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Efforts to avoid lethal violence require consideration of the dynamics of conflict. It is important to work flexibly but also to have a clear strategic framework, not least for reasons of accountability and assessment of success. These are some of the conclusions in a recent evaluation of Sida's Peace Building and Conflict Management activities.



South Africa. Peace monitors in discussion with a member of the security forces. Photo: Gustaf Eneroth /Phoenix.

Lessons of Peace Building

Background

In the post-cold war era, where most armed conflicts take place within rather than between states, many Governments, Sweden's included, have become increasingly engaged in resolving conflicts and promoting peace. Sida supports various activities to prevent outbreaks, escalation or return to violence. It also finances "peace building" projects, aimed at influencing the parties involved in on-going armed conflicts. "Conflict management" is used by Sida as a generic term for aid-financed projects implemented during armed conflicts. This includes a broad range of activities such as establishing forums for dialogue, refugee assistance, strengthening of independent media, support to human rights organizations and much more besides. Target groups for activities in this field can be anything from selected key individuals or groups of persons, formal and informal leaderships, to private and government organizations, institutions and bodies.

In the late 1990s, Sida developed an *Action Programme for Peace, Democracy and Human Rights*, as well as a *Strategy for Conflict Management and Peace Building*. The Swedish government has asked Sida to further develop its strategies in this area.

The Evaluation

In order to promote its institutional learning, to guide decision-making and to enhance the development of policies and methodologies in this area, Sida's Department for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organizations and Humanitarian Assistance commissioned an evaluative study of Sida's support to conflict management and peace building interventions. The study was carried out in 2000 by a consortium of Scandinavian consultants: SIPU International AB Stockholm; Centre for Development Research (CDR), Copenhagen; and International Peace Research Institute (PRIO), Oslo. It centres around five case studies of Sida supported projects in the field of conflict resolution and peace building, representing a broad thematic and geographical spread:

- **Israel/Palestine:** *Centre for Research and Information (IPCRI)*, a joint Palestinian-Israeli Centre promoting independent research and information.
- Projects in **the West Balkans** managed by the *Olof Palme International Centre (OPC)*, including support to civil society, refugee return, support to a free and independent press and promotion of human rights.

Assessment of Lessons Learned from Sida Support to Conflict Management and Peace Building (Final Report, State of the Art/Annotated Bibliography and Case Studies)

Björn Bengtsson,
Barbro Rönarmo, Dan Smith, et. al.
Sida Evaluation 00/37,
0037:1, 0037:2

Working in volatile environments requires administrative flexibility within clear strategic frameworks.

Involvement of committed local institutions does not ensure sustainable local institutions.

- **Liberia:** *Bridges for Peace*, focusing on the role of women in reconciliation and peace building, and the *Star Radio Project*, an effort to contribute to peace through mass media.
- **South Africa:** Seven projects channelled through *Diakonia* and various local non-governmental organizations concerned with conflict resolution and respect for human rights.
- **East Timor:** A project of the Department of Peace and Conflicts Research (PCR) at Uppsala University, which promotes a dialogue between the conflicting parties.

The evaluation is not an assessment of the projects as such but of Sida and its co-operation with the above mentioned organizations. In their assessment, the evaluators used a modified version of the criteria developed by the Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Assistance, ALNAP (*see box*). All case studies except East Timor included field visits.

The evaluation also comprised a bibliographical review to reflect the current state of the art of peace building. The findings from the case studies, set against the bibliographical review, form the basis of a large number of conclusions and recommendations.

The evaluation is published by Sida under the title *Assessment of Lessons Learned from Sida Support to Conflict Management and Peace Building* (three separate papers: Final Report, State of the Art/Annotated Bibliography and Case Studies, Sida Evaluation Nos 00/37, 0037:1 and 0037:2).

Findings & Conclusions

Sida has provided project support in a variety of ways, which is an important condition for work in the area of conflict management and peace building. For some of the projects, Sida uses an intermediary organization like *Diakonia* or the Olof Palme International Centre, while other organizations are given direct funding in the field, such as the Israel/Palestine Centre for Research and Information. A third category of projects are those requiring direct field management by a Swedish organization, like the Uppsala University PCR in the East Timor project.

The projects studied were generally found appropriate to the circumstances in the region in which they operated. This was true even of some projects that were not originally conceived, designed and categorized as outright peace building projects, for example, some of *Diakonia's* projects in South Africa. However, the evaluators expressed concern at project documentation sometimes lacking arguments that logically linked the activities to the conflict situation.

Projects in this field are bound to be unpredictable and proper timing is crucial. The authors argue that where Sida's routines clash with the messy reality of violent conflict it is the routines that should give way.

The evaluation notes that both Sida and the recipients have shown considerable flexibility during implementation of the various projects. Sida has been willing to alter major sub-goals and to add and cancel activities as necessary, and it has maintained a continuous dialogue with project partners.

Meanwhile, it is important not to be too flexible as this may make it impossible to assess goal fulfilment and to hold anybody accountable for results. Clear strategic frameworks, outlining overall and longer-term objectives, are needed to balance administrative flexibility. Flexibility also demands intensified monitoring and a sustained dialogue between the parties concerned.

The projects studied were found to have considerable strengths in terms of local involvement and commitment, but this does not automatically create sustainable local institutions. This problem is illustrated by the joint Israeli-Palestinian think tank IPCRI, which is a local organization with permanent presence, but still wholly dependent on external support. Many organizations are strongly dependent on a limited number of key persons. The report concludes that to the degree that Sida is committed to institution building, it has to include this element into project planning and make the necessary resources available.

Communication, organization and participation within conflict management projects may, according to the evaluation team, be decisively affected by gender inequality. The report notes that it has generally been difficult to

mainstream gender issues in the projects reviewed. The starting point has been an unpromising, male-dominated environment. It is therefore a positive sign that the projects in the Balkans, South Africa and Liberia explicitly address gender issues. Sensitivity is needed to win project partners and participants' positive response to this crucial theme, the evaluators say.

The bibliographical review points to a considerable literature, mounting experience and a growing body of theories and concepts regarding conflict management and peace building. The general thinking of Sida and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in this field is closely in line with mainstream thinking. However, there is a gap between theory and practice. Much of what is done in the field is still designed on the basis of untested assumptions. Awareness of existing knowledge and thinking needs to be expanded within Sida and partner organizations.

With all their strengths and weaknesses, the projects under review have made important contributions towards peace, the evaluators conclude. They also note that Sweden is in a comparatively good position to work in the area of conflict resolution and peace building. The challenge will be to learn to operate in volatile and unpredictable environments where risks are high, but also the potential gains.

Recommendations

The report includes a large number of recommendations, including the following:

- *Flexibility* at the operational level should be balanced by clear and explicit frameworks at the *strategic* level. These frameworks should state the project goals and justify them in terms of an assessment of the conflict situation in its regional context. Project activities should be specified with sub-goals and deliverables. The strategic framework should be updated when the conflict situation changes.
- The bibliographical review corroborates that there is no ready formula for conflict resolution and peace building. Attempting to generate a template for Sida's peace-building activities would therefore be

counter-productive. Instead, the evaluators suggest that Sida develop *a range of approaches* to various types of conflict related situations and build the competence necessary to handle the respective approaches. Each project could then be designed drawing from a wide basket of theories, concepts and possible approaches.

- More attention should be paid to the *building of sustainable local institutions*. The report highlights the need to focus on development of institutional competence, such as making management advice available, as well as provide assistance to develop strategic plans, training and core financial support.
- The issue of *financial sustainability* should be addressed from the start of projects. Local implementing organizations should be encouraged to develop realistic strategies for a diversified funding base.

The following criteria were used to assess projects:

Appropriateness: Are activities appropriate to the circumstances? Is there knowledge and understanding of the conflict dynamics and the local situation?

Coherence: Is the project externally coherent (no duplication or contradiction with other activities in the regional context etc.) and internally coherent (with overall policies, strategies, project goals and activities)?

Connectedness: Do short-term activities comply with long-term development considerations? Is the project sustainable?

Gender Equality: Does the project consider gender perspectives?

Flexibility: Are actors willing to alter major sub-goals and add and delete activities? What is the speed of communication and response between partners?

Location(s) of responsibility: Is there a clear and viable division of labour between partners?

Pressure for success/Possibility of failure: Are the levels of ambition realistic, and is there a will to accept failure and learn from it?

Institutional competence/Staff base: Are learning processes that can develop institutional competence, part of the project work?



Mine clearance in Melange, Angola. In addition to mine clearance Humanitarian Mine Action involves the reconstruction and rehabilitation of affected areas and communities. Photo: Trygve Bølstad/Phoenix.

Humanitarian needs should guide mine clearance

Background

The concept of Humanitarian Mine Action was established in the early 1990s. Until then, the landmine problem had tended to be seen primarily as a technical problem, with the result that other important aspects, not least the varying impacts of mines and mine clearance operations on local human populations as well as on the local and national economy, were neglected. Today there is a realization that mine clearance has to pay more attention to social factors. The concept of Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) extends beyond the simple clearance of mines and also includes mine-awareness, victim-assistance and advocacy to stigmatize the use of landmines. HMA should also be part of a broader reconstruction effort. While the goal is the eradication of landmines HMA also includes the recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation of affected areas and communities.

For a number of years Sweden was one of the world's leading donors to mine clearance and HMA. The largest contributions have been directed to Angola, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Cambodia and Northern Iraq. While Sida has supported a reorientation towards a broader HMA approach and the building of local national capacities, in practice mine clearance ac-

counts for approximately 85% of expenditure. Sida has also lacked a specific policy guiding its involvement in mine action.

The Evaluation

For an assessment of its contribution to mine action and to elicit recommendations on how to develop its policy guidelines Sida's Department for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organizations and Humanitarian Assistance commissioned an evaluation in early 2000. The evaluation specifically assesses strengths and weaknesses of Swedish initiatives and capacities. In addition, it analyses three central issues: impact assessment methodologies, implementation channels and co-ordination. The overarching ambition of the evaluation is to gain a better understanding of the relationship between mine action and contextual factors, such as local people's livelihoods, infrastructure and economic activities.

The evaluation was carried out by a team from the Swedish Institute of Public Administration (SIPU International) in Stockholm, and the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO) in Oslo, under the team leadership of Göran Andersson. It involved documentary reviews, field visits to Bosnia, Nicaragua, Kosovo and Afghanistan; interviews with key ac-

Sida's Contribution to Humanitarian Mine Action.

Göran Andersson, K. Berg Harpviken, A.S Millard, K.E. Kjellman, A. Strand
Sida Evaluation 01/06

tors and an analysis of community studies carried out by PRIO. The final report was delivered in March 2001 and is published under the title *Sida's Contribution to Humanitarian Mine Action* (Sida Evaluation 01/06).

Findings and recommendations

Analysing various mine clearing operations in which Sida has been involved, e.g. in Iraq, Angola and Nicaragua, the evaluation finds reason to recommend a number of measures that can form the basis of a consistent Sida policy on Humanitarian Mine Action. Central to this is an increased emphasis on impact assessments, analysing how mines and mine clearance affect the local population, the infrastructure and the economy. Such assessments should form the basis of decisions on policy and priorities and thus be an instrument for maximizing impact.

- *Impact assessments* should be built on composite indicators (including the nature of mine contamination; the number of recent victims and use or access blocked by the mines, e.g. crop land, water points, residential areas), complemented by economic analyses and, if possible, by community studies. Analytical capacity for this as well as for monitoring should be developed by international and local HMA organizations. Sida must, according to the evaluation, insist on any programme it supports having an impact assessment system in place. Sida must see support to such assessments as essential and should reorient its funding, giving priority to impact assessments.
- Internationally, the most important *implementation channels* for HMA are the UN, through its Mine Action Centres, NGOs, governments and, increasingly, business undertakings. The Mine Action Centres' double role as co-ordinators and implementers has, according to the evaluators, restricted innovation and flexibility and the building of national capacity. The centres should, according to the evaluation, be restricted to their co-ordinating role, leaving implementation to NGOs, governments and business undertakings.

The strength of NGOs lies in their flexibility at local level, their ability to implement innovative

responses and their assessments of impact. In contrast, governments provide a solid basis for creating national capacities and co-ordination. Government channels are preferable when political and military conditions allow their involvement. Under other circumstances NGOs, and increasingly business undertakings, are useful channels. Sida should assess the strengths and weaknesses of these new commercial channels while building national capacities.

- The *co-ordination* of HMA should be the responsibility of a national entity whenever possible. Mine Action Centres should therefore be located within national institutions and transfer authority at an early stage. Sida should always ensure the presence of viable co-ordination mechanisms for programmes in which it is engaged. The co-ordination between HMA and the broader humanitarian sector of reconstruction and development also needs to improve. HMA and humanitarian assistance should be integrated from the early planning stages.
- In relation to *Swedish initiatives*, the evaluation specifically looked at a few research projects concerning de-mining techniques, a mine-dog project in Cambodia and seconded Swedish technical experts. The results, according to the evaluation, have been largely negative. The initiatives have lacked sustainability and have not been effective in transferring knowledge. Sida should, according to the evaluators, not involve itself in technology-oriented research, which is high-risk and expensive.

Sida has developed some guiding principles for HMA. These emphasize humanitarian needs, the building of national capacities and HMA as part of reconstruction efforts. But the evaluation finds that decisions have often been taken in response to sudden needs or to political instructions rather than being based on a consistent policy. This reactive, rather than proactive, position, as well as the flexibility characterizing Sida, was constructive in the early stages of HMA, but today Sida needs to develop a consistent policy in the HMA area. It should also apply longer funding horizons and should reconsider its actual practice of prioritizing clearance.

Sweden has lacked a specific policy guiding its support to mine action. Sida thus needs to develop a comprehensive policy position.

The central challenge today is to maintain political interest in mine action, to ensure funding and to promote responses at all levels that can lead to sustainable long-term benefits for those most seriously affected by landmines.

Posttidning B

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Swedish International Development
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S-10525 Stockholm, Sweden

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Assessment of Lessons Learned from Sida Support to Conflict Management and Peace Building.

Annex 1–5, case studies. Ivar Evensmo, Hilde Henriksen Waage, Joakim Gundel, Jennifer Schirmer, Björn Bengtson, Barbro Ronnmö, Dan Smith.

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