



Sida Evaluations Newsletter

No 3/01

SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Assumptions and Partnerships in the Making of a Country Strategy. An evaluation of the Swedish-Mozambican experience.

Marc Wuyts et al.
Sida Evaluation 01/07.

Making the country strategy into a strategic tool

Background

The emergence of country strategies as tools for aid management reflects a greater concern with the macro policy environment. In addition, the move towards partnerships and consensus building involving recipients and other donors implies that donor agencies develop tools to manage a more long-term strategic approach to development co-operation. This process also provides room for consensus building within the individual agency concerned.

Sweden introduced Country Strategies for its co-operation with partner countries in the mid 1990s. These strategies use a five-year perspective and are formulated in a process involving the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sida's regional and sector departments, the Swedish embassies and partner country representatives (see box).

The question as to whether the country strategies have indeed become the strategic tools they were set out to be was brought to the fore towards the end of the first strategy periods. In 2000 an evaluation of the Country Strategy for Tanzania was carried out (Sida Evaluation 00/22, presented in issue 1/01 of this newsletter). It concluded that the strategy, although relevant to Swedish objectives and Tanzanian needs, in part failed to carry its analysis into a coherent programme responding to the analysis. This could partly be explained by the fact that ongoing programmes predated the strategy and were allowed to continue on the basis of sector decisions rather than being steered by the strategy. The Tanzanian study was followed by the present evaluation of the Country Strategy (1996–2001) for Mozambique, one of the largest recipients of Swedish development co-operation funding.

The Evaluation

The main purpose of this evaluation, according to its Terms of Reference, was to provide Sida with an independent view of the co-operation to serve as input into the next country strategy process for Mozambique. Focus was to be placed on the relevance of the present country strategy and the coherence between the various steering documents. Based on this, recommendations about how to improve development co-operation in the next strategy period were to be made.

Analysing the strategy formulation process and the operationalization of that strategy, the evaluation focuses on a few crucial issues, in particular:

- coherence and voice in the formulation process
- the role of assumptions about causal links between objectives and activities
- the use of the margin – the room for new decisions during the strategy period

Sweden establishes country strategies to guide its development co-operation

Under instructions from, and in co-operation with, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sida prepares country strategies in dialogue with the partner country and other stakeholders. Building blocks of these strategies are a country analysis, a results analysis of previous co-operation and policies formulated in Sida's Action Programmes and in Government directives on Swedish overall objectives for development. The country programme is developed on the basis of the country strategy. In Sida the development of the strategy involves the regional department, sector departments and the embassy, with the regional department leading and co-ordinating the process.

Assumptions underlying choices of action need to be made explicit in order to enable the exploration of viable alternatives.

The evaluation was mainly carried out in Mozambique, preceded by a desk study in Sweden. In order to assess how the strategy had been operationalised, the evaluation team designed a “country strategy matrix” based on fact sheets for all projects and programmes. The matrix contained both quantitative and qualitative data, making it possible to view projects and programmes against objectives, assumptions, intended beneficiaries and results.

In addition, a number of projects were chosen as “case studies” to be analysed, not for their own results, but to give qualitative insights into the country strategy process. The cases raise issues with respect to various inconsistencies and tensions in the operationalization of the strategy.

The evaluation was carried out by a team of consultants from Holland, South Africa, Mozambique and Sweden, and presented by Marc Wuyts (team leader), Helena Dolny and Bridget O’Laughlin from the Institute of Social Studies, Holland. The report is published under the title “*Assumptions and Partnerships in the Making of a Country Strategy. An evaluation of the Swedish-Mozambican experience.*” (Sida Evaluation Report 01/07, Stockholm, August 2001).

Findings

Country strategies are necessary

During fieldwork, the evaluators often encountered scepticism about the usefulness of a country strategy. The arguments were that a five-year strategy is an inflexible tool, that new development co-operation mechanisms involving many donors make a Swedish strategy redundant and that it is the Mozambican gov-

ernment, not the donor, that needs a strategy. However, the evaluation team maintains that the country strategy process *can and should be* a useful instrument for the construction of development co-operation that is both relevant and coherent.

A strategy is also needed as a basis for articulating the organization’s voice and objectives in joint actions, such as when developing a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp). Consensus will have a point of gravity where a balance of voices is struck (see Figure 1). In order to effectively articulate views and objectives, a strategy is necessary. Likewise a recipient government obviously needs a strategy, but even in a close partnership, Sida will have its own objectives, which need to be formulated and argued in a strategy.

Furthermore, Sida needs to be flexible in the sense of responding to continuously changing circumstances. Without a strategy there is a risk that choices made along the way become individualized or driven by special interests within the donor organization.

Coherence and voice

The evaluation found that dialogue within the country strategy process itself is very limited. Constructive dialogue is difficult to achieve at inter-ministerial level. More often, dialogue takes place at the sector-based programme level. However, more formal as well as informal opportunities for dialogue are needed which include the civil society, representing the ultimate partners in Mozambique.

According to the evaluation, one of the achievements of the country strategy process is nevertheless, that it, to a certain degree, has succeeded in giving a platform to Mozambican voices. This said, the evaluation examines some problematic aspects of partnership such as the inequality between donor and beneficiary and the multitude of partners.

While examining the process of formulating the Mozambique country strategy, the evaluators often uncovered differences in opinion within Sida, and rather than being ‘consensus seeking’ the evaluators describe the agency as ‘conflict absorbing’. Disagreements are not confronted but challenged behind the scenes and unwanted decisions may be ig-

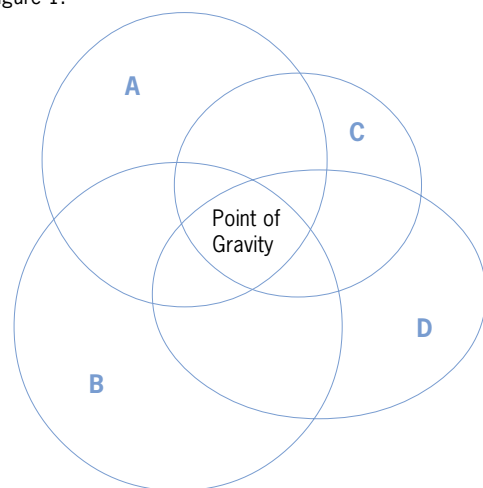


Figure 1. When negotiating a programme, the parties involved need to build consensus. With circles indicating the spheres of choices and acceptable definitions of relevance for each actor (A-D), the point of gravity of their intersection indicates where consensus can be reached and a platform for action made feasible. Consensus can be more or less in line with the definitions of relevance used by each actor.

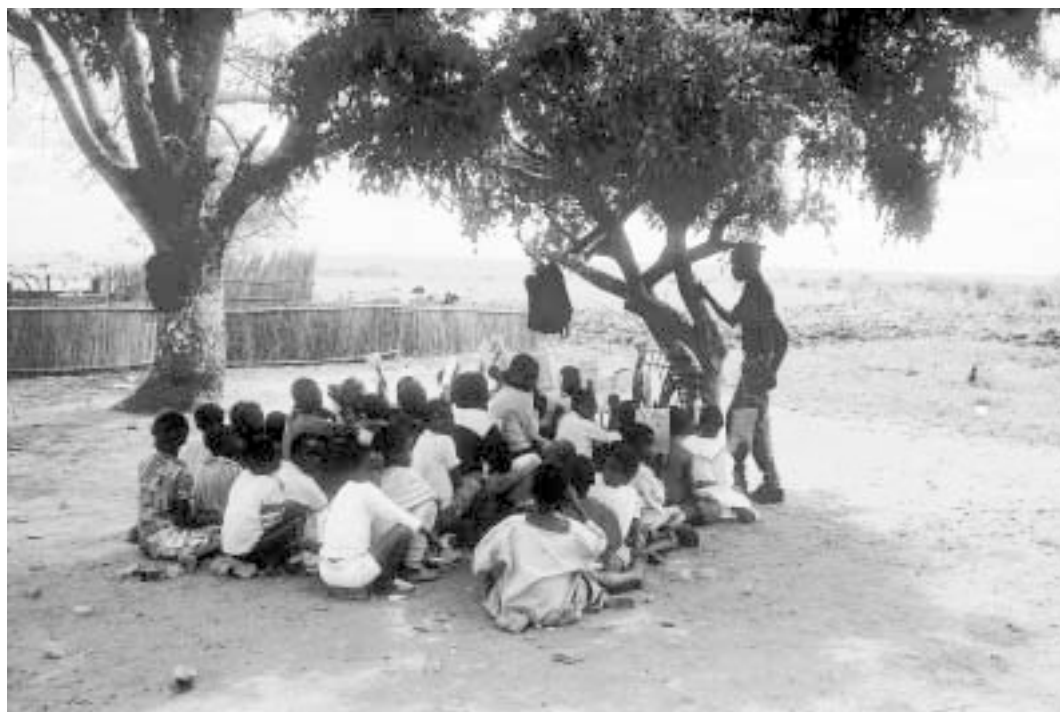


Foto: Hans Persson

Primary education has for a number of years been one of the main areas for Swedish support in Mozambique. Together with the Mozambican government and other donors a Sector Wide Approach has been developed.

nored. Differences between the embassy, the Regional Department for Africa and the sector departments in Stockholm seem to have compromised strategy formulation and implementation. The effect was both a flawed strategy and incoherent implementation.

The evaluation further finds Sida to have an 'oral culture' in the negative sense in that important discussions are not documented. In order to be able to use a strategy effectively such discussions, containing important analyses and assumptions, need to be documented. Furthermore, the use of log-frame analysis would greatly enhance the quality of documentation, as well as establishing an improved system for archival and retrieval of documents.

The role of assumptions

Initially concluding that there is a coherence between the country strategy and underlying documents – the Swedish parliamentary objectives and the country and results analyses for Mozambique – the evaluators still find that the country strategy *has not* been a useful instrument in the shaping of Swedish development co-operation in Mozambique, due to the weaknesses inherent in the process.

Central to the discussion of these weaknesses is how *assumptions* are made and how the *margin of manoeuvre* is used; assumptions be-

ing the reasoning behind choice of action and the margin being the room for change within the time horizon of the strategy period.

The strategy contains a number of implicit assumptions about the links between objectives and the strategy/programme. These links between the Swedish objectives and alternatives chosen or dropped are not spelt out. Reading the strategy it is not possible to really know why certain areas for action were chosen and others not.

For example, if the objective is to reduce rural poverty and the activity chosen is the rehabilitation of rural roads, the strategy should clearly state that the assumption is that the opening up of rural roads will allow improved rural trade. The intermediate objective is then to assure road access of rural communities to markets and the expected impact is that trade is facilitated and the costs of consumer goods lowered. The logical link between overall objective – intermediate objective – assumption – activity and expected impact is then made clear.

By not stating the alternatives and the assumptions made in choosing certain alternatives over others, the strategy does not become the strategic tool envisaged. Making assumptions about linkages explicit also makes it easier to entertain alternatives and test assumptions against reality.

Making room for listening to different voices and recognizing the difference between them is important in forging relevance through partnerships.

Visualising “the margin”

Concerning the strategic use of “the margin”, the evaluators point to the fact that the room for manoeuvre within the time horizon of the strategy period is restricted by earlier commitments and the strategies of the partner government. This “margin” of manoeuvre has to be managed as effectively as possible as old programmes are renewed and new ones introduced.

The evaluation finds that the margin has not been used strategically. Each programme sector appeared to be operating with its own rolling plan and the country strategy to have been made redundant as a management tool. To avoid such sector-driven and fragmented decisions, the strategy needs to allow flexibility within a set of strategic guidelines and principles. This can be managed, the evaluators suggest, through the use of a country strategy matrix as a management tool.

By creating such a ‘country strategy matrix’ on programmes and projects, the evaluators checked relevance and coherence in the operationalisation of the strategy for Mozambique. They found a number of what they call anomalies – silences and gaps – where stated objectives are not matched by activities.

Anomalies were found when, despite the decision to concentrate support to fewer sectors or programmes, this was not done. Additionally some programmes were phased out in spite of decisions to continue and vice versa. The evaluation team further found a large number of silences where linkages between activities and objectives were unclear or missing. A rough overview showed that not even half of the activities were *directly* relevant to Sida’s overarching objectives of poverty reduction, gender quality, democracy and environmental protection. This shows that assumptions about relevance are often vague and unclear.

When creating this matrix the evaluators also found a lack of logical framework planning and a chaotic data management system.

Recommendations

On the basis of its analysis the evaluation presents a limited number of recommendations. Among these are the following:

- In formulating the country strategy, assumptions should be clarified or made explicit. A documentary record should explain why certain options were considered more relevant than others.
- In-house documents registering differing positions within Sida and of partners should be annexed to the country analysis.
- A more committed use of the logical framework analysis (LFA) should be employed.
- Priorities and assumptions outlined in the country strategy should be revisited during the strategy period, when monitoring results and when developing the subsequent strategy. This implies the use of LFA in results analyses, using the margin in the construction of relevance and maintenance of coherence and creating a more efficient data and archival management system.
- A system of data management, possibly in the form of a country strategy matrix, should be constructed which enables the monitoring of programmes and projects in regard to relevance.
- A system of archival management (preferably web-based) is needed, to make it possible for programmers to find information more easily.
- The centre of gravity in decision making for the management of the country programme should shift to the embassy, with sector departments as technical expertise units and the regional department as coordinator.

The strategy has to be **operational** within the margin set by previous commitments and partner agendas.

Responding to HIV/AIDS



Kibera community centre, Kenya, the largest slum area in Africa with over 1 million people. HIV/AIDS incidence is very high. A social worker taking the blood pressure.

In many countries, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has long since passed from being a health problem to becoming a major development issue with implications at all levels of society. This perspective was emphasized in the Swedish strategy for HIV/AIDS adopted by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 1999: *Investing for Future Generations – Sweden's Response to HIV/AIDS*. According to this document, both the immediate and underlying causes of HIV/AIDS need to be addressed, as well as immediate and long-term effects.

How has Sida responded to this strategy? To answer this question, Sida's Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit (UTV) has decided to launch an evaluation to be initiated in approximately one year's time. To prepare the ground for the evaluation, UTV commissioned a "baseline study" in mid 2001. This study describes Sida's response to HIV/AIDS, as documented in its development co-operation in 1999, the year in which the strategy was adopted. The purpose is to facilitate comparisons over time as well as to identify relevant evaluation issues.

The study, carried out by Swedish Boman & Peck Konsult AB and Social Development Consultants, SODECO, was published under the title "*HIV/AIDS-related Support through Sida – A Baseline Study*" (Sida Studies in Evaluation, 01/2, October 2001).

It notes that in 1999, Sweden supported almost one hundred interventions with objec-

tives related to HIV/AIDS. They ranged from the MSEK 37 core support to UNAIDS (channelled through the Ministry for Foreign Affairs), to the financing of national HIV/AIDS programmes in sub-Saharan Africa and of a number of smaller-scale projects run by local NGOs. Most projects focus on HIV/AIDS prevention such as raising popular awareness.

However, after examining a limited sample of projects and programmes which do not directly target or focus on the HIV/AIDS problem but are still judged as being of relevance, it is noted that the epidemic is rarely considered. To the extent HIV/AIDS is dealt with, it appears to be the result of individual initiatives within Sida.

The report notes that in 1999 there were no comprehensive guidelines on HIV/AIDS within Sida. The Health Division functioned as focal point but there are no other organizational or managerial arrangements to deal with HIV/AIDS issues.

The attention paid to HIV/AIDS in Sida's country strategies entering into force in 1999 varied from country to country. In Namibia, for example, it is dealt with as a broad development issue while in other cases such as South Africa, no attention whatsoever is paid to HIV/AIDS despite the fact that HIV/AIDS had been emphasized in the underlying country analysis.

This was in 1999. The forthcoming evaluation will show what has happened since.

HIV/AIDS-related Support through Sida – A baseline study. L Peck, K Dahlström, M Hammar skjöld, L Munck. Sida Studies in Evaluation 01/02.

In 1999, Sida supported a wide range of HIV/AIDS related activities, but still lacked a comprehensive strategy.

Three of six African country strategies introduced in 1999 failed to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Posttidning B

Avsändare: Infocenter
Swedish International Development
Cooperation Agency (Sida)
S-10525 Stockholm, Sweden

Recent

Sida Studies in Evaluation:

01/02

HIV/AIDS-Related Support through Sida – A Baseline Study. Lennart Peck, Karin Dahlström, Mikael Hammarskjöld, Lise Munck.

01/01

The Management of Results Information at Sida. Proposals for agency routines and priorities in the information age. Göran Schill.

00/5

Ownership in Focus? Discussion paper for a planned evaluation. Stefan Molund.

00/4

Poverty Reduction, Sustainability and Learning. An evaluability assessment of seven area development projects. Anders Rudqvist, Ian Christoplos, Anna Liljelund.

Recent

Sida Evaluations:

01/33

Sistematización del Proyecto de OPS. Hacia un modelo integral de atención para la violencia intrafamiliar en Centroamérica. Mary Ellsberg, carne Clavel Arcas.

01/32

Review of PAHO's project. Towards an Integrated Model of Care for Family Violence in Central America. Final Report. Mary Ellsberg, Carne Clavel Arcas.

01/31

Sida's Support to the Land Reform Related Activities in Latvia. Mark Doucette, Sue Nichols, Peter Bloch.

01/30

Sida's Support to the Land Reform Related Activities in Lithuania. Mark Doucette, Sue Nichols, Peter Bloch.

01/29

Sida's Support to the Land Reform Related Activities in Poland. Mark Doucette, Sue Nichols, Peter Bloch.

01/28

Cambodian Human Rights and Democracy Organisations: Towards the Future. John L. Vijghen.

01/27

Sida's Support to NUSESA – Network of Users of Scientific Equipment in Eastern and Southern Africa. Eva Selin Lindgren.

01/26

Swedish Support to the Agriculture Sector in Zambia. A.R. James, M. Davelid, T. Breinholt, D. Chitundu, T. Lundström.

01/25

Sida Support to the Social Rehabilitation Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SweBiH). Nils Öström.

01/24

Formative Evaluation of Uganda Land Management Project. Jan Erikson, James Reinier Scheele, Sebina Nalwanda.

01/23

Sida Support County Twinning Programme in the Baltic Countries 1996–2001. Gunnar Olesen, Peter Rekve, Henrik Permin.

01/22

Expanded Support to the International Sciences Programme (ISP) in Uppsala University. David Wield.

01/21

Swedish Support to the Power Sector in Mozambique. Arne Disch, Trond Westernen, Anders Ellegård, Alexandra Silfverstolpe.

01/20

Sida Supported Municipal Twinning Cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe, 1996–2001. Gunnar Olesen, Peter Rekve, Henrik Permin.

01/19

Sewer Pipe Network Renovation Project in Sopot, Poland. Olle Colling.

01/18

Flood Relief Assistance to the Water and Wastewater Services in Raciborz, Nysa and Klodzko, Southern Poland. Olle Colling.

01/17

Swedish-Danish Fund for the Promotion of Gender Equality in Vietnam. Shashi R. Pandey, Darunee Tantiwiranmanond, Ngo Thi Tuan Dung.

01/16

Human Rights Training in Vietnam. Carl-Johan Groth, Simia Ahmadi-Thosten, Clifford Wang, Tran van Nam.

01/15

Follow-up to Social Sector Support to Moldova. Nils Öström.

01/14

Approach and Organisation of Sida Support to Private Sector Development. Sunil Sinha, Julia Hawkins, Anja Beijer och Åsa Teglund.

01/13

Strengthening Local Democracy in North West Russia 1995–2000. Ilari Karppi, Kaisa Lähteenmäki-Smith.

01/12

Sida's Support to the University of Asmara, Eritrea; College of Science and Faculty of Engineering. Eva Selin Lindgren.

01/11

Democracy and Human Rights. An evaluation of Sida's support to five projects in Georgia. Birgitta Berggren, Patrik Jotun.

01/10

Svenska bataljonens humanitära insatser i Kosovo. Maria Broberg Wulff, Karin Ströberg.

01/09

Active Labour Market Policy in Russia. An evaluation of the Swedish technical assistance to the Russian Employment Services 1997–2000. Henrik Huitfeldt.

01/08

NGO Cooperation with Belarus. Evaluation of programme implemented by Forum Syd. Peter Winai.

01/07

Assumptions and Partnerships in the Making of a Country Strategy. An evaluation of the Swedish-Mozambican Experience. Marc Wuyts, Helena Dolny, Bridget O'Laughlin.

01/06

Sida's Contribution to Humanitarian Mine Action. Final report. Göran Andersson, Kristian Berg Harpviken, Ananda S. Millard, Kjell Erling Kjellman, Arne Strand.

01/05

Resource Centre for Panchayat Training and Democratic Process Implemented by SUTRA. Nirmala Buch, Rukmini Rao.

01/04

Learning from Experience. Evaluation of UNICEF's Water and Environmental Sanitation Programme in India, 1996–1998.

Pete Kolsky, Erich Bauman, Ramesh Bhatia, John Chilton, Christine van Wijk.

01/03

Tackling Turmoil of Transition. An evaluation of lessons from Vietnam-Sweden health cooperation 1994 to 2000. Alf Morten Jerve, Gunilla Krantz, Pham Bich San, Paul Spivey, Tran Tuan, Claes Örtendahl.

01/02

Project for Development of Social Work in St Petersburg 1998–2000. Nils Öström, Dmitri Gavra.

01/01

Rural Development and Democratisation in Russia and Estonia. An evaluation of Sida's Support to the Three Projects in Russia and Estonia. Paul Dixelius, Camilla Gramner, Dan Hjalmarsson.

00/41

Water and Environment Project in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Bastiaan de Laat, Erik Arnold, Philip Sowden.

00/40

Swedish Initiative for Support of Sustainable Management of Water Resources in Southern Africa. Len Abrams, Lennart Peck, Klas Sandström.

00/39

Programa de Capacitación en Economía para Funcionarios de la República de Cuba. José Antonio Cuba.

00/38

Fortalecimiento Institucional al Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras. Defensa y protección de los Derechos de la Mujer. Sonia Marlina Dubón.



Sida Evaluations Newsletter presents summaries of evaluations and methodological studies, commissioned by Sida alone or in partnership with other donor agencies. The views and interpretations expressed in the presentations are those of the authors of the reports and should not be attributed to Sida. *Sida Evaluations Newsletter* is published by the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit. Publisher: Stefan Molund. Comments and subscription enquiries may be addressed to the editor: Mr Claes Bennedich, Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit, telephone: +46 (0)8 698 5447, fax +46 (0)8 698 5610, e-mail: claes.bennedich@sida.se. The newsletter is also available on Internet: <http://www.sida.se/evaluation>

Presented and backlisted reports may be ordered from:

Sida's publication service
Phone: +46 (0)8 690 93 80
Fax: +46 (0)8 690 92 66
E-mail: sidaorder@elandersnovum.se

Reports are also available at:

<http://www.sida.se/evaluation>