focus groups with communities in Kigoma, in the *Kigoma Joint Programme II*, programme proactively addressed tensions between refugees and host communities in the Kigoma region through adaptive management. Sida played a catalytic role by supporting the redesign of the programme for the second phase to include host communities, preventing tensions caused by refugee-only programming. Various social groups were included in planning, and transparent processes were introduced to reduce inequalities.
- **Diffusing tensions between refugee and host communities** – Through *Danish Refugee Council* support under the Kigoma Joint Programme, alternative energy solutions (briquette production and improved stoves) were introduced, with host communities supplying raw materials and refugees producing briquettes, with partners and reducing competition over firewood and easing environmental pressure. Vocational training initiatives brought refugees and host community members together, reportedly resulting in shared businesses, goods exchange, and mutual support networks.<sup>83</sup>
- **Facilitating peaceful resolution of grievances** – The *Legal and Human Rights Centre* reportedly supported communities in addressing land disputes, human rights abuses, and election-related grievances through peaceful protests, petitions to authorities, and legal processes. These potential outcomes were however not validated with the target communities themselves.
- **Reducing land-related grievances through formalisation** – In the Parallel CSO support to the *Land Tenure Support Programme* (We Effect and TAWLA) facilitated land title formalisation and community dialogues, reportedly contributing to the reduction of land disputes by an estimated 95% and improving relations between farmers and pastoralists<sup>84</sup>.

There is, however, also evidence of negative effects, further detailed in the case study report. Harm and negative effects were generally short-term and addressed by adaptations in programming to some extent, for example:

- **Delays in adapting to shrinking civic space** – Governance and rights-focused initiatives (ZLSC, Twaweza, TGNP, LHRC) were initially slow to adapt

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<sup>83</sup> Interviews with partners and FGDs with target communities.

<sup>84</sup> We Effect & TAWLA, *Final Evaluation Report – Parallel Land Tenure Support Programme*, 2024. Interviews with partners, local government officials and target communities.

strategies to restrictive government policies on civil society. Adjustments were later made by the Embassy and partners to reduce risks while retaining programme objectives<sup>85</sup>.

- **Gender-related backlash** – There were several examples where efforts to promote women’s rights and leadership met with resistance. In the *LTSP*, joint titling and land ownership by women disrupted traditional norms, causing household tensions. In *the Kigoma Joint Programme II*, women’s increased visibility in economic activities led to suspicion and accusations. These risks were mitigated through faith-based advocacy, community sensitization, and gradual normalization of women’s roles.
- **Potential harm related to mistargeting of programme participants** – Potential exclusion or misidentification of vulnerable groups was flagged in World Bank reporting for PSSN II, and mentioned by Embassy staff, but could not be verified due to lack of partner response to interview requests.

Positive contributions have been supported by partners’ strong contextual knowledge, participatory approaches such as consultative land use planning, and Sida’s flexible funding model, which enabled timely adaptations.

However, barriers have limited the strategy’s effectiveness. Staff engagement with Sida’s CS tools, such as the conflict prevention marker, was low; learning across the portfolio was informal; and CS was often viewed as secondary in a context perceived as stable. Monitoring and reporting processes did not consistently capture CS-specific outcomes, limiting opportunities for portfolio-wide learning and scaling of good practices.

Overall, the Tanzania strategy has produced positive, context-relevant outcomes and successfully mitigated harm in certain contributions. However, the absence of systematic monitoring, limited use of internal CS tools, and inconsistent prioritisation across the portfolio reduce the potential to fully assess, replicate, and scale these results.

### 5.2.9 Western Balkans and Türkiye (WBT)

The integration of conflict sensitivity (CS) into the WBT strategy has been partial and largely reactive, with examples of harm avoidance and adaptive practice concentrated in specific contributions. The **significance** of observed changes is assessed as **low**: while there is credible evidence of context-responsive action, these results are localised, not systematically prioritised, and lack a structured, strategy-wide approach. The evidence base is assessed as **low to medium**, drawing on a regional conflict analysis, individual conflict analysis for five countries, internal documentation, and interviews with Sida staff and implementing partners across the

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<sup>85</sup> Interviews with Embassy staff and partners; Moran, Greg., Clarence Kipobota and Johanna Lindgren Garcia. 2017. End of Strategy Evaluation of the Zanzibar Legal Services Centre. Sida. p.47; Evaluation of Twaweza, Sida 2021.

seven units responsible for the strategy, but outcomes have not been externally validated.

Examples of medium-term outcomes linked to CS integration include:

- **Applying conditionality to influence institutional behaviour** – Sida required the publication of a previously withheld survey as a precondition for continuing support to a public institution, helping to mitigate reputational risks and promote transparency.
- **Maintaining secure operations in restrictive contexts** – Sida engaged in ongoing security dialogues with a civil society organisation, enabling it to adapt its operating model to protect staff and beneficiaries under political pressure.
- **Mitigating risks to civic space** – Sida maintained regular dialogue with an advocacy partner on political and operational risks, allowing activities to be adapted to avoid exacerbating tensions and preserve operational capacity in a shrinking civic space.

Enabling factors included Sida's flexible funding model, which allowed adaptive responses such as conditionality in Albania<sup>86</sup> and secure operating models in Türkiye, and the presence of some partners with strong internal risk management systems. Constraining factors included the absence of a robust monitoring and evaluation system for CS, inconsistent use of Sida's conflict prevention marker, lack of clarity among some staff on how to operationalise CS, and the absence of documented learning loops. Adaptive practices were rarely captured systematically, limiting the ability to replicate or scale successful approaches across the strategy.

Overall, the WBT strategy's CS integration has produced isolated examples of harm avoidance and adaptation, but these remain reactive, fragmented, and insufficiently linked to a broader strategic framework. Evidence is anecdotal and does not allow for a clear causal link between the strategy's CS intent and any long-term outcomes.

## 5.3 CROSS-STRATEGY ANALYSIS

This section presents an analysis of the nine strategies across the sub-questions detailed in the beginning of section 5 and elaborates on Table 5.

### 5.3.1 Overview of conflict sensitivity across strategies

Across the nine strategies reviewed, a consistent evaluation finding is the diverse and uneven application of conflict sensitivity, both between strategies, but often also within the same strategy. In contexts such as Ethiopia and Myanmar, where conflict dynamics are overt and present serious risks to development and humanitarian operations, Sida demonstrated a strong commitment to embedding conflict sensitivity. This was reflected in intentional and conscious strategy adaptations, systematic

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<sup>86</sup> Swedish Embassy Tirana, *Contribution Appraisal: Public Finance Transparency and Accountability Programme*, 2022.



dialogue with partners, operational flexibility, and in some cases, conflict sensitivity being mainstreamed across the portfolio. This was also the case in Liberia and Iraq, but to a lesser degree. But in countries perceived as stable, such as Tanzania, Bolivia, or Western Balkans and Türkiye, conflict sensitivity tended to be interpreted narrowly or informally, sometimes limited to do-no-harm considerations, and often depending on partner initiative. In these contexts, Sida's own capacity to steer or monitor conflict sensitivity was limited by lack of conceptual clarity, inconsistent use of tools (especially the conflict prevention marker), and weak institutional requirements for systematic follow-up.

### **5.3.2 Enabling factors for effective integration**

Where conflict sensitivity was effectively integrated, the evaluation found several enabling factors. Sida's flexibility and trust-based relationships with partners stood out as a strength. In high-risk or politically constrained environments, this flexibility allowed for operational adjustments, discrete reprogramming, and contextually appropriate solutions. Sida's adaptive management approach, especially its responsiveness to partner feedback and openness to project changes, was often mentioned by partners as enabling them to continue or reorient their work in a conflict-sensitive manner. Another enabling factor was the presence of staff with conflict expertise or strong contextual and country familiarity. In Myanmar, for example, this was supported by systematic use of the Human Security Helpdesk, triangulation of local and international analysis, and active partner dialogue to track changing subnational dynamics. In Liberia, this was supported by expertise at the Embassy, and ongoing analysis of the country context. Where Sida staff had access to, or engaged proactively with, Sida's internal resources, such as the peace and conflict toolbox, the Helpdesk, or e-learning modules, they were more likely to ask the right questions, monitor risks, and interpret partner behaviour with empathy and understanding. This was evident, for example, in Ethiopia, where the Embassy combined bilateral and political analysis, shared intelligence across sectors, and adjusted contributions accordingly. In Liberia, the integration of conflict sensitivity across all strategic objectives in the strategy operationalisation process kept the topic high on the agenda for all Embassy staff.

### **5.3.3 Constraints and institutional gaps**

Constraints to the integration of conflict sensitivity were also consistent across strategies. One regular limitation was the weak institutionalisation of conflict sensitivity in Sida's planning and results frameworks. Some strategies mentioned conflict sensitivity explicitly, but very few embedded it in logic models, results matrices, or indicators. As a result, contributions could be conflict-sensitive in practice without being documented or assessed as such, making it difficult to measure or learn from outcomes.

Another constraint was the widespread misunderstanding or underuse of the conflict prevention marker. Many Sida officers including in Liberia, WBT, and Tanzania treated the marker as a procedural formality rather than a substantive classification. In many cases, it was applied inconsistently, not updated during contribution lifecycles, or disregarded entirely. Without clear incentives or



accountability mechanisms, the marker failed to serve its intended function as a portfolio management and monitoring tool. The marker's inability to distinguish between conflict sensitivity and thematic peacebuilding further limited its analytical value. Rarely updated or used for reflection, it lacked institutional incentives and did not yield meaningful data on conflict sensitivity integration, limiting its utility as a proxy for monitoring.

The evaluation also found that Sida's engagement with learning on conflict sensitivity was largely ad hoc. While individual projects included reflection on adaptations and conflict-related risks, this learning was seldom aggregated across portfolios or fed back into strategic decision-making. The absence of structured exchange and learning, synthesis reporting, or thematic learning products reduced the potential for institutional memory and continuous improvement.

#### **5.3.4 Contribution to medium- and long-term outcomes**

Regarding the contribution of conflict sensitivity to medium- and long-term outcomes, the evaluation found that the contribution of CS to outcomes varied in scope and relevance. Conflict sensitivity yields significant outcomes where explicit, anchored and resourced. The most apparent results are in areas of Peaceful and inclusive societies, and more generally across Human rights, democracy, rule of law, and gender equality, with partners designing programmes that avoid harm and build conditions for peaceful coexistence, trust and equitable resource distribution. But there are also examples across Environment, climate and sustainable use of natural resources.

In some cases, the integration of CS contributed to tangible, evidence-based, medium- and long-term outcomes, including supporting social cohesion, conflict mitigation, and institutional trust. These are detailed above and in section 6, and further in the case study reports for Ethiopia, Iraq and Tanzania. In Ethiopia, the evaluation found strong evidence of long-term outcomes attributable to conflict-sensitive programming. For example, joint natural resource management platforms and community peace taskforces not only addressed immediate grievances but also fostered institutional pathways for dialogue and coexistence. These contributions helped transform underlying conflict risks into cooperative arrangements, particularly in regions with a history of inter-group violence. In Myanmar, while the volatile environment limited the scope for long-term change, Sida-supported local governance committees and secure civil society networks contributed to sustained community cooperation and protection of civic space under repression. In Tanzania, although outcomes were less clear at the strategic level, certain contributions led to reduced friction between refugee and host communities, enhanced gender equity in land rights, and stronger local dispute resolution systems. These results emerged primarily where partners implemented inclusive practices and Sida was responsive to signs of tension. While the long-term peace dividends are difficult to quantify, the interventions reduced the risk of escalation and contributed to trust-building. Examples of positive long-term outcomes were also evident in Bolivia, Liberia and Iraq.

However, long-term outcomes were less evident in the WBT strategy, while some partners achieved progress in managing political risks or protecting civic space, these were -understandably- framed as conflict sensitive, but not explicitly as “peacebuilding efforts”.<sup>87</sup> In global strategies like Sustainable Economic Development or Humanitarian Aid, there were potential outcomes but these generally under-documented. Positive examples, such as market system interventions that avoided elite capture or humanitarian targeting that reduced inter-group tensions, were not reported systematically, making their strategic significance hard to assess. Interviewees also noted that this was mainly because Sida did not request them to report on good or bad examples and case studies.

### 5.3.5 Significance of changes

The significance of these changes was assessed by the evaluation as high in strategies like Ethiopia and Tanzania, especially where contributions tackled structural drivers of conflict. Improvements in trust, participation, and institutional responsiveness were particularly relevant in areas with inter-group tension. Elsewhere, changes were meaningful at local levels but limited in strategic scale or sustainability, or difficult to assess due to lack of evidence. In thematic strategies, changes remained diffuse and underreported, with the lack of explicit peace and conflict outcome tracking limiting assessment.

### 5.3.6 Factors influencing outcomes

In general, the evaluation findings suggest that conflict-sensitive programming contributes most effectively to outcomes when conflict analysis, adaptive management, and inclusive engagement are embedded from the beginning, and when Sida actively monitors and supports partner efforts. This was mostly evident at a strategy level in Ethiopia and Myanmar, and for some contributions in Liberia and Iraq. Where these elements are missing, outcomes tend to be fragmented, difficult to aggregate, and driven more by partner capacity than Sida direction, including in Bolivia, Tanzania, Humanitarian Aid, Sustainable Economic Development. Nevertheless, across all strategies, the absence of explicit conflict sensitivity indicators constrained the generation of robust, comparable data. Other enabling factors included Sida’s operational flexibility, long-term partnerships, and trust in partners. These allowed responsive adaptations in politically constrained environments.

Barriers included conceptual ambiguity, inconsistent tool use (especially the conflict prevention marker), lack of structured learning systems, staff turnover, and limited access to conflict expertise. In “stable” contexts, conflict sensitivity was often deprioritised or reduced to Do No Harm approaches. In Myanmar, persistent barriers included restricted physical access, military control over banking, and heightened

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<sup>87</sup> It is also important to keep in mind, that “peaceful and inclusive societies” as a priority area within the strategy is mainly addressed by FBA, which was not part of this evaluation. Neither was the work of the Swedish Institute in Istanbul included.

security risks for partners, requiring continuous adaptation of delivery methods and partner engagement strategies.

### 5.3.7 Underlying assumptions

Assumptions embedded in the theories of change across the nine strategies included expectations that Sida had adequate internal capacity and resources to guide conflict sensitivity and leadership and incentives were present to encourage a focus on conflict sensitivity; that Sida engaged with partners on this topic; that implementing partners were willing and able to engage with conflict dynamics; and that operational systems were in place to capture adaptations and outcomes. While these assumptions held in certain contexts, such as Ethiopia, they often failed in others. For all strategies, there were some assumptions that held and some that did not, often related to lack of resources, capacity, leadership or incentives. In more stable or politically constrained contexts like Bolivia or WBT, Sida many assumptions were not held, leading to limited or ad hoc integration. Assumptions about strategy flexibility, partner responsiveness, and institutional learning significantly influenced results.

### 5.3.8 Unintended negative outcomes and risk mitigation

For unintended negative outcomes, some contributions, for instance in Tanzania, exhibited harm risks where conflict perspectives were weak. Tanzania's tensions over facility locations and participant selection were an example, though later mitigated through programme adaptations. There was also an example of unequal targeting in Liberia and partners noted a risk of this in Iraq. There were several examples of gender-based backlash, although these were also largely short-term and efforts were made to mitigate them. In Liberia, mediation processes led to dissatisfaction among some community members at first, but the partner later adjusted their approach. Partner capacity and participatory approaches often mitigated harm even where Sida's conflict sensitivity was limited. Conversely, when contributions were conflict-sensitive, as seen in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Iraq, and Bolivia, there were also several examples where partners adapted programming to pre-empt tensions and promote trust. In Ethiopia, partners proactively adapted targeting and service delivery to reduce potential tensions between IDPs and host communities. UNICEF, UNFPA, EngenderHealth and Save the Children adjusted approaches to prevent exclusion and backlash, supported by Sida's flexible funding and ongoing dialogue, which enabled timely harm-mitigation. Targeted support and inclusive systems helped prevent escalation, with the most effective cases marked by shared analysis, operational flexibility, and ongoing engagement around risks.

### 5.3.9 Evidence reliability

The reliability of evidence varied significantly among the strategies, which reflected a combination of existing monitoring systems and whether the strategy was subject to a case study in this evaluation. In Ethiopia and Tanzania, it was judged to be of medium to high strength, supported by triangulation of interviews, strategy documents, contextual analyses, and external sources (evaluations or experts). In contrast, Humanitarian Aid, and the Sustainable Economic Development strategy presented low-strength evidence due to reliance on secondary data, limited conflict

sensitivity indicators, and a lack of structured outcome monitoring. In some strategies with weak conflict sensitivity, evidence of contributions to conflict dynamics was too limited or anecdotal to support evaluative conclusions on outcomes. Outcome claims were often based on partner narratives or qualitative perceptions rather than systematic validation.

## 6 Impact (EQ3)

This section presents findings related to **EQ 3: What is the overall impact of the integration of conflict sensitivity by Sida, Embassies of Sweden and Sida's cooperation partners? What has Sida contributed to?**

The analysis focuses on whether Sida, the Embassies of Sweden, and implementing partners have contributed to changes, positive or negative, in peace and conflict dynamics within the three case study countries, Ethiopia, Iraq and Tanzania. Impact level refers to effects that occur beyond the contribution level, they either have a larger scale effect (across multiple parts of the country) or across a specific sector. Assessing the impact of Sida's integration of the conflict sensitivity in Ethiopia, Iraq and Tanzania is difficult, given the size of the countries, complicated nature of economic, political and social dynamics, and the multitude of donors and other actors active in these countries the context. In addition, neither Sida nor partner reporting seeks to ascertain if there have been effects at the impact level. The findings are structured around five core areas of inquiry:

- Evidence of change at the impact level: The chapter examines whether there is observable change at the impact level as articulated in the theories of change developed for each case study country. This refers to both avoidance of negative impacts or harm, and positive contributions to peace (SQ3.1). we also consider whether the identified assumptions where in place (SQ3.3). The significance of these changes is also assessed (SQ3.4).
- Sida's contribution to change vs external factors: The evaluation investigates whether there is credible evidence of Sida's, the Embassies of Sweden's, and partners' contributions to changes in peace and conflict dynamics, particularly where conflict sensitivity was explicitly integrated (SQ3.5), relative contribution of other development actors and external contextual factors, including political shifts, donor coordination, and local dynamics, in shaping observed outcomes (SQ3.6).
- Unintended effects. The analysis identifies unintended effects, both positive and negative, of Sida's support, including those that emerged outside the intended scope of interventions. These include effects that were not part of the original ToC but emerged as a consequence of implementation, changes in context, or interactions with other actors. Such effects may range from strengthened relationships or unanticipated policy influence to increased tensions or new risks in specific communities (SQ3.7).

The evaluation applies three assessment scales to the findings:

- Strength of evidence (SQ3.2)
- Significance of change (SQ3.4)

- Level of Sida's contribution to impacts (SQ3.5)

These scales should be interpreted qualitatively. It was difficult to aggregate assessments at contribution level to the strategy level.

## 6.1 AVOIDING HARM AND POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO PEACE

This section introduces the impacts of Sida's conflict-sensitive development cooperation as observed in the Ethiopia, Iraq, and Tanzania case studies. In the analysis, there is a distinction between:

- **Avoidance of harm:** How Sida and its partners identified and mitigated risks of exacerbating tensions or causing unintended negative effects at the level of peace and conflict dynamics through their interventions.
- **Positive contributions to peace:** How Sida-supported contributions actively addressed conflict drivers, strengthened social cohesion, and promoted inclusive and peaceful societies.

The analysis draws on evidence from strategy documents, contribution-level evaluations, and interviews with Sida staff, partners, and affected communities. They assess both the significance of observed changes and Sida's contribution to those changes, using a common assessment scale to ensure comparability across contexts. Overall, most of the evidence that was found during the evaluation was of short-term, localised positive effects. However, there was some evidence of maximising opportunities for peace and social cohesion at the impact level across the case study countries.

### 6.1.1 Ethiopia

While Sida's integration of conflict sensitivity in Ethiopia has contributed to a diverse range of positive changes, the overall level of impact is best understood as meaningful but largely localised. These changes were observed across multiple sectors and regions, supported by credible evidence (**medium strength of evidence**) from partners and target communities, and triangulated by programme documentation and sometimes external sources<sup>88</sup>.

While not all contributions explicitly target peacebuilding outcomes, the widespread integration of conflict sensitivity has increased the conflict-responsiveness of the strategy as a whole. There is credible evidence that some interventions, particularly those focused on community-led dialogue, inclusive

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<sup>88</sup> Independent evaluation reports reviewed include: Annex 12. Summarised Summative Evaluation Report of West Arsi Project; Annex 4 Peace Programme Evaluation Report 2023-01-27 (003); Annex 9. Final Evaluation Report - SD Project; Ethiopia Summative Evaluation - Final Report; Evaluation of Country Programme Support to UNFPA Unicef and UN Women\_Niras 2022\_Final report; Evaluation-OHCHR-Programme-Ethiopia-with Mgnt Response.

service delivery, and adaptive programming, are likely to have helped reduce localized violence, improve trust among divided groups, and enhance responsiveness to displacement and ethnic tensions. These effects were complemented by contributions that strengthened inclusive governance, gender-responsive service delivery, and environmental cooperation, potentially creating enabling conditions for longer-term stability. Taken together, these interventions are reported to have helped avoid harm and maximised opportunities for peace and social cohesion. One particularly strong example is presented in Box 1.

### Box 1: Contribution Story – Community-led Rehabilitation and Conflict Prevention in Abijata–Shalla

**Context:** In Ethiopia’s Abijata–Shalla National Park, long-standing tensions over land and forest use had created chronic conflict between communities and park authorities. Years of degradation, limited community participation, and mistrust had made resource management contentious. Sida funded Farm Africa and local partners to implement a conflict-sensitive approach centred on participatory land demarcation, joint planning, and community-led rehabilitation.

**Observed changes:** Conflict dynamics in the park visibly improved. Six inclusive cooperatives – bringing together different ethnic groups, returnees, IDPs and refugees – collectively rehabilitated over **2,850 hectares** of degraded land. Community members reported reduced tensions and more constructive relations with park authorities. Livelihood diversification contributed to this shift: young men previously engaged in illegal tree-cutting now work in eco-tourism, honey and forest coffee enterprises. One cooperative, chaired by a woman refugee, earned **1.5 million birr**, demonstrating how shared resource management can support peaceful coexistence. Similar approaches also resolved disputes between host communities and refugees over irrigable land in the Somali region.

**Significance for communities:** The intervention strengthened social cohesion, enhanced joint ownership of shared resources, and increased economic opportunities. Cooperative bylaws and participatory governance mechanisms helped ensure fair benefit-sharing and reduced incentives for environmentally harmful practices. Improved trust between communities and park authorities contributed to a more stable environment for resource use and local development.

**Sida’s specific contribution:** High. Sida’s flexible funding and regular dialogue enabled partners to adapt to shifting conflict dynamics and maintain operations in volatile settings. Sida played a central role in integrating a dedicated outcome on resource-based conflict, promoting participatory land management and inclusive cooperative structures. Partners highlighted Sida’s emphasis on conflict sensitivity, gender inclusion, and adaptive management as key enablers of success.

**Other potential influencing factors:** Support from local and regional government authorities was essential for legitimising cooperative structures. Strong community ownership, long-standing local NGO presence, and consortium partners experienced in conflict resolution also shaped outcomes. Political instability posed risks but was mitigated through continuous conflict monitoring and adaptive programming.

**Strength of evidence:** High. Evidence is supported by partner interviews, community feedback, programme monitoring data, and independent evaluations documenting reduced conflict incidents, improved park–community relations, and verified land rehabilitation outcomes.

Other examples included:

#### Avoidance of harm

Across the contributions reviewed, Sida staff and implementers (including downstream implementers) demonstrated awareness of potential negative impacts of



their work and were able to point to related mitigation strategies (e.g. managing community expectations around speed of results from early warning systems, need for inclusive selection of participants in dialogue processes etc.). In most cases, no evidence was identified that these risks had come to fruition. In select instances, particularly for projects relating to natural resource management, there was some evidence that territorial disputes may have flared up subsequent to project interventions. This was attributed in part to the relatively small scale of project areas compared to the total size of disputed areas. Nevertheless, there is significant evidence of steps taken to mitigate negative impacts, Examples include:

- **UNICEF and UNFPA:** These partners proactively adjusted targeting strategies to avoid tensions between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities. UNICEF aimed to ensure equitable inclusion in cash transfer programmes and used local actors to verify fairness when access was restricted. UNFPA deployed women-led local NGOs to deliver services in hard-to-reach areas, potentially reducing risks of exclusion and backlash.
- **EngenderHealth and Save the Children:** These partners modified service delivery and distribution plans to help prevent exclusion and backlash. Save the Children prioritised under-five children during a supply shortage to avoid community resentment, while EngenderHealth integrated mental health support and adapted outreach in response to rising tensions in Amhara.

Sida's flexible funding and open dialogue with partners helped enable real-time adaptations that are reported to have prevented harm and maintained trust in fragile settings. This adaptability was frequently cited by partners as a distinctive strength of Sida's engagement.

#### **Positive contributions to peace**

- **PMU and Life & Peace Institute:** Sida's support to PMU and Life & Peace Institute (LPI) is reported to have strengthened local peace infrastructure and inter-group dialogue. PMU's Peace Taskforces mediated disputes over land, religion, and youth violence, reportedly preventing escalation and fostering interfaith cooperation. LPI's work in Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz enabled structured dialogues and joint livelihood initiatives that may have helped reduce youth violence and improve ethnic relations. Evidence from partner reporting and community feedback indicates these changes contributed to more resilient local governance structures.
- **HoAREC:** In Jama Urgi, HoAREC's participatory mapping and reforestation efforts aimed to improve inter-kebele relations and reduced mistrust. These interventions reportedly fostered reconciliation and strengthened local governance.
- **UNFPA and EngenderHealth:** Sida-supported GBV prevention and response services empowered women and girls to access justice and support. Community dialogues and male engagement initiatives helped shift harmful norms and fostered grassroots leadership in peacebuilding. Peer groups and youth forums promoted inclusion and reduced acceptance of violence. These gender-focused

contributions also intersected with broader peacebuilding objectives by tackling drivers of violence linked to exclusion and inequality.

The **significance of these changes in Ethiopia as a whole is assessed as medium to moderately high** in certain thematic areas. Sida's contributions addressed key conflict drivers, such as exclusion, resource competition, and gender-based violence, and supported inclusive, locally owned solutions. While impacts were often localised, in some cases these effects extended beyond the immediate project area, influencing neighbouring communities and local administrative practices.

**Sida's contribution to impact is assessed as medium, with pockets of higher contribution** where Sida's role was catalytic. Sida's flexible funding, adaptive management, and emphasis on conflict sensitivity enabled partners to respond effectively to evolving risks, which was identified as a key assumption for long-term outcomes and impact. Sida's role was particularly important in supporting civil society and peacebuilding actors, and in promoting inclusive governance and environmental cooperation. In several cases, Sida's long-term engagement was viewed by partners as essential to sustaining conflict-sensitive practices. There were only partial realisation of some of the other key assumptions identified in the ToC. Donor coordination reinforced results. However, the absence of systematic conflict sensitivity indicators and limited aggregation of learning constrained the potential for broader strategic influence. Access constraints also required remote monitoring, meaning that Embassy staff could not visit contributions themselves. In addition, assumptions around government commitment and political willingness were mixed, constraining Sida's influence on national processes and systemic change. While the cessation of hostilities agreement held, ongoing conflicts in Amhara and Oromia persisted.

Key caveats and considerations are as follow. These results should not be attributed solely to Sweden's development cooperation, but rather to Sida's contributions alongside national actors, other donors, and broader societal dynamics. Evidence of impact is strongest at the local level, especially where peacebuilding or conflict sensitivity were explicit priorities, with more limited influence observable at national or systemic levels. Impact-level change is also not consistently measured, creating gaps between qualitative evidence and formal results frameworks. Finally, while diverse programme outcomes are difficult to aggregate into a clear strategic picture, there are indications of a coherent approach, particularly in how programming adapted to an evolving conflict context. See separate country case study.

### 6.1.2 Iraq

Sida's integration of conflict sensitivity in Iraq has contributed to a range of locally meaningful impacts, especially in areas such as media pluralism, electoral integrity, and post-conflict recovery. While not all contributions explicitly targeted peacebuilding, many applied conflict-sensitive approaches that strengthened inclusion, reduced risks, and supported trust-building in a politically volatile context. Overall, the level of impact is assessed as **modest**, with most changes observed at local or sectoral levels rather than nation-wide. The evidence presented credible

(**medium strength of evidence**), supported by interviews with Sida, partners, community members and FGDs with target communities, and triangulated by programme documentation and external mid-term and final evaluations.

Examples include:

#### **Avoidance of harm**

- **IMS and Internews:** These partners implemented robust Do No Harm protocols, including journalist safety measures, gender-sensitive reporting, and conflict risk assessments. This helped prevent backlash and protected media actors in a polarised environment. According to these partners, Sida's flexible funding and trust-based partnerships, with Sida being their main or only funding source, contributed to these organisations being able to adapt to emerging risks. Journalists that benefitted from the project, for example, made investigative articles available and said those would not have been produced without the project.
- **UNMAS:** UNMAS integrated conflict risk analysis into its prioritisation of land clearance and supported national NGOs in professionalising mine action. While Sida had limited influence over de-mining area priorities and selection, the programme included risk education and safety protocols to reduce harm from explosive remnants.
- **UNAMI/IHEC:** Sida-supported electoral assistance included violence mitigation strategies, women's protection measures, and institutional safeguards. According to partners and Sida, these efforts helped reduce political tensions and protected vulnerable groups during elections. However, further validation with external sources would be required to assess Sida's specific contribution and the extent to which tensions were reduced.

Although Sida's ability to influence pooled funds was constrained, its emphasis on conflict sensitivity in partner dialogue and contribution design helped avoid reputational and operational risks.

#### **Positive contributions to peace**

- **IMS and Internews:** Sida's support enabled these organisations to promote pluralistic journalism, protect journalists under threat, and amplify marginalised voices. According to interviewees, especially journalists that participated in the activities, this work contributed to resilience against disinformation and strengthened civic trust in a fragile media landscape, even if this could not be verified independently at a higher level, e.g. with surveys or other perception studies.
- **UNAMI/IHEC:** Sida's contributions helped institutionalise women's participation in electoral processes and supported capacity-building for inclusive governance. These efforts reportedly contributed to reducing electoral violence and enhancing democratic legitimacy, according to evaluations and interviewees.
- **FFS and UNMAS:** Contributions to the UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilisation (FFS) and UNMAS supported return and reintegration, mine clearance, and risk education. These interventions enabled access to land and services, contributed to

social cohesion, and contributed to local recovery in post-ISIS areas, according to evaluations, and interviews with beneficiaries.

The **significance of change in Iraq is assessed as medium**. Sida's integration of conflict sensitivity led to tangible benefits in selected contributions, especially in stabilisation, independent media, and climate-sensitive livelihoods, through embedding risk analysis and Do No Harm principles into contribution appraisal, design, and delivery. These changes strengthened partner capacity to work in politically sensitive environments and, in some cases, helped prevent escalation of local tensions (e.g., inclusive stabilisation programming and journalist protection measures). But uneven institutionalisation of conflict analysis, communication gaps with non-beneficiaries, and Sida's early withdrawal reduced the depth and sustainability of these changes at the portfolio level. Most contributions were localized and not scaled nationally, and the early termination of Sida's strategy in late 2024 curtailed the potential for sustained influence. While there were important changes in select domains, particularly media and electoral integrity, its overall influence on national peacebuilding was necessarily limited.

Sida's **contribution to impact is assessed as medium**. Sida's funding enabled high-quality, conflict-sensitive contributions, particularly in politically sensitive areas. Sida was seen as a flexible and responsive donor, especially in its support to civil society and media actors. However, several key assumptions identified in the ToC did not hold. The lack of in-country presence limited strategic recalibration, and weak institutionalisation of learning reduced the potential for broader impact. Sida's funding represented only 2.7% of total ODA to Iraq, which inherently constrained its ability to shape broader conflict dynamics or drive systemic transformation. Moreover, external factors played a dominant role in shaping both the opportunities and constraints of Sida's engagement. Iraq's deep structural conflict dynamics, political volatility, constrained state legitimacy, and donor coordination challenges all influenced the feasibility and effectiveness of interventions. In some cases, donor exits, including Sida's own, introduced risks of reversals, undermining the sustainability of gains made in earlier phases.

Despite limitations, Sida's work in Iraq showed that adaptive and conflict-sensitive programming, when combined with trusted partnerships, can mitigate harm and foster local conditions for peace and stability, even in difficult (political) environments. Box2 includes a contribution story for Sida's support to IMS.

#### Box 2: Contribution Story – Independent Media and Social Cohesion in Iraq

**Contribution:** Independent Media Development Programme in Iraq (2023–2026)

**Context:** Iraq's media landscape is shaped by deep political fragmentation, sectarian divides, and widespread misinformation. Most media outlets are politically affiliated, contributing to biased reporting and undermining public trust. Independent and investigative journalism faces high security risks, legal constraints, and financial instability. Women journalists are particularly vulnerable to sexist hate speech and physical violence, often leading to their withdrawal from public discourse. In this context, IMS launched a dedicated media development programme with Sida support, aiming to strengthen independent media and promote conflict-sensitive journalism.

**Observed changes:** According to interviewees, especially journalists trained and supported through the contribution, the programme contributed to strengthening Iraq's independent media sector at a time when independent and investigative journalism is under threat and shrinking in Iraq. IMS combined a Do-No-Harm approach with targeted risk mitigation, providing both physical and digital security, legal assistance, and psychosocial support to journalists. Through its local partners, especially Al-Alam Al-Jadeed and Al-Manassa Media, IMS promoted ethical, gender-responsive, and conflict-sensitive reporting in an environment negatively affected by sectarian divides and widespread misinformation. These media outlets have produced investigative reports on corruption, environment, and minority rights, maintaining conflict-sensitive editorial standards to avoid inflammatory language and protect sources. Journalists made some of their articles available to the evaluators and said they would not have been produced without the project. The focus on women journalists and harassment prevention has helped sustain female participation in public discourse, despite pervasive online hate speech and physical threats. The contribution's impact is visible at the local and sectoral level: independent journalism has remained operational and credible in several governorates despite increasing repression, contributing to more balanced public debate and trust among audiences.

**Significance of change:** Medium. The contribution strengthened independent media practices and resilience against disinformation in a fragile context. Journalists gave examples of articles of investigative journalism and explained that those would not have been produced without the training and the material support provided through the project.

**Sida's contribution:** High. Sida's funding (Sek 30.5 million) and partnership approach were catalytic in sustaining conflict-sensitive, independent journalism otherwise unlikely to persist. Beneficiaries met and interviewed described Sida's engagement as decisive for maintaining their independence and professional standards amid shrinking funding and safety risks. The end of the funding had negative consequences for funded partners though and was explained in detail by previous implementing partners.

**Strength of evidence:** Medium. It is based on document review and interviews with IMS and partner media in Baghdad and Erbil. Examples of journalistic work were reviewed. However, the final assessment at the highest level, whether and how this has contributed to overall better journalism in Iraq, to strengthen resilience, increased trust in media or in reduction of misinformation was not traceable in a systematic way. It can only be confirmed up to the output level (e.g. for the spread of journalistic work), but not whether and how it was received or has changed attitudes or trust levels.

See separate country case study.

### 6.1.3 Tanzania

Sida's conflict-sensitive development cooperation in Tanzania has contributed to modest but meaningful local-level impacts, particularly in areas such as refugee-host community relations and land tenure and natural resource management, covering both avoidance of harm and maximising positive impacts on peace and conflict dynamics. These changes were observed across multiple sectors and regions, supported by credible evidence (medium strength of evidence) from interviews with the Embassy, partners, government officials, community members and FGDs with target communities, and triangulated through programme documentation, evaluations and in some cases, external sources.

#### Supporting refugee-host community relations in the Kigoma region

The impact of the integration of the conflict perspective in the Kigoma Joint Programme II is that:

- The programme has prevented and or mitigated negative impacts in the locations of implementation. In general, the programme foresaw and prevented, or responded to and mitigated harm/tensions/ conflict that were experienced in the community as part of programme implementation. These were largely short-term and overcome (participant selection processes for training, location of aggregation centre). However, the change in women's roles and gender relations in the community, which did lead to some backlash, is a complex social process that will continue to be an important consideration for programming, despite some improvements.
- It has maximised positive impacts on peace and conflict dynamics in the region by: seeking to address some of the root causes of conflict (alternative sources to firewood as an energy source, lack of/unequal access to livelihood opportunities), and fostering a shared, participative approach to common challenges that encourage refugee-host communities, and intra-host communities to work together to find shared solutions rather than to compete with each other.

This is evidence by interviews with the Embassy, partners, government officials and community members and focus groups with target communities in Kigoma, and validated by programme documentation and observed adaptations and community feedback mechanisms. Through its support for this programme, Sida contributed to alleviating political and economic inequality between refugees and host communities, and resource disputes as potential conflict drivers in the region through its support of the KJP. This support has consisted of both flexible funding and as a responsive and constructive donor that appreciates the importance of conflict sensitive and peacebuilding programming, even in other themes/sectors of programming. The influx of refugees from neighbouring Burundi and DRC is a contentious issue in Tanzania. By supporting initiatives to address tensions and to improve peace between refugee and host communities in the Kigoma region, is not only beneficial for this region but ensures that disputes in this region do not escalate to national level tensions over the presence of refugees in Tanzania.

#### **Land rights and natural resource governance:**

Sida supported several contributions that worked on land disputes as a conflict driver from various entry points across the country, together they had the potential for impact level change to reduce violence related to land disputes and institutionalise these conflicts with them being resolved by peaceful means. This included the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), which provided legal assistance and promoted rights-based land governance; and the Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organizations Forum (PINGOs) Forum, which advocated for pastoralist and hunter-gatherer communities. The strongest example is the Parallel CSO support (We Effect) to the Land Tenure Support Programme, which is detailed in the contribution story in the box below. However, the Tanzanian government initiative that they were



structured around, the land formalisation process, was discontinued and these initiatives have therefore also lost momentum.

### Box 3: Contribution story: Parallel CSO support to the land tenure support programme (LTSP)

**Context:** In Tanzania, disputes between farmers and pastoralists, gender-based exclusion in land ownership, and unresolved village boundaries have historically led to conflict. The government's formal land tenure programme (LTSP) aimed to address these issues but risked reinforcing exclusion and triggering disputes if not implemented sensitively. Sida responded by funding a parallel CSO-led initiative through We Effect and TAWLA to complement and mitigate risks associated with the state-led LTSP. TAWLA and We Effect used participatory legal infrastructure, community education, and strategic exclusion to foster change. Village bylaws were co-developed with communities and distributed to paralegals and councils. Faith leaders were engaged to shift attitudes on gender equity. Land use zoning involved all social groups, women, elders, youth, farmers, and pastoralists, ensuring inclusive planning. Villages with unresolved boundary disputes were excluded to prevent conflict escalation.

**Observed changes:** Land disputes in Mlimba district dropped by significantly following the formalisation of land rights and legal literacy efforts. Itongowa, tribunal caseloads dropped by 95%, according to Ward Tribunal Chairmen, with most remaining cases involving inheritance or marriage. Before the intervention, local tribunals handled up to 20 land cases daily. This is supported by an article published in IIED that noted Reports of land-related conflicts have decreased in the Kisarawe, Kilombero and Ulanga districts, as villagers and local government actors now better understand the rules governing land and avenues for resolution.<sup>89</sup> Participatory land use zoning also improved relations between farmers and pastoralists, transforming previously hostile dynamics into peaceful coexistence, something they themselves noted in interviews.

**Significance for communities:** The intervention fostered legal empowerment, social cohesion, and economic opportunity. Communities gained tools to resolve disputes fairly and peacefully. Women's land rights were promoted through faith-based advocacy, shifting community norms and reducing gender-based exclusion. Economic empowerment followed land formalisation, with increased land value and access to credit, especially for women and youth, according to interviewees.

**Sida's specific contribution:** High. Sida's funding enabled We Effect and TAWLA to implement conflict-sensitive programming, including participatory legal infrastructure, gender-sensitive advocacy, and strategic exclusion of high-risk villages. According to the Embassy, this support was added both to address potential negative effects of the LTSP such as further marginalisation of certain groups, and because CSOs were better placed to foster/implement community level resolution of land disputes. Sida's flexible funding modality supported institutional capacity building and adaptive management. Sida was also instrumental in drawing attention to gender-related risks.

**Other potential influencing factors:** Community-level leadership and long-standing CSO presence played a role in fostering trust and facilitating change. Religious leaders and local government authorities were key actors in promoting acceptance and enforcing bylaws. External factors included

<sup>89</sup> Philipine Sutz, Amaelle Seigneret, and Mary Richard. August 2019. How local rules can promote inclusive land governance, in International Institute for Environment and Development: London. p.3.



the abandonment of the land formalisation process by the Tanzanian government, which undermines sustainability.

**Strength of evidence:** High. It is based on triangulated sources including field interviews with community champions, paralegals, and local authorities in Mlimba; focus groups and direct beneficiary feedback during fieldwork conducted between February and June 2025; partner reports from TAWLA and We Effect; external publications such as IIED's report on inclusive land governance; Sida internal documents including appraisal memos.

The **significance of change across Tanzania is assessed** as medium. Sida's funding and support to contributions targeting conflict drivers contributed positively to peace and social cohesion on those issues. These impacts were important for peace and conflict dynamics in the given communities and thematic area. However, the overall level of impact remains limited in scale and strategic significance. There is limited evidence of positive effects on peace and conflict dynamics at the national or strategy objective level.

Sida's **contribution to impact is assessed as medium**. Sida's funding and support to contributions targeting conflict drivers contributed positively to peace and social cohesion on those issues, with many of the assumptions identified in place. Sida's contribution was particularly important for CSOs that appreciated Sida's funding modality that enabled them to build-up institutional capacity, including in relation to conflict sensitivity, as well as implement projects. Sida's partnership style was also appreciated in the multi-donor funds where Sida was viewed as more flexible and willing to adapt contributions as a result of conflict sensitivity concerns, and to draw attention to gender-related risks. Sida was often also a larger/the largest donor on specific themes such as gender equality and human rights. Nevertheless, while Sida is considered a relatively influential donor in Tanzania, it is still one of many actors operating in a complex development landscape. This makes detailing the extent of Sida's contribution difficult, and the sustainability of observed changes is uncertain, particularly in the absence of formal systems for tracking conflict sensitivity outcomes over time. Moreover, external factors, including the ongoing influx of refugees from Burundi and the DRC, land pressure, and the government's abandonment of the land formalisation process, and political-economic dynamics, played a significant role in shaping both risks and outcomes.

See separate country case study.

#### 6.1.4 Cross-case analysis

In these examples, there are several factors/trends that can be discerned that are important for positive contributions to peace.

##### Topic of the contribution

The topic of the contribution was found to be a determinant in whether positive effects occurred:

- First, those that fell under the strategic objective area of “inclusive and peaceful societies” and therefore had an explicit peacebuilding goal were understandably more likely to produce positive effects. In Ethiopia, support to local peace structures, such as taskforces, interfaith platforms, and reconciliation groups facilitated the resolution of land and religious disputes. Whilst local dialogue and

complaints mechanisms ensured that emerging conflicts were addressed early and did not evolve into larger conflicts.

- Second, if the contribution targeted a conflict catalyst, namely an issue that may be local but has the capacity to trigger a larger conflict or tensions. For example, the influx of refugees from neighbouring Burundi and DRC is a contentious issue in Tanzania. By supporting initiatives to address disputes over natural resources (e.g. access to water and firewood) and to improve peace between refugee and host communities in the Kigoma region, Sida support was not only beneficial for this region but ensured that disputes in this region do not escalate to national level tensions over the presence of refugees in Tanzania.
- Third, there is evidence that contributions that involve cross-group management of resources and service delivery such as health and natural resources, can increase trust-building and social cohesion as individuals experience that leaders from the ‘other’ group can be relied on to deliver services to themselves and other community members. For example, joint resource management in the Farm Africa and HoAREC contributions in Ethiopia reduced inter-group conflict. A jointly managed cooperative under the Joint Kigoma Programme II in Tanzania also contributed to increased trust between previously conflictual farming communities.

### **Scale of contribution and choice of partner**

The contribution is more likely to influence effects beyond the local level if the scale of the contribution itself is large or the nature of the contribution has a wider reach. In Iraq, Sida supported a large multi-donor UNDP fund to reintegrate ISIS returnees that represented more than 1 billion USD in funding. Due to the sheer size of the fund, national high-level impact is more likely. On the other hand, some contributions may be more impactful due to their reach. Sida support to independent media organisations (IMS and Internews) has the potential to mitigate conflict and foster social cohesion through enabling critical and high-quality, investigative, non-discriminatory journalism that could reach all Iraqis. This is particularly important in a polarised media landscape that tends to feed rather than alleviate existing cleavages and conflict dynamics.

This is connected to the choice of partner. Larger partners, such as UN agencies or international NGOs, often have the institutional capacity, visibility, and political leverage to operate in complex environments. In contrast, smaller local partners often have deeper contextual knowledge, stronger community relationships, and a more intuitive grasp of conflict sensitivity. IMS and Internews, as well as local and regional partners in Ethiopia and Tanzania (e.g. Farm Africa and Twaweza) stood for some of the most impactful contributions. These partners embedded context analysis and adaptive practices into their programming. These impacts were, however, often much more localised.

### **Complementary contributions/efforts maximise effects at scale**

It is not clear to what degree this was intentional programming, but there are several examples where smaller efforts or contributions addressing a conflict driver, aggregated to a larger effect. In Tanzania, Sida supported several contributions

(LTSP, CSO Parallel support to LTSP, LHRC) that worked on land disputes as a conflict driver from various entry points across the country, together they had the potential for impact level change to reduce violence related to land disputes, institutionalise these conflicts with them being resolved by peaceful means, and improve gender dynamics. Farm Africa's work on various small rangeland projects in Ethiopia helped reduce conflict and promote reconciliation at the community level across multiple geographical areas.

## 6.2 NEGATIVE IMPACTS OR HARM

Negative impacts or harm refer to the unintended adverse effects that development interventions may have on individuals, groups, or communities, particularly in fragile or conflict-affected settings. These impacts can manifest in various ways, such as exacerbating existing tensions, reinforcing inequalities, triggering backlash against marginalized groups, or undermining trust and social cohesion. The concept is closely tied to the "Do No Harm" principle, which emphasizes the importance of designing and implementing interventions in ways that avoid contributing to conflict or causing unintended damage. Harm can occur not only through direct actions but also through omissions or misjudgements, such as failing to account for local power dynamics or neglecting to include marginalized voices. Conflict-sensitive approaches aim to anticipate and mitigate such risks by embedding continuous context analysis, inclusive planning, and adaptive management into all stages of programming. There were several short-term negative effects (see section 5 and above). There were also several areas where there was a risk that Sida could contribute to negative effects at the impact level, in terms of exacerbating tensions at a larger scale. However, none of these harms were observed directly.

Where risks of negative effects were identified, they were generally addressed, or at least efforts were made to address them, during the lifecycle of specific contributions. For example, in Ethiopia, the Embassy and its partners recognized the risk that resource transfers, such as cash assistance, could fuel resentment between internally displaced persons and host communities. To mitigate this, they implemented transparent targeting processes and engaged local actors in decision-making to ensure fairness and reduce tensions. In Tanzania, efforts to promote gender equality occasionally led to unintended backlash, such as increased harassment or social isolation of women. These risks were largely identified and addressed through community engagement and conflict sensitivity training for implementing partners, but we cannot assess how successful these efforts were in the long term.

There are several areas that have **the potential for leading to negative effects at the impact level.**

### 6.2.1 Gender equality-targeted and mainstreamed interventions and harm

As noted above, there were examples of gender-related backlash. Promoting gender equality is a key focus of Swedish development assistance and is pursued via both gender-targeted and gender-mainstreamed contributions. Across the case study countries working on advancing gender equality has sometimes resulted in negative effects and comes with risks. In Tanzania it is more challenging in rural areas where

there are strong patriarchal structures. In Iraq many are shying away from gender-related projects after the General Secretariat for the Council of Ministers<sup>90</sup>, issued a memo advising against the use of the term "gender" in 2023. Although the memo did not explicitly ban gender-related projects it has contributed to raising the stakes for those engaging in work on this topic.

Negative effects in relation to gender equality work were noted in a number of contributions. For instance, in Sida-supported contributions in Tanzania that empowered women to claim their rights to land ownership, access to agricultural produce, and political participation, individual women often experienced short-term negative effects such as isolation in the community, community backlash, and harassment. Even if partners made efforts to mitigate these effects, the evaluation cannot verify that they do not persist, for instance in the KJP II programme. Similar experiences were reported in Ethiopia. In Sida-supported natural resource management projects, inclusive planning processes involving women helped mitigate some gender-related tensions, showing that risks could be reduced when addressed proactively.

It is not unusual for development assistance dedicated to promoting gender equality to include careful weighing of options, as well as trade-offs between the potential goals and gains of the contribution with the potential for harm.<sup>91</sup> To some degree short-term negatives experienced by individuals, is accepted on the premise that it will lead to long term gains in gender equality and transformative results in gender dynamics. In many of the incidences mentioned in the case study countries, adaptations were made to the contribution to address these circumstances. For instance, the involvement of community and faith leaders in promoting the acceptance of women's land ownership. Nevertheless, these activities were often reactive rather than proactive or preventive. Though many of Sida's contributions noted the associated risks of gender equality-advancing work, there was limited evidence of preventative measures to avoid or minimise these negative effects, i.e. engaging with community leaders from the outset of the contribution, consciously involving men in such efforts, or complementarity programming for livelihoods opportunities. Ethiopia yielded strong examples where partners integrated women's participation and community dialogue into project design, for instance in peacebuilding and natural resource management initiatives.

### 6.2.2 Potential risk of harm to Sida agreement and implementing partners

There is an inherent potential for harm to Sida's agreement and downstream implementing partners, particularly civil society organisations (CSOs), arising from

<sup>90</sup> <https://cabinet.iq/en>

<sup>91</sup> Zicherman, N., with Khan, A., Street, A., Heyer, H., & Chevreau, O. 2011. Applying conflict sensitivity in emergency response: Current practice and ways forward (HPN Paper 70). London: ODI. Barandun, P. & Joos, Y. 2004. *Gender- and conflict-sensitive program management*. Bern: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Garred, Michelle, Charlotte Booth and Kiely Barnard-Webster with major contributions from Nicole Goddard, Ola Saleh, Muzhda Azeez and Katarina Carlberg. 2018. 'Do No Harm & Gender.' Guidance Note. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.

the contexts in which they operate. These risks relate to physical, psychological, and digital security, and can be driven by political, legal, and social pressures from incumbent governments, non-state armed actors, or communities. They are shaped by the broader global trend of shrinking civic space, which was observed in all three case study countries.

The degree and nature of risk vary between countries. For example, in Ethiopia, new administrative requirements in 2024 reportedly led to the closure of more than 1,500 CSOs, while in Iraq, civil society actors have faced harassment, threats, and in some cases lethal violence. In Tanzania, some Sida-funded partners have experienced political targeting or censorship.

Sida's role is not to manage or determine these political environments, but rather to work with partners to anticipate and mitigate potential harms where possible. In line with its conflict sensitivity approach, Sida can engage in open dialogue with partners about context-specific risks, agree on realistic risk tolerance levels, and support practical measures to reduce exposure, recognising that ultimate responsibility for political and legal restrictions lies with the host state.

Across the case study countries, there is evidence that Sida's flexibility and trust-based relationships enabled partners to adapt when risks emerged, such as adjusting operations in Ethiopia such as relocating activities from insecure areas, changing delivery methods, or altering targeting to reduce tensions and protect staff and community members. However, across the board, risk engagement was sometimes ad hoc and partner-led, with limited documentation or portfolio-wide systems for tracking and responding to such risks.

### **6.2.3 Potential for risk of negative distribution effects due to participation selection processes**

In conflict-affected and in more stable settings, who receives what, when, and how can be just as important as the content of the intervention itself. If aid is perceived to disproportionately benefit one ethnic, political, or geographic group over another, it can undermine trust, fuel grievances, and reinforce divisions. Conversely, equitable and transparent distribution can help build social cohesion, foster inclusion, and support peacebuilding. Whilst the evaluation cannot confirm negative distribution effects, there were some examples of potential for such harm.

In Tanzania and Iraq, there were examples of contributions that had the potential to strengthen social tensions and political divisions. In Tanzania, a contribution on livelihood training and opportunities was adapted following negative feedback from the community via complaint boxes and community meetings that the original participant selection process was perceived to favour those with personal links to community leaders according to partner documentation and interviews with staff. To address this perception, the UN adapted the process so that it was no longer based on referrals from community leaders but instead involved a public announcement and application process that was open to all.

In Iraq, a Sida-partner (UNMAS) noted that they were concerned with the selection process for the contribution as it was an Iraqi government agency that decided who participated and in what order. It was not possible to speak with non-

recipients as part of fieldwork, so it is not possible to verify whether this contribution contributed to the exclusion of a group or reinforced existing political or social inequalities.

Whereas in Ethiopia, this risk was recognised by Sida and partners from the outset and took steps to implement transparent targeting processes.

These examples illustrate the potential to exacerbate tensions even in a so-called ‘stable’ context as Tanzania and the importance of feedback mechanisms and engagement with both recipients and non-recipients of a contribution.

#### 6.2.4 Potential for negative effects due to nature of the exit from Iraq

In the end of 2024, Sida’s funding to contributions in Iraq ended prematurely because of the Swedish government decision to exit development cooperation with Iraq. Many contributions had been contracted until 2026 and the premature ending caused a disruption with potentially negative effects, because the exit was not well-communicated and managed and because some implementing partners decided to “blame” Sida for the exit. The potentially negative effects include:

- The exit from the UNDP FFS (especially in combination with USAID’s exit) likely increases the risk of the return of ISIS as a relevant military force, if no sufficient reintegration and rehabilitation measures for returnees are available.
- The communication for Sweden’s exit from development cooperation was either not well-communicated or not well-understood, neither by implementing partners, nor by beneficiaries. Some previous implementing partners were unwilling to even participate in the evaluation and only seven out of 12 contributions could be evaluated because of that.
- An example of harm potentially being done includes the FAO project in Iraq that was reviewed: during the project’s inception phase, FAO had engaged in an extensive campaign to explain to communities in Southern Iraq whether and how they were selected or why not. In the end, not all communities that were promised project activities received those and expressed deep dissatisfaction about Sida’s exit from the project.

### 6.3 BARRIERS TO THE EVALUATION OF IMPACT

The evaluation revealed that the strength of evidence regarding both negative long-term harm and positive impacts is generally low to medium. This is linked to several structural and contextual limitations that constrained the evaluation’s ability to capture the full range of effects:

- One major challenge was the absence of specific indicators for conflict sensitivity or harm in Sida’s monitoring systems. For instance, in Ethiopia, while conflict sensitivity was part of strategic dialogue, it was rarely embedded in formal reporting frameworks, making it difficult to systematically assess whether interventions mitigated or exacerbated tensions. Ultimately, this also means that we cannot know if we have missed significant negative or positive impacts.
- Access and security constraints posed another barrier. In Ethiopia and Iraq, high-risk regions were often inaccessible, limiting real-time monitoring and forcing reliance on second-hand reports from local actors. These constraints

also influenced the evaluation design, as the most conflict-affected areas were excluded from site visits.

- Furthermore, Sida's understanding of conflict dynamics was heavily shaped by partner-dependent reporting. In Tanzania, many partners relied on informal mechanisms such as community feedback, which allowed for responsiveness but left negative effects undocumented and invisible in formal evaluations.
- Institutional learning mechanisms were also weak. Across all three countries, lessons about harm or unintended effects were rarely aggregated or used to inform strategic adjustments, leaving gaps in portfolio-level visibility.
- Finally, the risk of positive selection bias, as noted in the limitations section, may have skewed findings toward more favourable results.



# 7 Conclusions and lessons learned

This section presents the conclusions drawn from the findings presented in sections 4, 5 and 6, including the separate country case studies, followed by general lessons learned.

## 7.1 RELEVANCE (EQ1)

**The evaluation concludes that Sida's work with conflict sensitivity is generally relevant and context-contingent, but strongest where analysis was continuous. A common weakness across strategies is weak feedback loops between strategic and contribution-level adaptations, and lack of institutional learning on conflict sensitivity.**

The strongest conflict sensitivity practices are found in acute and post-conflict contexts like Ethiopia and Myanmar, where conflict is central to the strategy. In more stable or politically sensitive contexts, integration is weaker, often informal, and reliant on partner initiative. Global strategies face structural challenges due to their thematic and partner-driven nature, requiring clearer expectations and stronger internal systems to ensure consistent application and learning.

### **Acute and post-conflict affected contexts: Ethiopia, Myanmar, Liberia and Iraq.**

In conflict-affected settings, including in a post-conflict setting such as Liberia, Sida's strategies demonstrate a strong commitment to understanding and responding to complex peace and conflict dynamics. These strategies are typically grounded in detailed conflict analyses, often supported by MDPA processes, helpdesk inputs, and regular engagement with partners and local actors.

Ethiopia and Myanmar stand out for their adaptive management in volatile environments, where the strategies had to adapt to rapidly deteriorating contexts. Both strategies use real-time conflict analysis and flexible implementation to respond to shifting dynamics, but with some weaknesses in MEL in Ethiopia. Liberia and Iraq adapted some contributions in response to political shifts and security risks, but strategic adaptation was limited, and weaknesses in MEL. In Iraq, early responsiveness waned after the Embassy closure.

Across these conflict and post-conflict affected contexts, a common weakness is the uneven translation of strategic conflict analysis into partner selection and contribution-level adaptation. While Sida often assesses partner capacity for conflict sensitivity, this is not always a decisive factor in selection, and support for capacity-building is inconsistent. In addition, despite some good examples, MEL is not formalised.

### **Relatively stable contexts: Bolivia, Tanzania and WBT.**

In contexts characterized by relative stability or moderated conflict risks, such as Bolivia, Tanzania, and the Western Balkans and Türkiye (WBT) strategy, the

integration of the conflict perspective is present but less urgent. These strategies incorporate contextual analyses and consider partner capacity for conflict sensitivity, but the emphasis is often on long-term development goals rather than immediate conflict mitigation. Separate conflict analyses are not standard (e.g. Bolivia and Tanzania), rather the MDPA is relied on for understanding the conflict drivers. While contributions are adapted in response to local dynamics, these changes are often ad hoc and not always reflected at the strategic level, and vice versa. The strategies acknowledge the importance of conflict sensitivity but do not prioritize it in partner selection or MEL. This limits Sida's ability to anticipate and mitigate risks, particularly in contexts where stability may be fragile or deteriorating, such as the political unrest since the 2025 election in Tanzania and political tensions in Serbia since late 2024..

### **Global, varied and evolving contexts: Humanitarian Aid Strategy, Sustainable Economic Development.**

In contexts where conflict dynamics are varied and evolving constantly, Sida's strategies show a more mixed picture. The Humanitarian Strategy relies on Humanitarian Crisis Analyses and partner assessments rather than MDPAs, and while it emphasizes conflict sensitivity in partner selection, it lacks a systematic approach to tracking and learning from conflict-related risks. The Sustainable Economic Development strategy includes thematic conflict analyses, particularly in areas like women's economic empowerment and land rights. However, the integration of conflict sensitivity is uneven across contributions. MEL systems are lacking, and the strategy lacks a clear framework for translating contextual changes into strategic or operational shifts.

A key challenge in these changing contexts is the absence of a structured mechanism to ensure that conflict sensitivity is consistently applied and monitored. While Sida's flexible funding model allows for adaptation, the lack of formal processes means that learning is often ad hoc and not systematically captured or shared.

## **7.2 EFFECTIVENESS (EQ2)**

**The evaluation concludes that there are significant outcomes connected to conflict sensitivity. However, the picture is uneven and concentrated where CS is explicit and supported by flexible operations. A consistent weakness is lack of monitoring, evaluation and learning, which limits the discovery of short-term negative effects and the monitoring of long-term positive and negative outcomes.**

The integration of conflict sensitivity in Sida's strategies has contributed to meaningful outcomes in several contexts, particularly where it was embedded from the strategy level and supported by institutional commitment, flexible operations, and responsive monitoring.

In settings such as Ethiopia, Myanmar, Iraq, Liberia, Bolivia and Tanzania, conflict-sensitive approaches have enabled Sida to deliver programmes that both avoid exacerbating tensions and actively strengthen the conditions for peaceful and inclusive development. In these cases, Sida's partners adapted to local dynamics in

ways that enhanced trust, safeguarded rights, and promoted constructive inter-group relations. These contributions, while often modest in scope, reflect a grounded and context-aware practice of development cooperation. Clear, locally significant results include reduced tensions via inclusive targeting (Ethiopia), safer electoral participation (Iraq), improved refugee-host relations (Tanzania), and partner-led harm avoidance in humanitarian contexts, whereas results in Myanmar, Bolivia and Liberia are promising, but more uncertain due to lack of evidence. There are also isolated examples across the other strategies.

But across the portfolio, the application of conflict sensitivity has been uneven, varying by strategy, context, team capacity, and the presence or absence of tools and incentives. Where CS remained implicit, results depended on partner practice and were seldom captured in results frameworks.

Sida has not fully realised the potential of conflict sensitivity as a strategic and operational framework. Key constraints, including the inconsistent use of the conflict prevention marker, lack of conflict sensitivity indicators, and weak systems for learning and accountability, have limited Sida's capacity to assess, replicate, and scale successful approaches. In many strategies, conflict sensitivity remains under-conceptualised, reliant on partner initiative, and disconnected from formal planning and review mechanisms. While many strategies began with strong political and conflict analyses, these insights were rarely followed through in decisions about which counterparts to engage, which modalities to use, or how to adapt over time. This disconnect between analysis and implementation is a critical gap, especially related to the ability of strategies to anticipate and mitigate risks. Across these strategies, even where MEL systems are in place, the lack of inclusion of conflict sensitivity indicators limits the discovery of short-term negative effects and the monitoring of long-term positive and negative outcomes. Evidence of short-term negative effects were evidenced in several strategies (e.g. Liberia, Tanzania, Iraq). This is particularly important for conflict affected contexts where security challenges often limits in person monitoring.

### 7.3 IMPACT (EQ3)

**The evaluation concludes that Sida has contributed to modest but credible impacts at local/sector levels in case studies, but there is limited evidence of system-level change. There is also evidence of recurring risks and areas of potential harm that Sida needs to address more proactively, including potential for gender-related backlash, potential harm to partners, negative effects related to targeting processes and to the exit from Iraq.**

Across the three case studies, there is evidence of Sida-funded contributions avoiding harm and contributing to positive outcomes. In Ethiopia, joint resource governance and local peace infrastructure show plausible pathways to sustained social cohesion. In Iraq, pluralistic media and stabilisation support contributed to enabling conditions for recovery, tempered by early exit risks. In Tanzania, multiple, complementary contributions plausibly reduced land-related grievances and supported refugee-host coexistence.

Notably, contributions with explicit peacebuilding goals tended to produce more visible impacts. This is partly because they had a clear theory of change and a defined vision of what success would look like in a given context. In contrast, strategies without a peacebuilding objective, often lacked clarity on what “maximising opportunities for peace and social cohesion” should entail.

These examples were significant at the local level, but there was limited evidence of changes across a strategy objective or the strategy as a whole. Nevertheless, in Tanzania, the MDPA and strategy operationalisation process led to a portfolio that intentionally addressed conflict drivers, specifically in the area of Land Rights and Natural Resource Governance. This highlights the need for Sida to be more deliberate in setting its level of ambition and risk appetite for conflict sensitivity at the strategic level, even in contexts not formally categorised as conflict affected.

In none of the case study contexts were observed impacts, positive or negative, attributable solely to Sida. Positive changes in peace and conflict dynamics, where evidenced, were shaped by a complex interplay of domestic dynamics, other donors, and political actors. This underscores the importance of multi-donor coordination mechanisms. In politically sensitive or conflict-affected contexts, Sida’s influence is often limited by its size and visibility. Participating in joint platforms allows Sida to amplify its impact, share risk, and contribute to collective learning and strategy. However, opting for larger contributions creates different trade-offs, where Sida’s influence may be constrained.

Whilst there is evidence of short-term negative effects, largely addressed during the implementation of specific contributions, we did not find conclusive evidence of long-term negative effects on peace and conflict dynamics, in terms of Sida contributing to increased tensions or similar. However, there is evidence of recurring risks and areas of potential harm that Sida needs to address more proactively, including gender-related back-lash, potential harm to partners, negative effects related to targeting processes and to the exit from Iraq.

## 7.4 GENERAL LESSONS LEARNED

This section draws more general lessons learned from the evaluation, in response to sub-question 3.8 What lessons can be learned from integrating conflict perspective for impact?

### **Adapting to rapid change**

Conflict-affected environments can change rapidly. A coup, sudden escalation of violence, or new actors can render carefully designed programmes obsolete - or even harmful. Adaptability is therefore fundamental to conflict-sensitive programming. This is particularly important in the current context (2025), where such changes have affected other Sida partner countries, including those included in this evaluation, e.g. Tanzania and Serbia as part of the WBT strategy.

Good examples emerge from the evaluation. After the 2021 coup in Myanmar, Sida did not persist with pre-crisis plans. It commissioned new risk assessments, phased out support to central authorities, introduced alternative payment modalities, and strengthened security measures. Partners relocated operations, adopted hybrid

delivery, and reoriented projects toward safer counterparts. Monitoring was active throughout, with “do no harm” and “do good” criteria tracked in reviews and trust-based dialogue enabling rapid adjustments. In Ethiopia, escalating conflict in Tigray and Oromia prompted a strategic pivot. Sida adjusted geographic and thematic priorities, reprogrammed contributions toward humanitarian needs, and engaged flexible INGOs able to operate in volatile areas. Partners demonstrated agility: Farm Africa relocated activities, UNICEF shifted to cash transfers, and EngenderHealth integrated GBV and mental health services. Participatory monitoring, inclusive feedback mechanisms, and remote verification ensured responsiveness even when access was blocked.

Key principles emerging from these cases include maintaining continuous, granular analysis, embedding flexibility in design and budgets, and fostering an adaptive management culture that rewards course correction and creates safe spaces for honest reporting.

### **Choice of partner**

A key tension in Sida’s approach to conflict sensitivity lies in the balance between working with large, well-established partners, who often have greater reach and influence, and smaller, in-country actors who may be better positioned to implement conflict sensitive programming. Larger partners, such as UN agencies or international NGOs, often have the institutional capacity, visibility, and political leverage to operate in complex environments. However, they may also be more constrained by bureaucratic mandates, less embedded in local contexts, lack an institutional focus on conflict sensitivity (e.g. IFC), and less flexible in adapting to emerging conflict dynamics.

In contrast, smaller local partners often have deeper contextual knowledge, stronger community relationships, and a more intuitive grasp of conflict sensitivity. In Bolivia and Myanmar, for example, Sida’s most conflict-sensitive contributions were led by local or regional partners who embedded context analysis and adaptive practices into their programming. However, these actors may lack the administrative capacity, financial systems, or risk management frameworks required by Sida’s compliance standards, making them less likely to be selected, especially in high-risk contexts.

In Iraq, the preference for large international partners, such as UNDP, UNMAS, and the World Bank, enabled Sida to contribute to stabilisation and recovery efforts at scale. Sida’s early exit from some programmes, and its limited influence over partner selection and prioritisation (e.g. in demining zones), illustrate the risks of relying on multilateral channels without a clear conflict sensitivity strategy. While these choices may reduce short-term risk, they can undermine long-term goals of localisation, ownership, and system strengthening—core principles of the New Deal and the Paris Declaration.

This raises a broader strategic question: what level of risk is Sida willing to accept in order to support conflict-sensitive, locally led programming? Avoiding risk by defaulting to large, international partners may protect Sida’s reputation and fiduciary integrity, but it can also limit its ability to influence conflict dynamics, build local capacity, and support inclusive peacebuilding. Conversely, engaging smaller or

politically sensitive actors may increase exposure but also deepen impact, especially in contexts where trust, legitimacy, and local knowledge are essential. To navigate this tension, Sida could be more intentional in its partner strategy.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning**

The evaluation of conflict sensitivity in Sida's operations reveals several key lessons regarding monitoring of and learning from conflict sensitivity. A strong and evolving understanding of local conflict contexts, as seen in Ethiopia and Myanmar, is vital for effective monitoring. Adaptive management practices, including flexible programming and implementation adjustments, help mitigate risks and enhance outcomes. However, the lack of systematic indicators and formal monitoring processes limits learning and strategic adaptation. Institutional learning mechanisms and feedback loops are underutilised, and the inconsistent use of the conflict prevention marker reduces its effectiveness. Overall, the conclusions stress the need for dynamic contextual awareness, engaged partnerships, and robust systems for monitoring and learning to effectively integrate conflict sensitivity into development work.

Another recurring challenge is the lack of data on impact-level change. While many contributions report on outputs and some on outcomes, it is extremely difficult to determine whether long-term, transformative change has occurred, and if so, whether Sida's efforts contributed to it. This is largely because neither Sida nor its partners systematically aggregate results at the sector, country, or strategy level. Without a structured approach to synthesising contribution-level data, it becomes nearly impossible to assess whether strategic objectives are being met or whether conflict sensitivity is influencing broader peace and conflict dynamics. This challenge is compounded by Sida's reliance on partners to monitor for and adapt to both negative and positive effects. While many partners demonstrate strong contextual awareness, their ability to identify unintended consequences, especially those that are politically sensitive or reputationally risky, varies significantly. Moreover, even when partners do identify such effects, there is no guarantee they will be reported candidly unless Sida has built a high-trust relationship and created space for open dialogue. This reliance on partner initiative, without structured accountability or learning systems, limits Sida's ability to systematically learn from and respond to emerging risks.

To mitigate harm and maximise positive outcomes, it is essential that contributions include feedback loops, not only for members of target communities but also for those not directly receiving Sida funding. This is particularly important in fragile contexts, where those who are marginalised or excluded are often the most vulnerable to harm. Without mechanisms for these groups to raise concerns, especially if they lack a community leader or formal representation, early warning signs may be missed, and grievances may escalate. Feedback loops should be designed to capture both formal and informal signals, and should be integrated into programme design, monitoring, and adaptation processes.

### **Gender equality and conflict sensitivity**



Efforts to promote gender equality sometimes led to backlash or harm, especially in conservative or conflict-affected settings. While Sida and partners adapted in their response, these adaptations were often reactive. Proactive integration of gender-sensitive conflict analysis, such as engaging male allies or community leaders from the outset, could reduce risks and enhance impact.

### **Participant selection processes**

The way participants are selected for participation in contributions have significant impacts on trust and social cohesion, especially in conflict-affected areas, with several examples provided across the evaluation. If selection processes are seen as biased, they may deepen divisions and fuel grievances. However, when organisations listen to community feedback and adapt their methods, such as moving from leader referrals to open applications, they can reduce these risks. Transparent and inclusive approaches, along with early recognition of potential issues, help ensure that aid supports peace and inclusion rather than unintentionally causing harm.

### **Exiting a country**

Sida's withdrawal from certain countries and contexts, such as Iraq and parts of Ethiopia, and especially how it was managed and conducted, showed the risk of reputational damage, partner disruption, and reversal of gains when exit strategies are not explicitly designed with conflict sensitivity in mind. Abrupt or poorly communicated disengagement, decided by the Swedish government, not Sida, can exacerbate perceptions of abandonment, weaken trust in Sida and its partners, create vacuums that less constructive actors may fill, and open opportunities for scape-goating Sida for negative developments (such as overall reduction of development funding) that were caused by other actors and developments than Sida. But a conflict-sensitive exit process could still be anticipated from the beginning of engagement in a country or region, include transparent communication with stakeholders, ensure adequate handover to capable actors, and safeguard the continuity of key relationships and services. Where possible, phased or partial drawdowns, combined with targeted capacity support to local actors, could help mitigate negative effects and preserve the legitimacy of Sida's previous engagement even after the exit. A recent study by the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) argues that exit processes in development cooperation should be, but rarely are, based on clear strategies and that existence of a well-developed strategy can have a major impact on how successful such a process is, in terms of sustainable impacts and continuing partnerships. The study goes on to suggest that guidelines for exit strategies should be developed by donors<sup>92</sup>, and this evaluation suggests that such guidelines should consider the specificities of withdrawing from conflict affected contexts.

### **Conflict sensitivity as good donorship?**

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<sup>92</sup> Lücking, K., M. Eppler und M.S. Heinelt (2021), Exit-Prozesse in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit, Deutsches Evaluierungsinstitut der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (DEval), Bonn.



Many of the success factors identified in the report are not necessarily directly connected to explicit conflict sensitivity programming, but rather showcase principles of good donorship, including flexibility, trust-based funding, and support for local ownership, but without a structured conflict sensitivity lens. This includes the Sustainable Economic Development Strategy, where Sida provided flexible, long-term funding to partners like RRI and AgriFoSe2030, and the Humanitarian strategy, where Sida's long-standing partnerships with organisations like Islamic Relief and NRC were based on trust and flexibility. However, in other cases, there was more intentionality in Sida's approach, including in places such as Ethiopia, which was combined with principles of good donorship.

In Myanmar, there was a mixed picture. Sida's flexible funding enabled some partners to build internal capacity for conflict sensitivity, including digital security, adaptive delivery, and protection mechanisms. However, this was not universal. The type of funding, core support versus project-based, short-term versus multi-year, played a critical role in determining whether partners could invest in the systems and staff needed to navigate conflict dynamics. Sida's good donorship practices (e.g. trust-based relationships, flexible modalities) enabled adaptation, but without a deliberate strategy to build local capacity, these gains remain uneven and fragile.

### **Evaluating conflict sensitivity**

We conducted the evaluation using a theory-based approach, as recommended in the ToR. While this methodology is widely recognised for its potential to unpack complex interventions, its application in this context revealed several limitations, both conceptual and practical. A central challenge was the absence of an explicit or implicit ToC at the strategy level for mainstreaming perspectives such as conflict sensitivity. Sida's strategy operationalisation includes ToCs at the level of strategy objectives. Although conflict-related elements may be referenced within these objective-level ToCs, they do not constitute a coherent or integrated approach to integrating conflict sensitivity across a strategy.

The evaluation's efforts to retroactively construct hypothetical ToCs were met with scepticism from some Sida staff and seen as potentially misleading, as they did not reflect the reality of how Sida worked in some contexts, and some staff were worried that the evaluation would judge a strategy against goals not prioritised in the strategy operationalisation process. This was the case especially in strategies where peace and conflict was not an explicit strategy objective. In practice, the evaluation was guided by the initially developed ToCs but the team worked in an inductive manner to explore potential outcomes, impacts and assumptions, meaning that the ToCs were living documents that were refined throughout the evaluation process.

In light of these challenges, a more inductive, grounded and context-sensitive approach is recommended for the future. Rather than attempting to develop a unified strategy-level, or global, ToC for conflict sensitivity, evaluators should focus on the ToCs embedded within individual contributions. These can be compared and analysed to identify patterns or gaps, but without imposing a superficial coherence that lacks grounding in actual strategic intent or design.

## 8 Recommendations

The following eleven key conclusions (drawn from section above) and recommendations synthesise the central insights from the evaluation.

### **Conclusion 1: Conflict sensitivity is not consistently integrated across Sida's strategies.**

The integration of the conflict perspective is strong and explicit in acute or post-conflict contexts (Ethiopia, Myanmar, partly in Liberia and Iraq), but much weaker or implicit in settings that have been considered stable (Bolivia, Tanzania, WBT) and in global/thematic strategies (Sustainable Economic Development, Humanitarian Aid), where CS is understood mainly as basic “do no harm.” This inconsistency weakens Sida's ability to anticipate risks or use CS to strengthen results. Recent events in Tanzania and Bolivia show that even stable contexts can change rapidly.

### **Recommendation 1: Establish a Sida wide minimum standard for conflict sensitivity integrated into all strategy plans.**

- Define a Sida-wide minimum standard for integrating the conflict perspective that applies to all strategies, including those in currently “stable” contexts and global/thematic strategies.
- Require each strategy plan to state clearly how conflict sensitivity will be handled (even if it is not a principal objective), including when it is limited to implementing basic do-no-harm.
- In high-risk or rapidly changing contexts, maintain or introduce explicit CS-related objectives and outputs in strategy plans, ensuring that they are reported on in annual and in-depth strategy reporting.

### **Conclusion 2: Conflict analysis is strong in some portfolios but ad hoc or outdated in others.**

In Ethiopia and Myanmar, Sida and Embassies maintain robust and updated conflict analyses that feed into strategy operationalisation and day-to-day decisions. In several other strategies, the MDPA and/or one-off conflict analyses exist but are not regularly updated; in some cases, Sida relies almost entirely on partners' analysis. Continuous context tracking is the exception, not the rule. Without periodic analytical updates, strategies risk becoming misaligned with fast changing contexts.

### **Recommendation 2: Institutionalise regular, proportional context/conflict updates within strategy plans.**

- Require each strategy and/or Embassy to maintain a simple, regularly updated context/conflict note (e.g. yearly, and at key decision points), rather than relying on one-off MDPA or partner reports. Sida could propose some key indicators to

track over time, drawn from reputable sources (e.g. ACLED, GPI, SCORE, UCDP, WBG-FCS)<sup>93</sup>.

- Allow these to be proportionate: a short “context pulse” in more stable contexts; fuller analysis in high-risk settings and integrate with MDPA, Helpdesk inputs, and existing review tools.
- Link these updates to concrete decisions (e.g. portfolio composition, partner mix, risk management) so that they are explicitly and clearly used.

### **Conclusion 3: Conflict sensitivity is mainly understood as risk management, less as a lever for positive change**

The evaluation finds many examples of avoiding harm (especially around targeting, access, and reputational risk). There are also strong but more limited examples where CS has been used proactively to strengthen social cohesion, peaceful resource management, or inclusive governance. But in many strategies, the “maximise positive effects” dimension of conflict sensitivity is not systematically explored or articulated, even where there are clear entry points (e.g. land, service delivery, economic inclusion). If it happens, it is most likely not captured in full.

### **Recommendation 3: Ask strategies to identify a small number of deliberate opportunities where Sida can make a positive contribution**

- For each strategy where conflict is especially relevant, invite the team to identify 1–2 deliberate opportunities where existing work could make a positive contribution to peace/social cohesion (e.g. joint resource management, inclusive service delivery, cross-group platforms).
- Encourage programme officers to frame these not as new peacebuilding projects, but as additional elements within existing contributions (e.g. adding structured dialogue, inclusive committees, or shared benefit-sharing mechanisms).
- Where such elements already exist (e.g. KJP in Tanzania, land-tenure work, local peace structures in Ethiopia), document them as positive practice and consider replication in similar contexts.

### **Conclusion 4: Contribution-level adaptations rarely translate into strategic learning or adjustments.**

Across strategies, many sensible conflict-sensitive adaptations were made at contribution level (e.g. re-targeting, re-phasing, changing modalities or locations). But these rarely are fed back into strategy-level adaptation or learning. Strategy-level shifts (e.g. new political risks, exits) did not always translate into systematic portfolio-wide adjustments. Feedback loops remain weak.

<sup>93</sup> Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED), <https://acleddata.com/>; Global Peace Index (GPI), <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/global-peace-index/>; Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index (<https://www.scoreforpeace.org/>); Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), <https://ucdp.uu.se/>; The World Bank Group's list of fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCS).

#### **Recommendation 4: Create simple, compulsory feedback and adaptation mechanisms**

- Introduce a short “adaptation note” in annual strategy reports: what changed in the context, what was adapted (if anything), and what this implies for the portfolio.
- Ask programme officers to note major CS-related adaptations in Conclusion-on-Performance/Completion memos and then use these examples in strategy-level learning discussions.
- Encourage Embassies and Sida units to hold at least one annual internal “conflict sensitivity reflection” where programme staff present key adaptations and lessons, including successes and failures.

#### **Conclusion 5: Strong reliance on partner systems masks Sida's own blind spots. Sida benefits from partner CS systems, but rarely requests or synthesises CS learning**

Especially in the Humanitarian and Sustainable Economic Development strategies, Sida leans heavily on partners' do-no-harm systems and internal conflict analyses. This works reasonably well from a risk perspective, as the evaluation found no major harm caused by these partners. But Sida gets little structured information on CS-related adaptations or effects and thus has limited organisational learning or accountability on conflict sensitivity.

#### **Recommendation 5: Maintain trust-based partnerships while requesting proportionate CS learning inputs.**

- Maintain the principle of relying on partners' systems, but ask for short, structured CS inputs in existing reports (and templates) where the context or theme is sensitive:
  - 1–2 examples per year of how the partner avoided harm or adapted to conflict dynamics;
  - any observed positive or negative effects on tensions/cohesion.
- Integrate one or two CS-focused questions into regular annual reviews with all partners (especially framework organisations and multilaterals).
- Use these examples in internal Sida learning processes and products (e.g. simple compilations of “conflict sensitivity cases” per strategy).

#### **Conclusion 6: Partner CS capacity varies widely and is not consistently assessed or supported.**

Where Sida works with partners that have strong conflict-sensitivity capacity (e.g. LPI, Diakonia, and some UN and NGO partners), contributions show clearer avoidance of harm and positive effects. Yet partner capacity for CS is only an explicit criterion in selection in some of the strategies reviewed, not all of them, and Sida's support to strengthen local partners' CS practice is uneven. There is also a tension between working through large multilaterals (scale, reach) and through smaller local organisations (contextual depth).

### **Recommendation 6: Make conflict sensitivity an explicit criterion and support local capacity**

- In strategies where conflict sensitivity is considered relevant (ideally all of them), include CS capacity in partner appraisal templates and in ToR for calls/negotiations.
- For large partners, use Sida's leverage to ask how they handle conflict sensitivity in specific programmes (not only at corporate level), and request concrete examples.
- Allocate modest, flexible resources for CS capacity-building with local partners (e.g. helpdesk inputs, peer-learning), especially where they are key to reaching sensitive areas or groups.

### **Conclusion 7: Internal capacity, incentives and leadership on conflict sensitivity are uneven**

Embassies and Sida units with staff who are comfortable with CS concepts and tools (and where management has signalled that CS matters) integrate it more systematically (Ethiopia, Myanmar, to some extent Liberia). For other strategies reviewed, staff are unsure how to apply CS in “non-conflict” portfolios; tools like the Peace & Conflict Toolbox and Helpdesk are under-used; and there are few explicit incentives to invest time in CS compared to other cross-cutting priorities.

### **Recommendation 7: Strengthen internal CS capacity and make expectations clearer**

- Offer focused, practice-oriented CS refreshers for strategy teams (in addition to the general e-learning), using (good and bad) cases from Sida's own portfolio.
- Encourage routine use of the Human Security/CS helpdesk for tricky contexts or contributions and make this expectation explicit in strategy plans.
- Ask managers to signal that CS is part of “good Sida practice” by:
  - referencing it in staff dialogues where relevant;
  - ensuring that strategy plans and annual reviews include at least one short reflection on CS.

### **Conclusion 8: Monitoring systems do not systematically track conflict sensitivity.**

Most strategies do not have explicit indicators for CS processes or outcomes; CS is seldom visible in results frameworks. The conflict prevention policy marker is regularly misunderstood, inconsistently applied, and almost never used for monitoring or learning. As a result, Sida cannot systematically know and assess where CS is working well, where there are risks, or where projects are having peace-related effects.

### **Recommendation 8: Introduce light, optional CS indicators and strengthen guidance on the conflict prevention marker.**

- Develop a concise menu of pragmatic CS indicators (process and outcome) that strategy teams can integrate when relevant (e.g. quality of inclusive targeting; functioning feedback mechanisms; reported conflict-related incidents; documented do-no-harm adaptations).

- Require strategies where CS is considered relevant to choose at least one CS indicator per contribution and report against it.
- Clarify the purpose and use of the conflict prevention marker (e.g. through updated guidance and short training). If it cannot realistically serve a monitoring function, consider consciously limiting its use to coding/statistics and not treating it as a proxy for quality.
- Consider using global indicators for the classification of a country (or region) as 0, 1, or 2, e.g. the OECD DAC guidance on the marking.
- Apply third party monitoring in contexts where safe access is an issue (this option is used by other donors, e.g. Danida or the EU commission (INTPA)).

**Conclusion 9: Lack of aggregation hampers understanding of broader CS impact.**

Across the sampled contributions, localised impacts are observed and Sida has made plausible contributions to these impacts. But a regular challenge is the lack of data on outcome and impact-level change. Neither Sida nor its partners systematically aggregate results at the strategy objectives or strategy level. Without a structured approach to capturing and aggregating contribution-level data (for the contribution's intended outcomes and CS related outcomes), it is impossible to assess whether strategic objectives are being met or whether conflict sensitivity is influencing broader peace and conflict dynamics.

**Recommendation 9: Strengthen strategy-level results frameworks and enable aggregation**

- Develop indicators at strategy-objective level that capture conflict-relevant change.
- Integrate these indicators into strategy plans and annual reviews, ensuring alignment with Sida's evolving corporate monitoring frameworks.
- Monitor regularly and synthesise results for strategic learning and prepare for future strategy level evaluations, not only CS.

**Conclusion 10: Predictable risks, gender backlash, unequal targeting, reputational risks, are insufficiently anticipated.**

Across cases, the evaluation found recurrent risks: short-term backlash against women and girls in gender-equality programmes; tensions around who is included/excluded in targeting; and, in some cases, reputational or security risks for partners. These were usually addressed once they became apparent rather than systematically anticipated up front.

**Recommendation 10: Integrate gender-responsive CS and transparent selection/feedback mechanisms**

- Require contributions in sensitive areas (gender, land, displacement, livelihoods) to include:
  - an explicit reflection on potential backlash or distributional effects;
  - planned mitigation measures (e.g. engagement with community/faith leaders, involvement of men and boys, accompanying communication).

- Promote transparent, inclusive participation/beneficiary selection processes (public criteria, open calls where feasible, or clearly justified targeting) and ensure communities know how they were selected - or why not.
- Systematically use simple feedback and complaints mechanisms (including for non-participants) to detect tensions early and adapt.

**Conclusion 11: Exits and major shifts have not consistently been managed in a conflict-sensitive way and have undermined conflict-sensitive gains.**

In Iraq in particular, the early and relatively abrupt withdrawal of Swedish development cooperation created confusion, dissatisfaction, and risks of reputational damage and local tensions (e.g. where communities had been promised benefits that did not materialise). The evaluation also notes upcoming phase-outs in several other countries, where similar risks may arise if exits are not handled with a conflict perspective.

**Recommendation 11: Develop and apply conflict-sensitive exit and transition protocols**

- For country exits or major portfolio shifts, require a rapid, conflict-sensitive exit approach focusing on:
  - where withdrawal could exacerbate tensions or reverse cohesion gains;
  - which interventions are most sensitive (e.g. peacebuilding, social cohesion, land, gender equality).
- Ensure early, transparent communication with partners, authorities and, where feasible, affected communities about timelines and rationales, to reduce rumours and blame.
- Coordinate with other “Team Sweden” actors to sustain critical functions.
- Consider handing over and recommending previous partners to other donors and international actors that remain engaged in the country in order to mitigate the negative impact of withdrawal.
- In the longer term, prioritise the support of organisational capacity and funding diversity of partners overly reliant on Sida funding.



# Central Evaluation of Conflict Sensitivity in Sida's Development and Humanitarian Cooperation

## Purpose and use

This evaluation examines how Sida integrates conflict sensitivity across its strategies and operations, with the purpose of strengthening learning and improving how Sida's work affects peace and conflict dynamics.

## Conclusion

It finds that conflict sensitivity is increasingly embedded in Sida's portfolio but applied unevenly across contexts. Stronger results emerge where analysis is continuous, partner capacity is high, and adaptation is proactive. Weak monitoring systems and inconsistent feedback loops limit learning and the ability to track outcomes or anticipate risks.

## Recommendation

The evaluation recommends establishing minimum standards for conflict sensitivity across all strategies, ensuring regular context updates, strengthening monitoring, evaluation and learning systems with simple indicators, and proactively addressing recurring risks such as gender backlash, unequal targeting, and challenges linked to country exits.



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