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Nordic Consulting Group A/S

Evaluation of Sida's South Sudan Portfolio

An analysis of South Sudan's portfolio as part of the Central Evaluation of Sida's work with Poverty



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Abbreviations and acronyms

A2J	Access to Justice Programme
BHI	Boma Health Initiative
CBPS	Community-based Psychosocial Support
CDSS	Community Development Support Services
CEmONC	Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care
CIVSAM	Framework contract with Swedish NGO
CoS	Church of Sweden
CP	Country Programme
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
DHIS2	District Health Information System
EES	Eastern Equatoria State
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
HCA	Humanitarian Crisis Analysis
HPF	The Health Pooled Fund
IDPs	Internally Displaced People
KAPAME Strategy	Strategy for capacity development, partnership and methods that support the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development
MDPA	Multidimensional Poverty Analysis
NFNC	National Food and Nutrition Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PaCC	Peace and Community Cohesion
PfRR	Partnership for Recovery and Resilience
RSRTF	Reconciliation, Stabilisation, and Resilience Trust Fund
SEK	Swedish Kroner
SGBV	Sexual & Gender-Based Violence
SSRTF	South Sudan Reconciliation, Stabilisation, and Resilience Trust Fund
ToC	Theory of Change
UNDP	United Nations Development Fund
USD	United States Dollars
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive Summary

This report presents an assessment of the relevance of Sida's South Sudan portfolio across all sectors and strategies in 2019. The assessment constitutes part of a larger *Strategic Evaluation of Sida's Work with Poverty*. In the report, we have analysed statistical data and conducted an in-depth document review for the 32 active contributions in South Sudan, with particular focus on the 8 contributions funded through the Swedish South Sudan Strategy.

Overall, the strategic framing for Sida's engagement in South Sudan is aligned with international good practice: it focuses actively on vulnerabilities and addressing the widespread and pervasive poverty situation and takes a comprehensive and holistic approach of simultaneously addressing the humanitarian situation and building capacities and resilience.

We find that Sida, by funding and engaging with multi-donor initiatives, has taken an approach whereby the impact of Swedish funding is amplified. On the other hand, Sweden has less leverage to influence the contributions strategic orientation and/or targets when other donors provide equal or larger portions of funding.

Given the pervasive needs and widespread poverty in South Sudan, we find it relevant that Sida's portfolio of contributions takes a people-centred approach, *directly* addressing people living in poverty. While such an approach has its limitations in terms of sustainability – since Sida's partners primarily deliver direct services or support to the population, rather than indirectly alleviating poverty through institution-building or systems strengthening – the challenges of working with the Government leave few viable alternatives. Evidence indicates that donors' efforts to build Government capacity have yielded limited results; and in the absence of political will and accountability, the direct poverty alleviation approach has proven a relevant way to address needs.

Sida's contributions target relevant populations, broadly speaking, but the widespread poverty in South Sudan has allowed for the target groups to be defined rather broadly (i.e., women and girls being the primary target group). Nevertheless, our review indicated that specific vulnerable groups, such as people living with disabilities and IDPs are also targeted by the contributions.

1 Introduction

This report presents an assessment of the relevance of Sida's 2019 South Sudan portfolio.¹ A portfolio is understood as consisting of *all* contributions to South Sudan across all sectors and strategies in a given year. The year 2019 was selected based on a few criteria: i) it was the last year before the COVID-19 pandemic, which changed the Sida portfolio somewhat; ii) key stakeholders would still be around and available for interviews; and iii) Sida's capabilities would likely not have changed significantly since then.

The focus of the portfolio analysis has been first to map the portfolio, and then to assess the *relevance* of the 2019 portfolio composition from different perspectives including: i) sector/sub-sector focus, ii) types of partnerships and modalities (e.g. national and international NGOs, government, UN organisations, private sector actors), as well as iii) contributions that address poverty reduction directly and indirectly and through both long and short results chains. While all contributions in the South Sudan portfolio directly target poor people, at least *partially*, some include a focus on institutional strengthening, with the assumption that such support will eventually facilitate improvements for the poorer segments of society.

The point of departure for the analysis was an overview of all contributions from 2019 provided by Sida's statistical department providing information of all contribution names, sectors, aid modality and strategies for a total commitment of 59 contributions. Some of the contributions cut across several strategies/sectors but in order to have the contributions reflected only once, the list was sorted manually bringing to total down to 32 contributions. These 32 contributions were assessed based on statistics from Sida and the following types of documents: i) project documents/partner proposals; ii) appraisal reports; iii) Sida's internal

Sida defines multidimensional poverty as deprivations within four dimensions - resources, opportunities and choice, power and voice and human security. Sida defines a person living in multidimensional poverty as being resource-poor and poor in one or several of the other dimensions.

Note that this definition is broader than the definition used in for instance OPHIs national multidimensional poverty index (MPI) and the World Bank definition of multidimensional poverty that uses the MPI in combination with monetary poverty.

Source: Sida (2019), Dimensions of Poverty, poverty toolbox.

¹ The assessment is part of the larger *Strategic Evaluation of Sida's Work with Poverty* which was commissioned by Sida in 2023 and is being implemented by Nordic Consulting Group.

programme monitoring (Conclusions of Performance) on a spot check basis; and iv) evaluation reports/progress reports. These assessments identified geographic coverage, target groups, an assessment of their poverty dimension and whether they were direct or indirect poverty interventions.

Overall, this analysis aims to assess *IF and HOW*, the portfolio was oriented towards people living in poverty. This was done by assessing the geographic distribution of contributions, strategic areas covered, target groups reached compared to stated intentions (e.g. in strategy or poverty analyses). It is important to note, that the assessment primarily serves a *learning purpose* rather than being an accountability exercise.

Direct poverty reducing interventions target the poor end-beneficiaries directly and impact is expected to materialise in the short-term.

Indirect interventions work through longer results chains where impact cannot be expected to materialise in the short-term. Rather, indirect interventions aim at supporting creation of preconditions for improvements for the poor.

In 2024 it was decided that Sida's bilateral development cooperation was to be phased out within the calendar year based on a Swedish Government decision. The cooperation office in Juba therefore closed in August 2024. Meanwhile humanitarian assistance to South Sudan continues.

1.1 OUTLINE OF THE ANALYSIS

After this introduction, Chapter 2 presents the mapping of the portfolio. This includes a presentation of the strategies in South Sudan in Section 2.1, and a mapping of how the contributions are distributed across sectors and partner modalities. In Chapter 3, the relevance of the portfolio is analysed focusing on how the contributions are distributed across strategic areas, the extent to which synergies across strategy areas are realised, the focus on direct versus indirect impact on poverty in the portfolio, the geographical areas covered, and specific target groups addressed by the Swedish development cooperation.

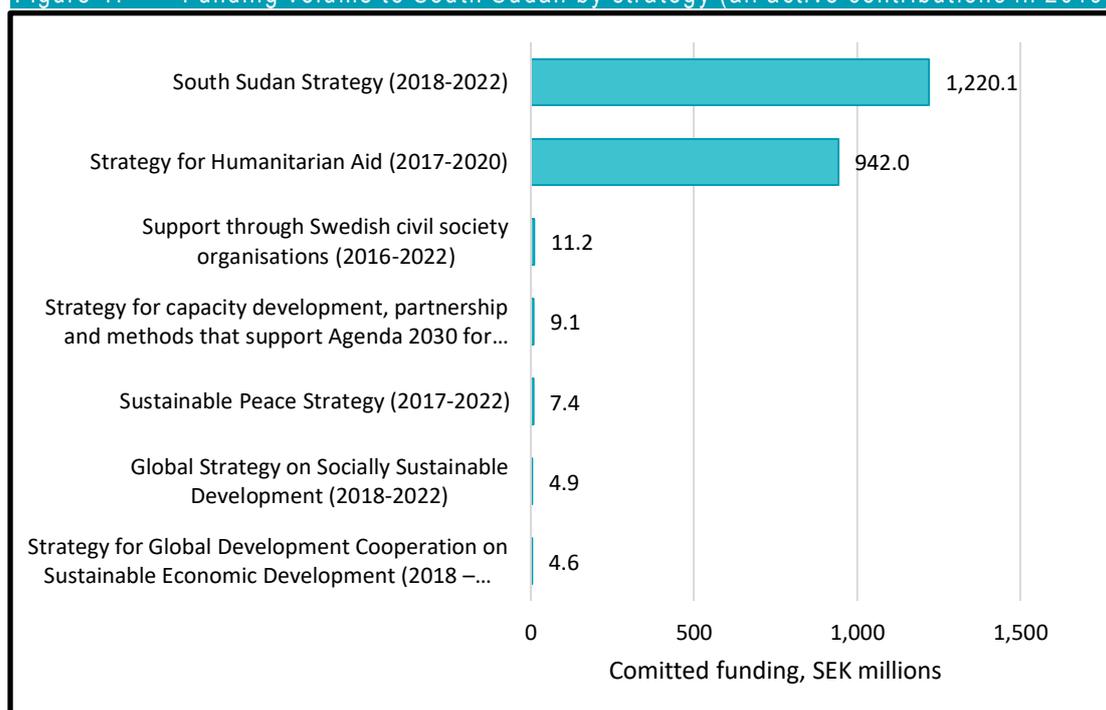
2 Mapping of South Sudan Portfolio

This section first provides a descriptive mapping of the main strategies in South Sudan in 2019, then a description of the distribution of the portfolio by sectors, followed by an analysis of the contributions in terms of partnership modalities.

2.1 STRATEGIES IN SOUTH SUDAN 2019

In 2019, seven strategies were active in South Sudan covering a total of 32 contributions and a funding volume of 2.2 billion SEK.² Of the seven strategies, two strategies – the South Sudan Strategy 2018-2020 and the global Strategy for Humanitarian Aid 2017-2020 – accounted for over 98% of the total funding volume. Figure 1 (below) indicates the funding volume of the 32 commitments, illustrating that more than half of the funds were channelled through the South Sudan Strategy (55%), followed by the Strategy for Humanitarian Aid, which accounted for 43%.

Figure 1. Funding volume to South Sudan by strategy (all active contributions in 2019)



Source: Evaluation team compilation of data from Sida's Statistics office.

² Not counting JPO positions/secondments, audits, and consultancy contracts.

While the bilateral country strategy was the largest in terms of funding volume, it is noteworthy that there are significantly more, smaller contributions funded through the Strategy for Humanitarian Aid, as illustrated in Table 1.

Strategy	No. of contributions
South Sudan Strategy 2018-2020	8
Strategy for Humanitarian Aid 2017-2020	18
Support through Swedish civil society organisations 2016-2022	1
Strategy for capacity development, partnership and methods that support the 2030 Agenda (KAPAME)	2
Sustainable Peace Strategy 2017-2022	1
Global Strategy on Socially Sustainable Development 2018-2022	1
Strategy for Global Development Cooperation on Sustainable Economic Development 2018-2022	1

Source: Evaluation team compilation of data from Sida's Statistics office.

Eighteen contributions fall under the *Strategy for Humanitarian Aid*. The main objective of the contributions is: “*To save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity for people affected by crises.*” In line with this strategic objective, and in accordance with the Humanitarian Principles³, the contributions are needs-based, aiming to reach the most vulnerable populations with “*material aid and protective measures*”. The Strategy has four main areas of intervention that contributions align with:

1. Needs-based, fast and effective humanitarian response;
2. Increased protection for people affected by crises and increased respect for international humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles;
3. Increased influence for people affected by crises; and
4. Greater capacity and efficiency in the humanitarian system.

The main focus of the contributions is on needs and protection (Area 1 and 2 above), noting that emergency needs and protection of civilian populations are deep and comprehensive following the 2013, and subsequently the 2016, major outbreak of violent conflicts across the country. Besides conflict-related emergencies, the support also addresses natural disasters, where both droughts and floodings are frequent in parts of the country, and cyclical/recurring.

Areas 3 (*increased influence for people*) and 4 (*capacity and efficiency*) of the Strategy are important design elements in the contributions and signal Sweden's active

³ The Humanitarian Principles refers to the four fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, rooted in international humanitarian law.

commitment towards the implementation of the Grand Bargain,⁴ the Good Humanitarian Donorship⁵ and other key principles of the humanitarian system.⁶ Sweden is also a considerable donor to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)’s field coordination efforts and thereby supports the “capacity and efficiency” and fair distribution of emergency support. All humanitarian contributions are expected to mainstream gender equality, conflict sensitivity and resilience.

In addition to the humanitarian portfolio, Sweden has 8 development cooperation contributions under the South Sudan Strategy. Sweden’s development cooperation with South Sudan aims “*to contribute to a peaceful and inclusive society, improved access to equitable and gender-equal health and education services, and improved living conditions for people living in poverty*”. To this end, the Strategy has two main objectives, with five sub-areas:

1. Peaceful and inclusive societies
 - More inclusive processes for peace, community building and accountability.
 - Improved conditions for the empowerment of women and girls.
2. Basic public services and livelihood opportunities
 - Improved conditions for health, focusing on sexual and reproductive health and rights.
 - Improved access to good quality education.
 - Improved opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.

The foundation of the Strategy is a rights-based approach, and each contribution emphasises equal rights to services and the right to peace for individuals and for groups who are discriminated against, excluded or marginalised. With specific reference to poverty reduction, the Strategy has clear language on inclusion and taking poor people themselves as the entry point: “*The perspectives of poor people on development means*

⁴ The Grand Bargain is a global agreement launched in 2016 during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul. It was developed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian aid delivery by addressing systemic challenges within the aid sector. Sweden has been an active participant in the Grand Bargain since its inception as one of the 68 signatories. The agreement involves commitments made by major humanitarian donors and organizations, collectively aiming to enhance cooperation and accountability while ensuring that aid reaches those in need more effectively.

⁵ The Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative is an informal donor forum and network which facilitates collective advancement of GHD principles and good practices. Meeting in Stockholm in June 2003, a group of 17 donors endorsed the Principles and Good Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship. There are now 43 members of the Good Humanitarian Donorship group who contribute through this forum to the pivotal role of donors in providing effective and accountable humanitarian assistance. It recognises that, by working together, donors can more effectively encourage and stimulate principled donor behaviour and, by extension, improved humanitarian action.

⁶ Sida. (2017) *Strategy for Sweden’s Humanitarian Aid provided through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency Sida, Appendix to Government Decision 26 January 2017* (UD 2017/01299KH).

that the situation, needs, circumstances and priorities of poor women, men and children must be the starting point for poverty reduction and the promotion of equitable and sustainable development”.

The 8 contributions’ focus areas align with the South Sudan Strategy, both on peaceful and inclusive societies (particularly at community level) and on the meaningful participation and empowerment of women (Objective 1), and access to basic public services, i.e. health, education and livelihoods opportunities (Area 2 in the Strategy). The two objectives of the Strategy are complementary, which is clearly spelt out in the portfolio activities and the selection of partners (see Section 2.3).

Development effectiveness is a core principle in the Strategy, and this can be witnessed in the partnerships, where Sweden contributes to several multi-donor programmes such as those implemented by UNDP, i.e. South Sudan Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund (SSRTF) and Peace and Community Cohesion Project (PaCC), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Health Pooled Fund (HPF), and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and also contributes to NGO programmes together with other donors (such as Oxfam and the NGO Forum).

Sida strategies do not spell out a Theory of Change (ToC), as these are developed after the strategy is finalised, as part of the operationalisation process (in the strategy plan). Although there is no ToC in the strategy, we find from the assessment of the Strategy documents, that objectives are fitting at outlining the overall ambition at strategic level and there is alignment between the ambitions set in the Strategies, modalities and the portfolio of projects.⁷

The five other global strategies with active contributions in South Sudan (listed in Table 1) had only 1 active contribution in South Sudan – apart from the KAPAME Strategy, which had 2 contributions in 2019 - and therefore account for only a minor portion of the overall portfolio, both in terms of funding volume and number of contributions.

The Strategy for Sustainable Peace 2017-2022 played a limited role in the portfolio but nevertheless complements and strengthens some of the contributions under the country strategy. An example is the UNICEF project enhancing the protection of children in armed conflict, which complements the UNDP PaCC project. Likewise, *The Global Strategy on Socially Sustainable Development 2018-2022* covers the support to UNESCO’s “Education Cannot Wait” and the “Global Partnership for Education”, which are the global programmes for education. These are complementary to the Save

⁷ The annual strategy reporting refers to the ToC of the strategy, which can be confusing. It was explained to the Evaluation by the South Sudan Unit in Sida that the overall goal of the strategy can also be considered to be equaling a ToC at strategic level.

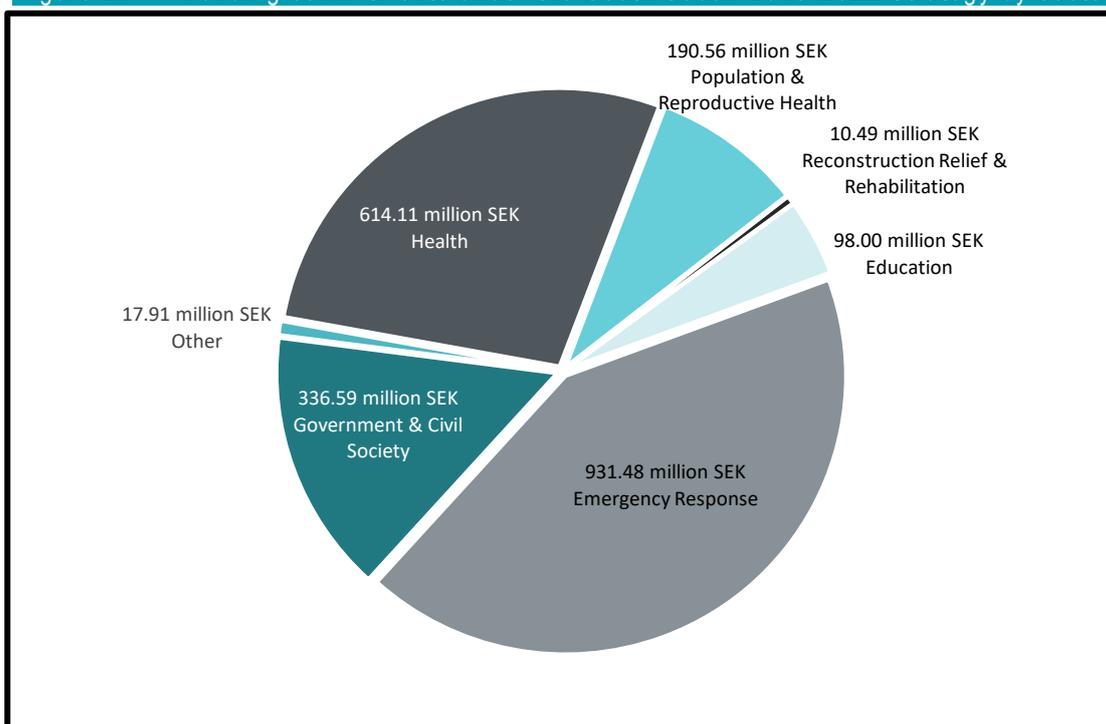
the Children project funded through the country strategy, which also focuses on the education.

Overall, the strategic framing for Sida’s engagement in South Sudan is aligned with international good practice: it focuses actively on vulnerabilities and addressing the widespread and pervasive poverty situation and takes a comprehensive and holistic approach of simultaneously addressing the humanitarian situation and building capacities and resilience. Nevertheless, and as will be discussed further in the subsequent sections, such efforts are only likely to be sustainable if and when societies are peaceful and government is functional, which therefore is articulated in Sida’s strategies and portfolio approach.

2.2 PORTFOLIO DISTRIBUTION BY SECTOR

The following section presents the sectoral distribution of the 2019 South Sudan portfolio, which has been summarised in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Funding commitments under the South Sudan 2018-2022 Strategy by sector



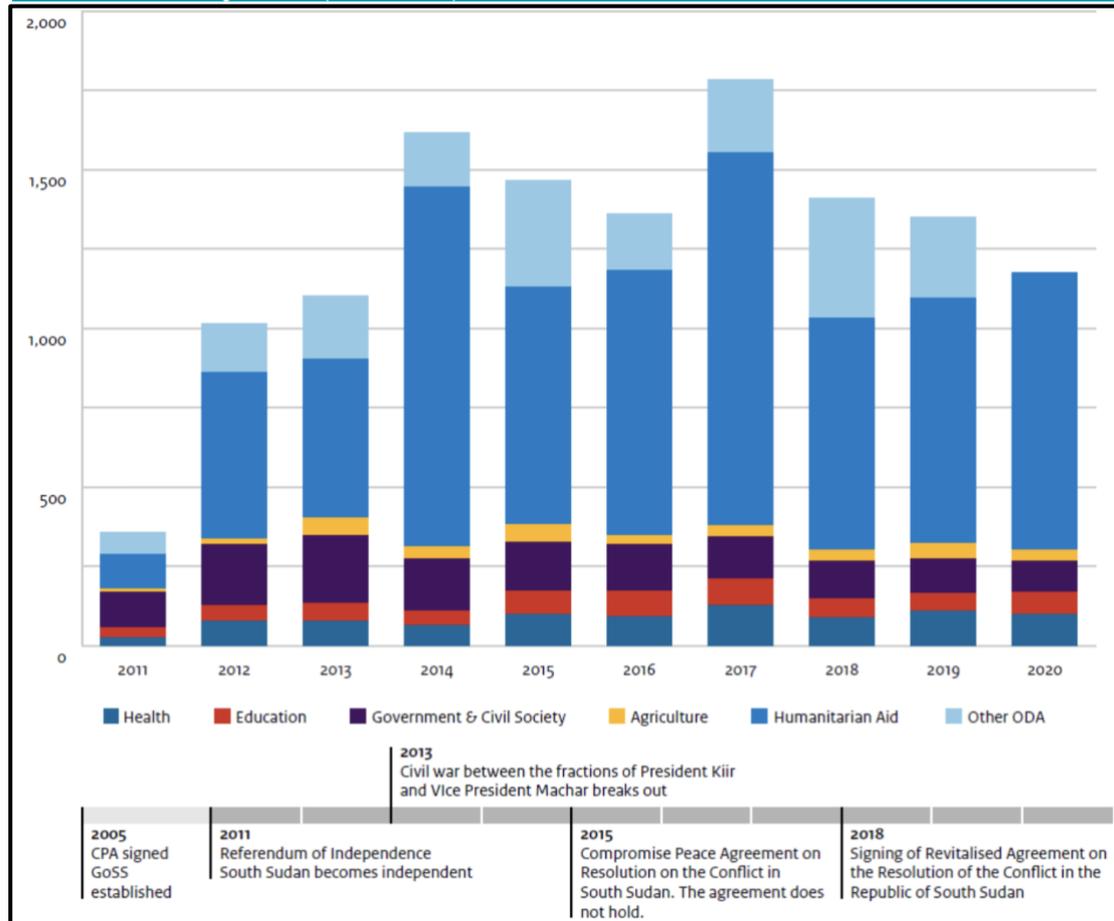
Source: Evaluation team compilation of data from Sida’s Statistics office.

Chart note: The sectors are based on Sida’s reporting to OECD DAC, and therefore the sectors are defined by OECD DAC, the category “Other” includes Reconstruction Relief & Rehabilitation; Other Social Infrastructure & Services; Trade Policies & Regulations; Water Supply & Sanitation; Other Multisector.

Across the portfolio of contributions, the largest sector (based on Sida’s reporting to OECD DAC) is **emergency response**, covering 42% of the funding commitments (see Figure 2). This is consistent with the proportion of commitments funded through the

Humanitarian Strategy. Notably, Sida provides multi-year humanitarian grants, both to specific programmes and unearmarked, flexible emergency funds to e.g., the OCHA-managed Country-based Pooled Funds and the Rapid Reaction Mechanism (non-earmarked contributions). In general, many donors downscaled support to Government institutions in South Sudan following the outbreak of civil war in 2013; and while 2017 marked peak levels of ODA to South Sudan since its independence, humanitarian aid became the dominant aid sector from 2014-onward, as illustrated in Figure 3 below.⁸

Figure 3. ODA to South Sudan (USD millions) relative to a timeline of significant events affecting development cooperation from 2011 to 2020.



Source: Figure is taken from Zuercher, et al. (2022). *Effects of Development Aid to South Sudan 2008-2021. Part I: Summary Paper. P. 11.*

Figure notes: The original source of the data on aid flows is OECD DAC’s Creditor Reporting System data with values in USD millions, combined with the authors’ (Zuercher et al.) mapping of events.

⁸ Zuercher, et al. (2022). *Effects of Development Aid to South Sudan 2008-2021. Part I: Summary Paper. P. 10.*

Looking at longer-term development cooperation, the **health sector** was the largest recipient of Sida funding in 2019, with half of all the funding commitments of the South Sudan Strategy channelled towards this sector. Notably, this sizable funding commitment represents a single contribution, Phase 3 of the Health Pooled Fund (HPF), where Sida committed SEK 614 million over a 5-year period. The Swedish contribution to the HPF covered approximately 10% of the overall budget commitment to the third phase of the Fund, which amounted to SEK 5.66 billion. South Sudan has some of the worst health indicators in the world, with the world's highest maternal mortality rate;⁹ for this reason, the HPF has targeted maternal and neonatal health. Given the focus on women's reproductive health, the HPF could in part also be categorised as contributing to the sector, "**Population Policies/ Programmes & Reproductive Health**".

The UNFPA Country Programme, which has strong synergies and collaboration with the HPF, is the main contribution toward this sector (accounting for SEK 190 million of the total SEK 190.56 million toward population & reproductive health). In contrast to the HPF – which also more broadly works to expand the provision of primary healthcare, in addition to the specific focus on maternal and neonatal health – the UNFPA Country Programme has greater focus on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). This focus is highly relevant in the context of South Sudan, where official estimates note that 65% of women have experienced (S)GBV and the access to reproductive services and information is extremely limited.

Compared to the health sector, the other service sector prioritised in Sweden's South Sudan strategy, the **education sector**, receives comparably less funding from the country strategy. In general, as illustrated in Figure 3 covering ODA flows to South Sudan, donors have consistently prioritised funding to the health sector higher than funding to the education sector. While this might suggest that donors (including Sida) have neglected the education sector, a potential reason for the higher priority given to funding the health sector over education sector by donors may be to fill apparent gaps in the budget allocation to service sectors by the Government of South Sudan. In FY 2018/2019, merely 2% of the public budget was allocated to health, compared to 9% to the education sector.¹⁰ Sida's support to education is mainly financed through global core contributions to Global Partnership for Education and UNICEF and at country level support through international NGOs in specific locations.

The second most prominent sector, notwithstanding humanitarian aid, is to "**Government and Civil Society**". In a context like South Sudan, the combined

⁹ WHO. (2023). The Global Health Observatory – World Health Statistics. Annex 1 – Country, area, WHO and global health statistics (of the World Health Statistics 2023).

¹⁰ Ministry of Finance and Planning. (2019). National budget brief: South Sudan 2019. p. 13.

categorisation of support to government and civil society is misrepresentative. Since independence, donor relations to the Government of South Sudan have changed, affecting development assistance. In 2011, there was strong international backing and commitment to support the state building process and national institutions, with the expectation that aid would contribute to peace dividends and stability.¹¹

However, as noted above, the renewed conflict in 2013 led donors to shift engagement toward humanitarian aid and local level peacebuilding efforts, rather than direct engagement with the Government / state-building. The apparent lack of political will from the Government of South Sudan to prioritise inclusive development, poverty reduction, and instead concentrate on a small elite's own "needs" and cronyism with its major flaws of accountability and transparency. This has reinforced a reluctance by donors, including Sida, to support the state.¹² Thus, Sida's support to the 'Government and Civil Society' sector constitutes contributions that support local level peacebuilding, civil society and human rights, through multilateral and civil society partners rather than direct government support.

The largest of these contributions is to the South Sudan Reconciliation, Stabilisation and Resilience Trust Fund (SSRTF), to which Sweden is one of the biggest contributors. The grants to SSRTF aim to reduce community level violence, support intercommunal conflict management, promote civic participation, accountability, and rule of law. The contribution to the UNDP Peace and Community Cohesion (PaCC) project, also categorised as support to 'Government and Civil Society', takes a similar approach to supporting community-based conflict resolution mechanisms paired with livelihoods opportunities to reduce conflicts.

Several of Sida's contributions include an element of capacity building of government institutions, e.g., UNFPA's country programme, which supported the National Bureau of Statistics to conduct data collection, or the UNDP PaCC project, which has sought to link community level conflict resolution to the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan at national level.

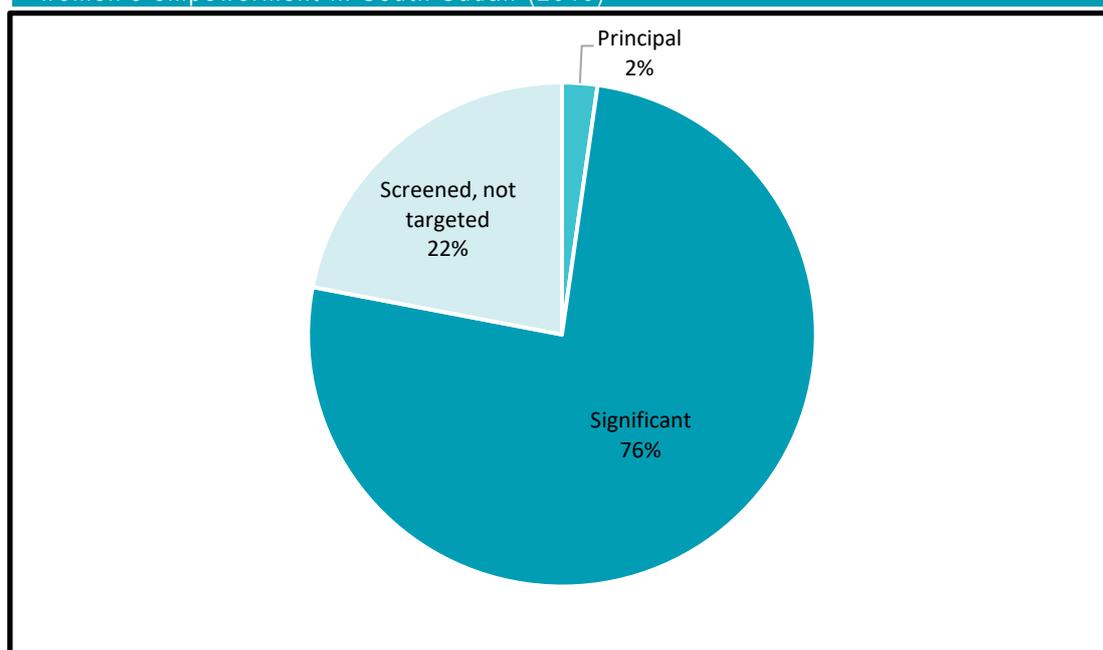
Notably, **gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE)** were included as a specific sub-objective under Strategic Area 1 of the South Sudan Strategy. In practice, however, it appears to be handled as a cross-cutting objective, more so than a standalone focus area. In 2019, a mere 2% of the portfolio was reported to DAC to have GEWE as its 'principal objective', while over three quarters of the portfolio had GEWE

¹¹ Ibid, p. 8.

¹² South Sudan was ranked as the second most corrupt country in the world in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for 2020 (rank 179 out of 180). The political corruption is steadily increasing according to V-Dem. In the Freedom House Index of political freedoms and civic rights is South Sudan also at the bottom of the 210 countries included.

as a ‘significant objective’ (without being the principal reason for undertaking the activity),¹³ as is illustrated in Figure 4. The cross-cutting focus on gender equality is apparent in several contributions – e.g., the HPF and UNFPA interventions, which have significant focus on maternal health, and sexual and gender-based violence respectively. Likewise, the contributions that contribute to peacebuilding include a focus on the women, peace and security agenda.

Figure 4. Proportion of Sida’s funding to South Sudan targeting gender equality & women’s empowerment in South Sudan (2019)



Source: Evaluation team compilation based on data OECD (2024), "Creditor Reporting System: Aid activities targeting gender equality", OECD International Development Statistics (database), <https://doi.org/10.1787/data-00824-en>. Accessed on 24 March 2024.

Chart note: The “principal” score signals that gender equality was an objective of the activity and fundamental to its design - i.e. the activity would not have been undertaken without this objective. In contrast, the “significant” score is applied if gender equality was an important secondary objective of the activity, but not the principal reason for undertaking the activity. The “not targeted” score is assigned if, after being an activity was found to not target gender equality at all.

Based on the analysis of the sector composition we find that the portfolio has a clear direction, seeking to directly address several dimensions of poverty. While humanitarian aid and emergency response are prominent in the portfolio, this is combined with longer term development cooperation to address critical service sectors.

¹³ This finding is based on Sweden’s own reporting to the OECD DAC on Aid Flows: Creditor Reporting System (CRS) Dataset for 2019. Source: OECD (2024), "Creditor Reporting System: Aid activities targeting gender equality", OECD International Development Statistics (database), <https://doi.org/10.1787/data-00824-en>.

The priority given to health (over education) in Sida's portfolio is also reasonable, given the Government's apparent de-prioritisation of funding to healthcare. In addition, the focus on conflict resolution and peace building through various mechanisms underscores the point that without peaceful coexistence development gains are eroded and emergency needs are likely to increase.

One element that is missing in the portfolio could be a more explicit focus on climate change, given that South Sudan is one of the most vulnerable countries in this regard. From our desk review, it is not apparent that the Sida portfolio directly focuses on the consequences of climate change. However, it was explained in interviews with FAO and Oxfam that their livelihood activities include a cross-cutting focus on climate change, as gains in productivity – which are the aim of the contributions - otherwise are eroded by conflict, floods, droughts or locusts, the morale and interests of communities is affected negatively.

2.3 PARTNERS AND MODALITIES¹⁴

In South Sudan there are relatively few partners for Sida to work with. For several years running, South Sudan has consistently been the most dangerous country for aid workers,¹⁵ and actors face significant security and access constraints. Organisations need to mobilise considerable resources to have boots on the ground, including having well developed duty of care and security systems to operate country wide. The costs and requirements therefore limit the number to mainly UN and large international civil society organisations or consultants (such as Crown Agents implementing the HPF). There are think tanks and smaller local organisations with specific expertise (such as women's rights, disabilities, livelihoods development) and presence in particular localities; these are sub-contracted by the UN and other implementing organisations.

Figure 5 gives an overview of Sida's partners, indicating that UN/multilaterals account for close to half of the portfolio (47%). Concretely, Sida works with UNFPA, UNDP and UN Women on development cooperation (under the South Sudan strategy), and provides humanitarian funds to UN OCHA, UNICEF, and UNHCR (through the Humanitarian strategy). Across these contributions, Sida is generally one of several donors providing support to UN organisations programmes/projects.

The remainder of the portfolio primarily draws on international civil society organisations (17%), with both development and humanitarian mandates, and Crown

¹⁴ Modalities are discussed in section 3.2.2. as there is an overlap between *modalities and synergies* since Sida works with an HDP nexus approach.

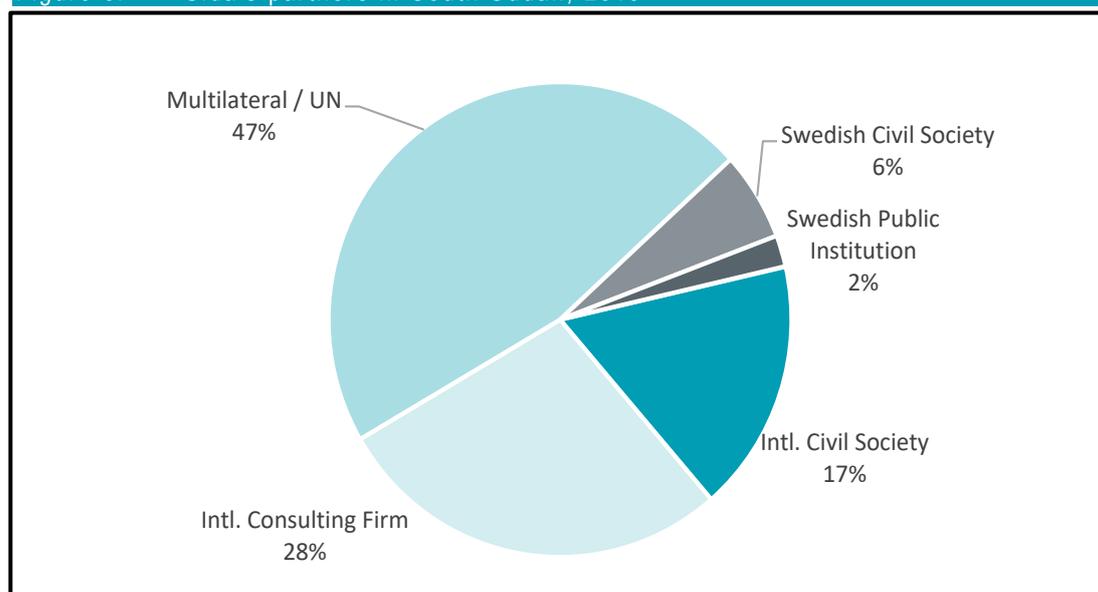
¹⁵ Humanitarian Outcomes. (2019). *Aid Worker Security Report – Speakable: Addressing sexual violence and gender-based risk in humanitarian aid.* (Updated August 2019).

Agents, the international consulting company managing the HPF (28%). As with the support to multilateral organisations, Sida is one of many like-minded donors supporting the HPF.

In addition, a small amount of funding channelled through Swedish civil society (8%), through the civil society strategy, funding faith-based organisations such as Swedish Mission Council and Church of Sweden, and humanitarian responders such as the Swedish Red Cross.

Finally, a minor portion of the portfolio funds public institutions (2%), constituting support to Lund University to engage on sexual and reproductive health rights.

Figure 5. Sida's partners in South Sudan, 2019



Source: Evaluation team compilation of data from Sida's Statistics office.

The majority of the humanitarian contributions to South Sudan is channelled through larger global or multi-country and multi-year contributions to multilateral and civil society organisations (CSOs) aimed at responding to emergency situations. The Humanitarian Strategy laid out the following principles for partnerships in the portfolio at strategic level:

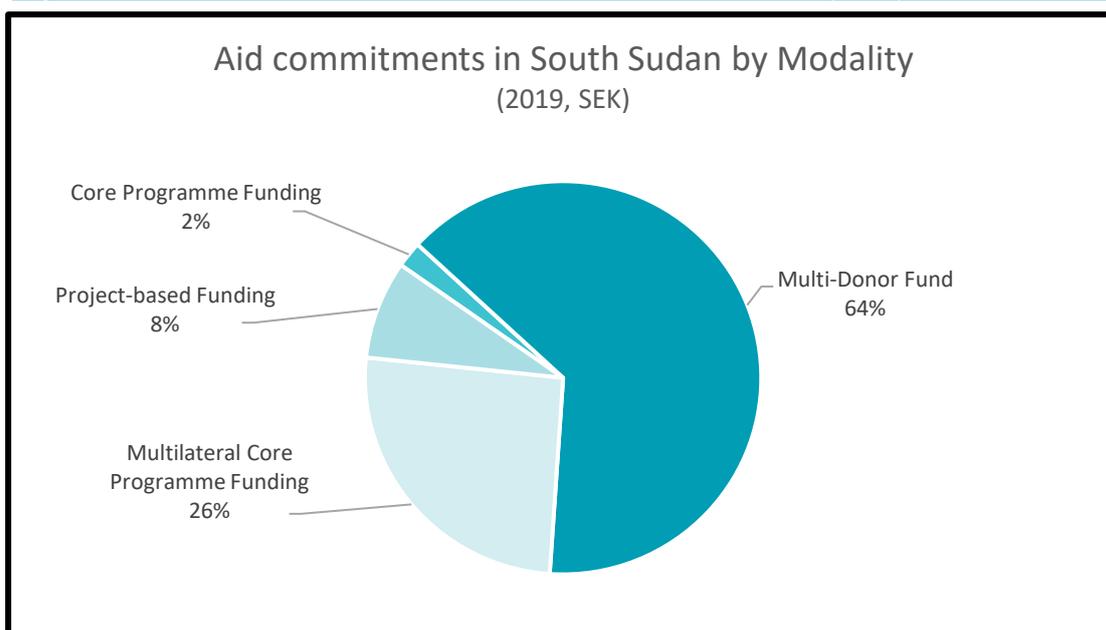
- *“Sida should support organisations and financing mechanisms based on their comparative advantages, relevance, results and effectiveness. Sida should continue to work on strategic partnerships with civil society organisations on financing, cost-effectiveness, advocacy work, methods development and policy work”.*

With its strategic level focus on working through a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, the South Sudan Strategy takes a similar approach for partnerships. The relevance of the nexus approach is underscored in the Annual Strategy Report for 2019, which states that the level of conflict in South Sudan in the coming years

(following 2019) likely will not diminish. The selection of partners therefore also needs to take the capacity of the partner to work with considerable flexibility and adaptivity into account, should there be major conflict outbreaks.

Sida's portfolio has also become less projectized and more programmatic and it has been a priority for Sida to make this shift and increasingly provide programmatic support. Organisations such as UNFPA, which formerly received project-based support from Sida, now receives core funding to the Country Programme to enable flexibility and adaptivity.

Figure 6. Preferred modalities of Swedish aid in South Sudan (2019)



Source: Evaluation team compilation of data from Sida's Statistics office.

Overall, there is a clear poverty orientation in the portfolio, which is witnessed at strategic level (Nexus approach), the selected modalities and the partnerships. We find that Sida has, by funding and engaging with multi-donor initiatives, taken an approach whereby the impact of Swedish funding is amplified, because the selected multi-donor mechanisms (such as pooled emergency funds, and the HPF and PaCC) have considerable outreach and leverage. On its own, with the resources available, it is reasonable to assume that Sweden would not be able to have the same outreach or depth of engagement as the joint approach offers. On the other hand, the Swedish 'fingerprint' may be lost when there are other donors providing equal or larger portions of funding.

3 Relevance of the Portfolio

Following a mapping of the portfolio this Chapter analyses the relevance of the portfolio. First it analyses synergies across strategy areas, then an analysis of direct versus indirect poverty contributions, then the geographic distribution of contributions is discussed before turning to the target groups addressed in the portfolio. A short conclusion on relevance will be provided under each section.

3.1 SYNERGIES ACROSS STRATEGIC AREA

Synergies across strategies and within strategy areas have long been a dedicated strategy for Swedish development cooperation in order to enhance efficiency and ensure a more integrated approach.¹⁶ In the context of South Sudan, integrated approaches or programming focused on improving the resilience of communities became more prominent in 2013 (with the outbreak of civil war), as the country was faced with a “vicious cycle” recurring conflict and violence, delays in peace agreements and ever worsening humanitarian crises.¹⁷ The integrated approach marked a shift away from siloed “*aid programs which paid insufficient attention to the connections between relief, recovery, and conflict prevention*”.¹⁸ As was stressed in discussions with donors, the UN and local partners during our field visit in February 2024, a holistic approach which integrates humanitarian, development and peace elements also more closely responds to peoples’ realities on the ground: when communities e.g., face severe food insecurity, an intervention focused solely on generating awareness of SGBV is not sufficient/useful.

Donors’ commitment (including Sida) toward this paradigm shift, away from a siloed approaches, toward a more integrated one were articulated in international agreements, hereunder the New Way of Working¹⁹ and the Humanitarian Development Peace

¹⁶ See for instance guiding documents for Swedish development cooperation “Guidance Note: Theory of Change”, 2021; Sida (2020). *External Evaluation of the Swedish Cooperation Strategy with Bolivia 2016-2020*.

¹⁷ Hanatani, A., Gómez, O.A., & Kawaguchi, C. (Eds.). (2018). *Crisis Management Beyond the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (1st ed.)*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351006828>. 91.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 94.

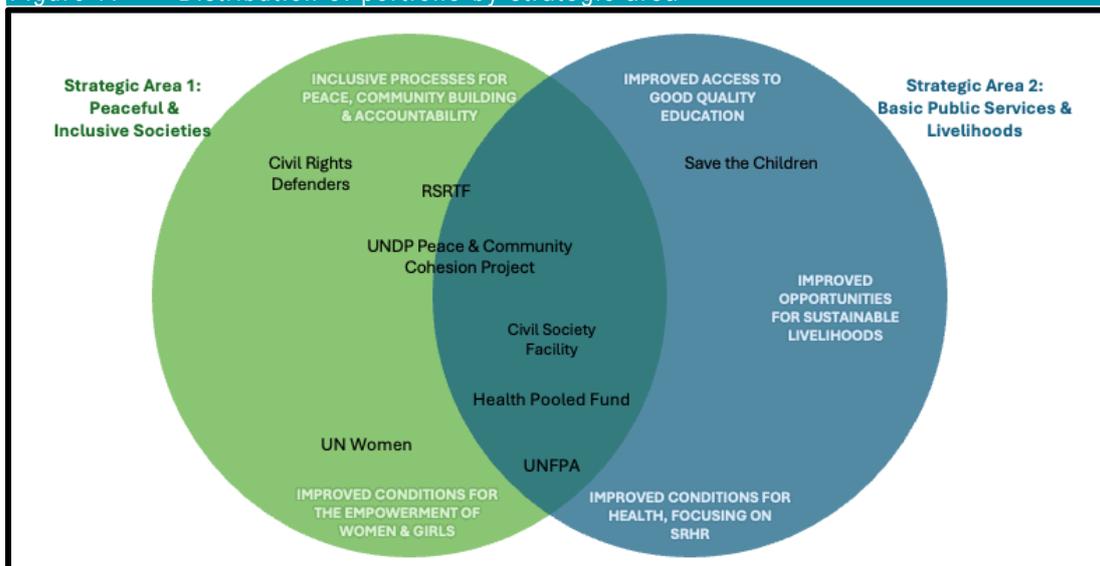
¹⁹ The United Nations’ “New Way of Working” (NWOW) is an initiative aimed at enhancing collaboration between humanitarian and development actors to more effectively address and reduce humanitarian needs, risks, and vulnerabilities. Introduced during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, NWOW emphasizes the pursuit of “collective outcomes”—concrete, measurable results that multiple stakeholders work towards over a period of three to five years. One of the key elements of the NWOW is for organisations to setup joint planning processes and seek collective outcomes.

Nexus principles.²⁰ Against this backdrop, this section takes stock of the extent by which the portfolio's contributions take a broader approach, rather than working in isolated silos – as well as the coherence and complementarity of the portfolio more broadly.

Overall, the eight active contributions in 2019 under the South Sudan Strategy cover both Strategic Areas of the strategy, as well as the five different sub-areas. As noted above (Section 2.2., Figure 3), gender equality is a significant focus area across most of the contributions in line with Sida's focus on 'improved conditions for the empowerment of women and girls,' it is applied in a cross-cutting manner.

In Figure 7, we have mapped out how the contributions fit within the sub-areas. The figure illustrates that Sida's contributions generally take a holistic, or cross-thematic approach, as most of the contributions align to several sub-themes. For example, the HPF and UNFPA fall between the sub-areas that relate to women and girls' empowerment, health and SRHR respectively.

Figure 7. Distribution of portfolio by strategic area



Source: Evaluation team's mapping of the portfolio based on data from Sida's Statistics office and review of project documents. The green circle (left) represents Strategic Area 1 on peaceful and inclusive societies; and the blue circle (right) represents Strategic Area 2 on basic public services and livelihoods. Sida's 8 active contributions in south Sudan are mapped (text in black) according to the different sub-areas of the strategy (marked in white in the circles).

²⁰ The international community worked after the Humanitarian Summit in 2016 on the further development of the Nexus approaches which was formalised in 2019 with the HDP Nexus Principles, Sida played a constructive role in these processes, including in the chairing of the International Dialogue for Peacebuilding and the agreement of the Stockholm Declaration.

Several of Sida's contributions also take a holistic approach to peace and social cohesion, often linking conflict prevention to income generation or livelihoods activities, in addition to strengthening governance and conflict resolution mechanisms for accountability, inclusion, and participation at the community level. This is seen as a strategic and relevant way to work across the development-peace nexus, given the well-documented linkages between livelihoods (particularly agro-pastoralism), and local level conflicts in South Sudan.²¹ In the same vein, FAO and Oxfam link their livelihoods activities to climate change, as this is a way to ensure that livelihoods supported by the project are sustainable, in a context that is very vulnerable to climate change.

It could be said that some of the contributions within the same strategic area or sub-area seem to have a degree of overlap/ duplication; but this is likely due to the multisectoral and pervasive needs present in the country. For example, support to the Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund (RSRTF) and UNDP PaCC project have similar objectives although different modalities. These two complementary (if not somewhat overlapping) contributions could allow Sida and partners to pilot or test different approaches, with potential for cross-learning; however, Sida staff note that there has been a missed opportunity to explore such complementarities and learning in practice.

In contrast the UNFPA country programme and the HPF have similar objectives in relation to women's reproductive health and rights, but in this case, coordination has taken place to capitalise on the synergies/complementarity. The two contributions established a (mostly) clear division of labour, for example with UNFPA taking lead on family planning and contraceptives and GBV, while the HPF secures a minimum healthcare package.

Both at strategic level, in terms of the composition of the portfolio, and at the level of operations, there are close and well-articulated links between humanitarian support and development cooperation in both strategies. In South Sudan, approximately two-thirds of the population are affected by emergency situations regularly, and access and security constraints lead to continuously interruptions, setbacks and delays in development efforts. The programmatic (rather than projectized), and flexible approach taken by Sida has enabled partners to swiftly transition to incorporate humanitarian/peacebuilding support during conflict escalation or as new humanitarian crises emerge, while preserving development cooperation elements. Sida's annual Strategy Reports highlight several examples, covering different partners (UNFPA, UN Women, HPF and UNDP), that demonstrated agility in adapting support to meet (and

²¹ Riquier, M. (2023). *Improving the Prospects for Peace in South Sudan: Spotlight on Measurement*. SIPRI: Stockholm, June 2023. p. 8.

prevent escalation of) emerging humanitarian needs. These interventions demonstrate a strong nexus between humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding activities, effectively showcasing the alignment of the Humanitarian Strategy and the Country Strategy at the strategic level.²²

In addition, together with ACT Church of Sweden, Sida has supported a resilience pilot enhancing capacities and exploring the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approaches in order to strengthen outcomes at community level.²³ This contribution has been supported through the civil society strategy, but through conversations with the South Sudan team and civil society unit in Sida, it is apparent that no wider learning process in Sida has taken place following the pilot.

Based on the complementarity across the portfolio – as well as Sida and partners’ prioritisation of nexus/ integrated approaches – we find that the portfolio has managed to capitalise on synergies across some contributions. Nevertheless, there are also several cases where cross-learning and synergies did not materialise in practice (e.g., with the ACT Church of Sweden pilot or the peacebuilding contributions), constituting a missed opportunity.

3.2 DIRECT VERSUS INDIRECT POVERTY IMPACT

Contributions can either target people living in poverty directly, or indirectly. Indirect poverty reducing contributions work through long results chains. Impact cannot be expected to materialise in the short-term. Rather they support creation of preconditions for improvements for the poor. Direct interventions target directly the poor end-beneficiaries with improvements. Since indirect and direct contributions work so differently, we analyse their relevance separately.

Our portfolio analysis indicates that all of the contributions in South Sudan in some way or another directly target people living in poverty; however, several contain components that take a more indirect approach.

For example, UNFPA’s Third Country Programme directly targets people living in poverty by giving them access to SRHR, SGBV and family planning services. This is the primary outcome (Outcome Area 1) of the contribution and has a clear and definitive impact on the lives and dignity of people living in poverty. However, under Outcome Area 4, UNFPA works with the National Bureau of Statistics of South Sudan

²² Sida (2019). Strategirapport år 1 för Sydsudan 2018-2022. Ärendenummer: 19/000497. p. 8.

²³ The Resilience Pilot conducted project activities in four locations in South Sudan. This evaluation selected the Budi nexus pilot, implemented by the Community Development Support Service as a particular case study.

in order to develop their capacities to undertake data collection on population dynamics to support decision-making. This constitutes an example of activities indirectly targeting people living in poverty, as the idea behind the intervention is to improve national systems for generation and dissemination of population data, including in humanitarian settings, in order to support evidence-based policies and programmes; which in turn should lead to decision-making that addresses real needs on the ground e.g., for SRHR. In the same vein, many of the other contributions in the portfolio include a focus on strengthening national capacities and systems e.g., the HPF contribution, which seeks to strengthen capacities and national ownership of the healthcare system, or UNDP PaCC which engages the Government the national level implementation of the revitalised peace agreement.

In practice, as is illustrated in the separate impact evaluation case studies of 4 contributions from the South Sudan portfolio, the impact of the activities that have directly engaged poor people are often easier to measure and therefore *appear* to lead to more tangible results. This does not rule out the potential impact of the indirect approach but rather highlights that indirect poverty interventions are challenged by documenting that poor people benefit in the long run.

However, it bears mentioning that where indirect components of projects have sought to strengthen the capacity of Government institutions in South Sudan, these have often fallen short of their primary goal, and thereby also the secondary aims of addressing poverty. In fact, a recent cross-sectoral meta-evaluation from South Sudan concluded that “*capacity-building efforts for the government of South Sudan were by and large not effective and did not lead to an increase in institutional strength*”.²⁴

The regime’s lack of attention to address widespread and pervasive poverty, and not least to seek peaceful solutions to the many conflicts in the country, is a major factor hindering in impact and sustainability of contributions that directly target poverty. Large scale corruption and elite grabbing of resources, and politically instigated violence and the general lack of concern for the rights and wellbeing of citizens are major factors hindering impact and sustainability of all dimensions of poverty reduction. Donors including Sweden therefore cannot align with the Government’s priorities. This is also shown in the portfolio, which only works with the Government to a limited degree and where there are entry points (Ministry of Peace and Reconciliation) and some parts of Ministry of Health (UNFPA, HPF).

The regime’s lack of political will to address poverty constitutes a shortcoming for the donors and many civil society efforts in South Sudan to address the widespread poverty

²⁴ Zuercher, et al. (2022). p. 38.

and to build sustainable systems. The scale of poverty can only to a limited extent be reduced by donor interventions and by civil society efforts. Sustainable development hinges on Government's plans, functioning government institutions and budgets working in the interest of promoting peace and development. There has in recent years been an exodus of donors, including Sweden, from South Sudan, because of the fruitless efforts of strengthening Government capacity, and because of the lack of political will to secure lasting peace. International efforts therefore go towards emergency assistance focusing on saving lives and addressing the direct and urgent needs of population, which in a large part of the country are ridden by man-made and climate related crises (see further below).

In view of the above analysis, and in the context of pervasive needs and widespread poverty, it is relevant that Sida's portfolio of contributions directly address people living in poverty. However, the sustainability of such contributions – e.g. that directly deliver services to the population without focusing on e.g. institution-building or systems strengthening – can be called into question. On the other hand, greater focus on the latter, i.e., building the capacities of the Government to be accountable toward the population, has led to limited results.

3.3 GEOGRAPHIC DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY

This section analyses the degree to which the geographic distribution of Sida's portfolio corresponds with regional/ geographic poverty trends in South Sudan, in order to assess whether the geographies targeted (the most) relevant to address poverty.

Within the picture of widespread poverty, it is particularly the eastern and northern portions of the country that face exceptionally high poverty headcounts (between 81-100%). As Figure 8 (below) also illustrates, poverty has increased significantly when compared to pre-independence (2009).

Figure 8. Comparison of poverty levels in South Sudan in 2009 and 2016

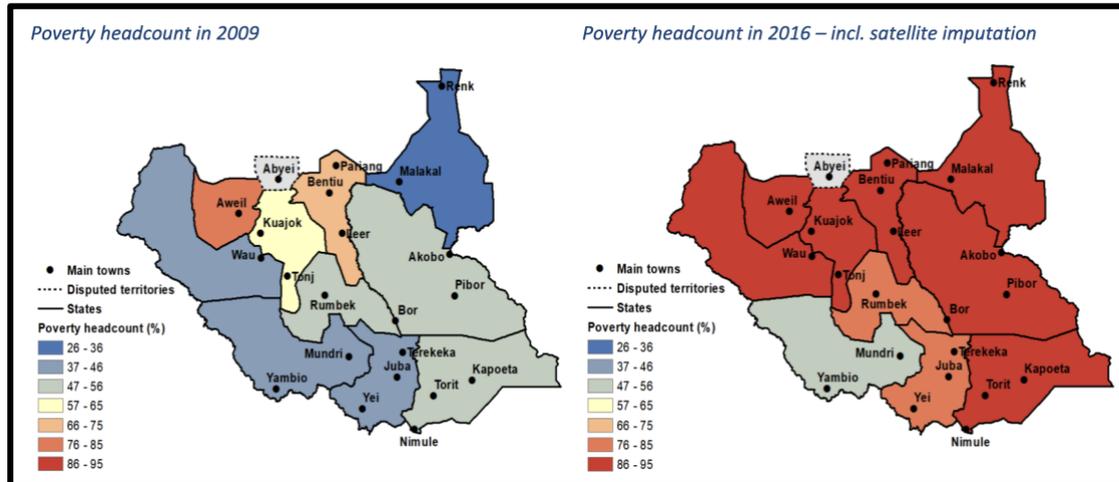


Chart note: Graph draws on data from National Baseline Household Survey from 2009 and High Frequency Survey from 2015-2017.

Source: Utz Johann, P., et al. (2018), *Impact of Conflict and Shocks on Poverty: South Sudan Poverty Assessment 2017 (English)*. Washington, D.C. World Bank Group.²⁵

A significant number of Sida's contributions are part of large, country-wide programmes that receive support from several donors. In the case of the HPF, which by far is the largest Sida-supported contribution in South Sudan, coverage during its peak²⁶ covered 8 out of 10 states, where the World Bank covered the remaining two, Upper Nile and Jonglei, with a programme mirroring that of the HPF.

Based on a desk review, the Evaluation has mapped Sida's contributions (see Figure 9, map on the left side) in South Sudan for 2019, illustrating that Sida has a country-wide presence, with contributions covering all 10 states. The country-wide coverage is a consequence of the programmatic approach and multi-donor cooperation again emphasising the relevance of Sida's strategic level approach and use of modalities.

Several contributions also specifically targeted areas based on on-going conflict clusters (e.g. UNDP Peace and Community Cohesion Project) or areas with large, displaced populations.

²⁵ Pape, U. J. et al. (2018) *Impact of Conflict and Shocks on Poverty: South Sudan Poverty Assessment 2017 (English)*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.

²⁶ At the outset, the HPF covered 6 states. This expanded to 8 but was reduced to 7 in the third phase of the Fund, when FCDO faced budget cuts.

Figure 9. Geographic location of Sida's contributions and the concentration of IDPs and conflict incidents per country in 2021

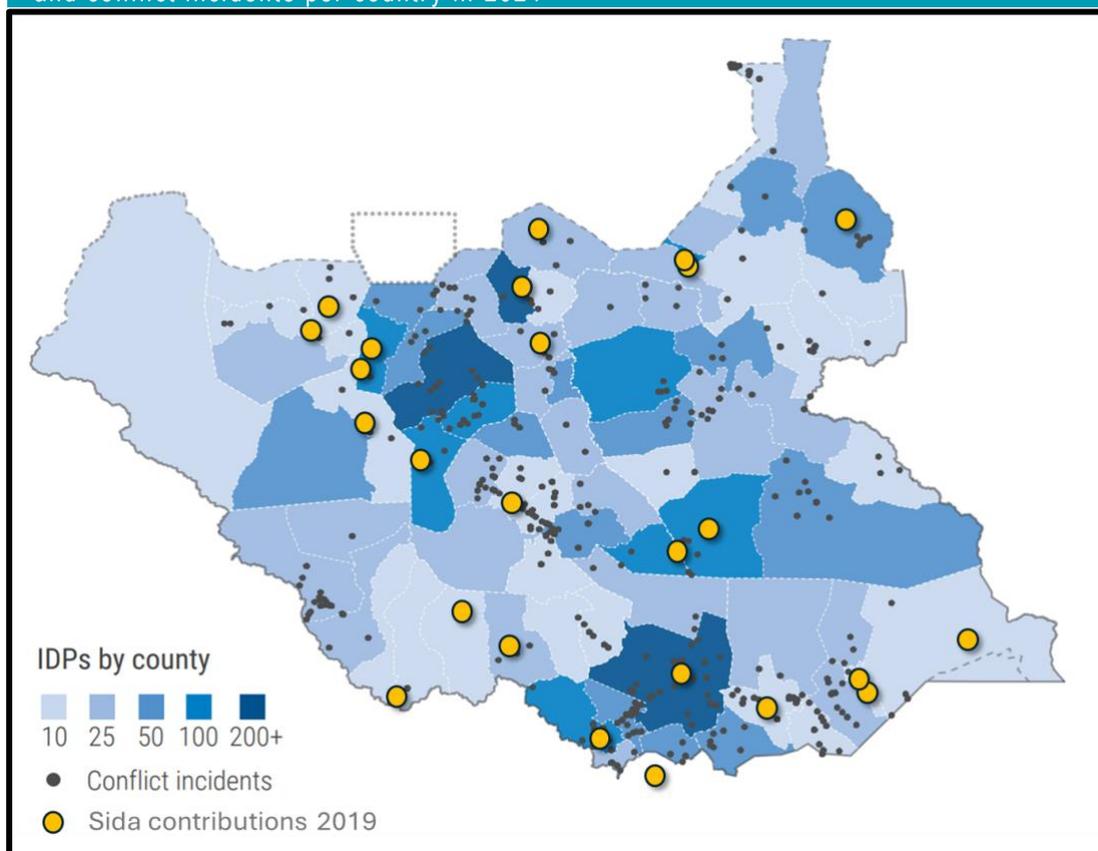


Chart note: The map overlays UN OCHA's Humanitarian Needs Overview mapping of IDPs in South Sudan and conflict incidents in 2021 with our own mapping of Sida's contributions' presence across the same counties (active contributions in 2019).

Source (without Sida contributions): UN OCHA, (2022) Humanitarian Needs Overview South Sudan. Accessed at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-needs-overview-2022-february-2022>.

Humanitarian aid tends to follow different principles than development cooperation; many of Sida's contributions funded through the Strategy for Humanitarian Aid do not have predefined target groups, nor geographic focus areas, but rather are allotted based on humanitarian needs analyses. Sida's approach, in accordance with humanitarian principles, take the widespread and the recurring and rapidly shifting emergency situations into account. For example, the South Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview (2019) estimated that two thirds of the population were in dire need of some form of humanitarian protection and assistance in 2019 (see Figure 10 and 11).

Based on the analysis of needs and the geographical distribution of Sida's contributions, our findings point to the portfolio working in relevant areas of the country, not only to address poverty (the economic dimension), but also drivers of conflict, displacement and emergency needs arising in the country.

Figure 10. The geographical distribution of people in emergency needs (October 2018)

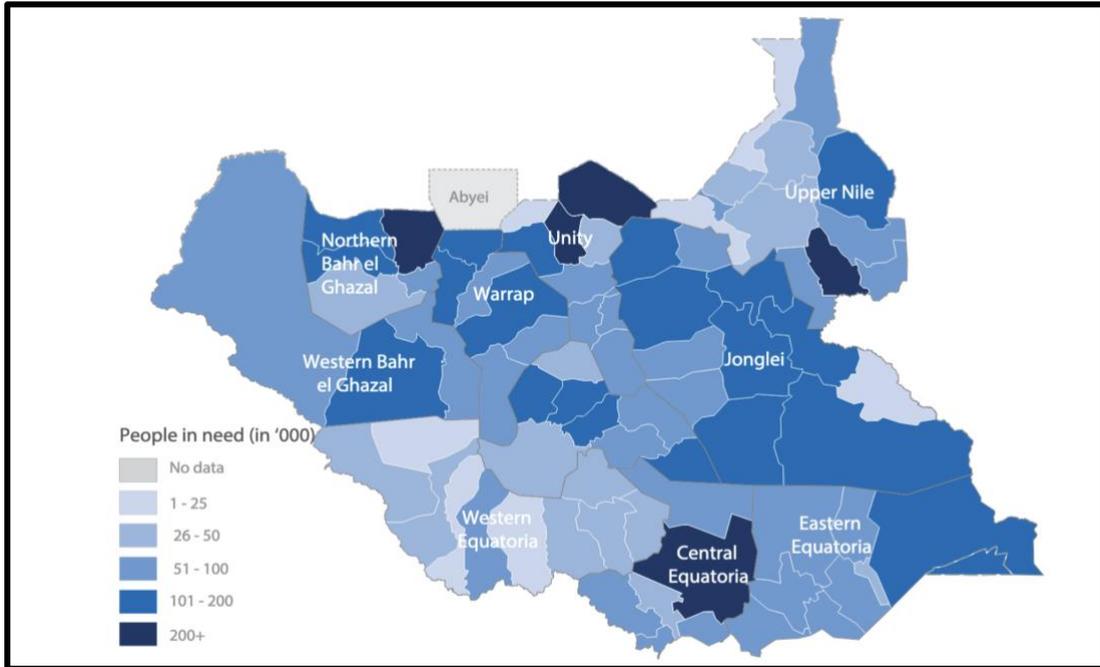
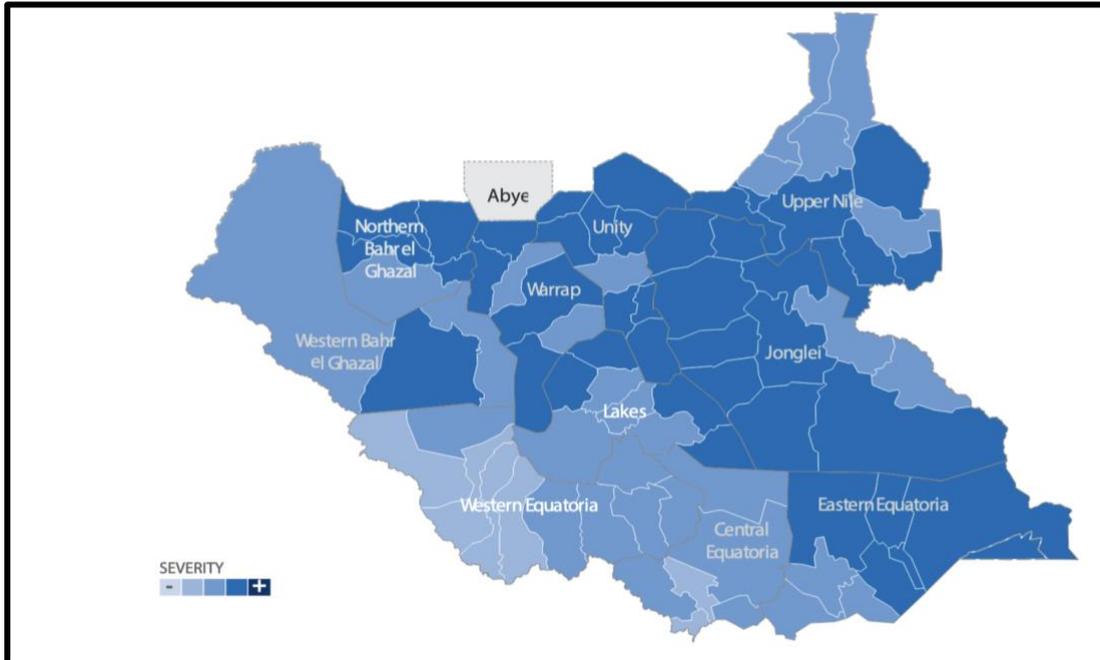


Figure 11. The geographical distribution of severity of need



Source (Figure 11 & 12): UN OCHA. (2018). 2019 South Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview. Draws on data from OCHA and partners, October 2018.

Notes (Figure 11): OCHA draws on the Joint and Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF) standards to estimate the severity of intersectoral humanitarian needs, with a 5-point scale within each sector ranging from 1 (minor or no needs) to 5 (total sectoral collapse).

3.4 TARGET GROUPS

This final section considers the relevance of the portfolio with regard to the groups of the population that are targeted. As noted previously, contributions in the 2019 South Sudan portfolio generally work directly with people living in poverty (i.e., rather than indirectly benefitting people living in poverty through a longer chain of results). Sida does not have a central definition of when a person is considered to live in multidimensional poverty - a person living in multidimensional poverty is deprived in the resource dimension and one or all of the other dimensions. Thus, Sida's target group (people living in poverty) excludes those that are resource rich but deprived in other dimensions.

Applying this definition to the context of South Sudan - one of the poorest countries in the world – means a significant portion the population fall under the 'correct' target group (i.e., people living in poverty). Across several measures of poverty, the majority of the South Sudanese population are impoverished. In 2022, UNDP estimated that 92% of the population are multidimensionally poor.²⁷ Likewise, the World Bank estimates that 8 in 10 individuals in the population were poor in 2021, living below the national poverty line; and of these, 7 in 10 lived in extreme poverty.²⁸

During the evaluation team's consultations with Sida staff and partners in Juba (field visit, February 2024) it was noted that Sida's partners base their targeting on relevant analysis and most importantly the Humanitarian Needs Overviews, local level conflict analysis, displacement analysis, specific needs analysis and data, to the extent data is available. As such, while Sida staff highlighted that the MDPA process deepened their understanding of the depth and multidimensional nature of poverty, it did not result in a clearly defined target group for Sida and partners to work with.

In general, the development cooperation contributions in South Sudan have not narrowly defined their target groups: they broadly focus on vulnerable, conflict affected women, children and youth, Internally Displaced People (IDPs), and in some cases on persons living with disabilities. These are broadly speaking the same groups that were identified in Sweden's MDPA for South Sudan, but they nevertheless still cover a considerable segment of the population.

In line with Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy (which was still active in 2019), special attention was given to gender equality and on the Women Peace and Security agenda. Sweden has, for example, been an active player in securing space for the Women Peace

²⁷ UNDP. (2022). *Human Development Report, 2021-2022. Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World*. UNDP: New York, 2022.

²⁸ Adoho, F. (2024). *Poverty & Equity Brief – South Sudan*. World Bank: October 2024.

and Security agenda in the implementation of the Peace Agreement. Moreover, the focus on service sectors, education and health, in the portfolio aims to improve particularly the situation for women and girls who have very low literacy, poor access to maternal and child health services, and are victims of Sexual & Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).

With regard to humanitarian action, target groups are understood as populations in need of emergency assistance.²⁹ 2019 was a year where a combination of manmade conflicts and natural disasters across all states affected 7.2 million people (equivalent to two thirds of the population being “in need”). According to the Humanitarian Response Plan, 5.7 million were targeted with lifesaving assistance, and 5.3 million (93%) of them were reached.³⁰

It is therefore our view that Sida’s contributions target relevant populations, broadly speaking, to have an impact on people living in poverty in South Sudan. Our review indicated that specific vulnerable groups, such as people living with disabilities and IDPs are also targeted by the contributions. Likewise, there is no evidence to indicate that the humanitarian contributions fall short in targeting those with the direst needs.

²⁹ Blanket Targeting: Aiding an entire population or geographic area without differentiation. Targeted Approach: Distinguishing between those who need assistance and those who do not. This involves using targeting criteria to select groups, households, or individuals who are most vulnerable and require humanitarian aid.¹

³⁰UN OCHA (2019). *South Sudan Humanitarian Response in Review*.

Evaluation of Sida's South Sudan Portfolio

This report assesses Sida's South Sudan portfolio across all sectors and strategies in 2019.

Main evaluation method: we reviewed the 32 active contributions in South Sudan, with special focus on the 8 contributions in the South Sudan Strategy.

Positives: Given the pervasive needs and widespread poverty in South Sudan, we find it relevant that Sida's portfolio of contributions directly address people living in poverty. The widespread poverty in South Sudan has allowed for the target groups to be defined rather broadly (i.e., women and girls being the primary target group). Nevertheless, our review indicated that specific vulnerable groups, such as people living with disabilities and IDPs are also targeted by the contributions.

Potential shortcomings: Donors' efforts to build Government capacity have yielded limited results. Directly addressing people living in poverty has its limitations in terms of sustainability: Sida's partners deliver primarily direct services or support to the population, rather than indirectly alleviating poverty through institution-building or systems strengthening. However, the challenges of working with the Government leave few viable alternatives.



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