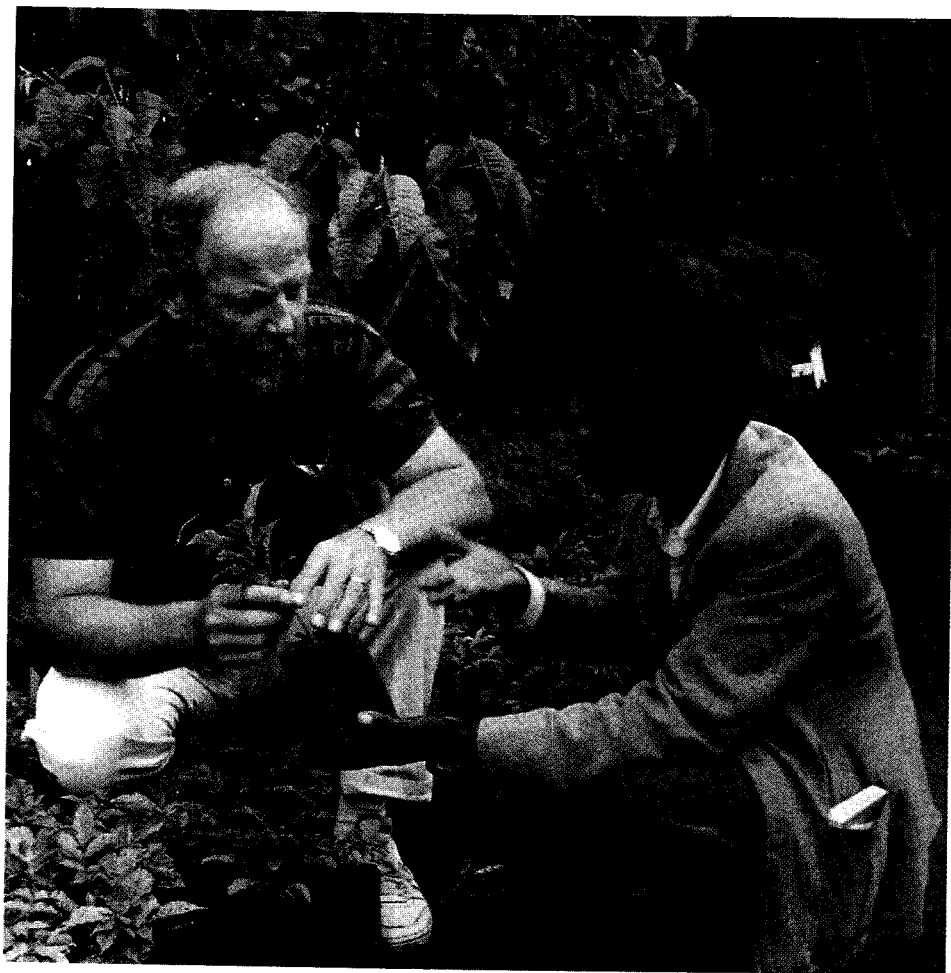


# PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT BY PROXY

*An Evaluation of the Development Impact  
of Government Support to Swedish NGOs*



BY ROGER C. RIDDELL, ANTHONY BEBBINGTON  
AND LENNART PECK

This report is based on a series of project evaluations undertaken by Agnes Aboum, Anthony Bebbington Sheelu Francis, Adalbeto Kopp, David Lewis, Simon Matsvai, Soneni Ncube, Mark Sinclair and Roger Riddell.

Author: Roger C. Riddell, Anthony Bebbington and Lennart Peck

The views and interpretations expressed in this report are those of the author and should not be attributed to the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA).

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# *Promoting Development by Proxy*

**The Development Impact  
of Government support to Swedish NGOs**

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Anthony Bebbington  
Overseas Development Institute. London**

**Lennart Peck  
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# PREFACE

This NGO evaluation *Report* is the result of many months of labour, tens of thousands of miles of accumulated travel, and the work of many hands. Four of the main building blocks of the overall evaluation consisted of a series of project evaluations/assessments in Bolivia, India, Kenya and Zimbabwe. This work was undertaken by a core team of nine people. These were Agnes Abuom, Anthony Bebbington, Sheelu Francis, Adalberto Kopp, David Lewis, Simon Matsvai, Soneni Ncube, Mark Sinclair and Roger Riddell. The team leaders for each of the four country case-studies were Anthony Bebbington (Bolivia), David Lewis (India), Mark Sinclair (Kenya) and Roger Riddell (Zimbabwe).

The country study work could not have been completed in the time allotted if it had not been for the assistance and cooperation of scores of different organisations, and hundreds of different people located across the four countries and in Sweden. Their names cover over 11 pages of Appendix B of this *Report*.

The work of helping to set up and facilitate particular project visits was supplemented by a variety of essential inputs from two groups in particular: a range of SIDA and Swedish Embassy officials in Stockholm, and across the four countries, and key personnel from the 14 framework organisations and linked Swedish NGOs, many of whom spent considerable time and effort in providing information, answering questions and helping to organise visits. The thanks of the team go out to all these people.

This evaluation *Report* was authored by three people: Anthony Bebbington, Lennart Peck and Roger Riddell. Lennart Peck was responsible for **Chapter 2**, Anthony Bebbington and Roger Riddell for the remaining chapters. Documentation preparation and lay-out were carried out by Sandra Cox at the Overseas Development Institute in London who, as usual, coped ably with the demanding time-schedule.

To the extent that the *Report* and its recommendations are found to be relevant to policy debate in Sweden, no small thanks are due to the SIDA officials, especially personnel from the NGO Division, and representatives of the different Swedish framework organisations who discussed the different conclusions and recommendations as they were being formulated, and who provided written comments to the

team. Thanks are also due to Mark Sinclair who, at short notice, agreed to come to Stockholm in mid-November for a series of key discussions.

Formal responsibility for the overall evaluation lay with the Overseas Development Institute, London. However, the work could not have been undertaken without considerable logistical support ably given by ICS Interconsult Sweden AB, Stockholm. They provided a host of administrative services to the team, which they performed with great efficiency, and with tolerance of the often excessive demands made on them by distant foreigners. A special word of thanks needs to go to Mr. Göran Schill of ICS Interconsult Sweden AB for his particular, conscientious and most efficient, contribution to the study.

Development is a difficult business to work in: the longer one engages in development debate and practice, the more certain one becomes of one's ignorance. In contrast, because evaluations, of their nature, tend to be critical documents – evaluators are employed to be critical and to make recommendations – the impression is sometimes mistakenly conveyed that the evaluators **have** the answers.

Evaluators, especially evaluators of large, complex and diverse initiatives, are in a privileged position: privileged to meet a wide range of different people, and see a wide range of different activities – and privileged, especially on this occasion, to witness the working lives of dedicated individuals who are trying to make a difference for the people with whom they live and work, often in very difficult circumstances. For many, it is rewarding work, but, equally, it can be lonely and sometimes dangerous work. What reports such as this tend to omit, and certainly not to praise enough, are all these different positive and enriching aspects of NGO development work. One of the underlying objectives of the authors of this *Report* is to build on all this, not to undermine it.

Finally, I would like to thank both the head of the NGO Division, Eva Asplund, and her staff, and the former and current heads of the Evaluation Unit, Stefan Dahlgren and Eva Nauckhoff, together with Annika Idemalm, for the kindness and hospitality extended to the team during the months of the evaluation.

While responsibility for the views expressed remain those of the different authors, in so many ways this *Report* is very much the product of a joint effort.

*Roger C. Riddell*  
London  
February, 1995

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*Education is the most common NGO activity in all the four countries studied. Here, mentally retarded students in Caritas-supported Sadhana school, India, are taught how to make wedding decorations as an income-generating activity.*

PHOTO: CARITAS

# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AG	Afrikagrupperna (Africa Group)
BIFO	Föreningen Bistånd och Information genom Frivilliga Organisationer (Assistance and Information through Voluntary Organisations)
BITS	Beredningen för Internationellt Tekniskt-Ekonomiskt Samarbete (the Agency for International Technical and Economic Cooperation)
CORACA	Corporacion Agropecuaria Campesina
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DCO	Development Cooperation Office
EU	European Union
FINNIDA	Finnish International Development Agency
FY	Financial Year
GSO	Grassroots Support Organisation
LH	Lutherhjälpen (Church of Sweden Aid)
LO	Landsorganisationen (Swedish Trade Union Confederation)
LO/TCO	LO-TCO Biståndsnämnd (Council of International Trade Union Cooperation)
MSLB	Mision Sueca Libre en Bolivia (Swedish Free Mission in Bolivia)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Overseas Development Administration (UK)
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPIC	Olof Palmes Internationella Centrum (Olof Palme International Centre)
PMU	Pingstmissionens U-landshjälp (PMU Interlife)
RB	Rädda Barnen (Swedish Save the Children)
RRV	Riksrevisionsverket
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme

SAREC	Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries
SASDA	Secretariat for Analysis of Swedish Development Assistance (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
SCC	Swedish Cooperative Centre (Utan Gränser)
SEK	Swedish Krona
SHIA	Svenska Handikapporganisationers Internationella Biståndstiftelse (Swedish Organisation of Handicapped International Aid Foundation)
SIDA	Swedish International Development Authority
SRK	Svenska Röda Korset (Swedish Red Cross)
SKM	Svenska Kyrkans Mission (Church of Sweden Mission)
SMR	Svenska Missionsrådet (Swedish Missionary Council)
SVS	Svensk Volontärsamverkan (Swedish Volunteer Service)
SWEDECORP	Swedish International Enterprise Development Corporation
TCO	Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation (Swedish Central Organisation of Salaried Employees)
TOR	Terms of Reference
UG	Utan Gränser (Swedish Cooperative Centre)
UBV	Utbildning för Biståndsverksamhet (Training for Development Assistance)
UV	Ung Vänster
YWCA	Young Womens' Christian Association



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Promoting Development by Proxy is the Evaluation Report covering the development impact of Non-Governmental Organisations' (NGOs') interventions (projects and programmes) funded by SIDA.

The evaluation was undertaken by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London, but Chapter 2 was written by ICS Interconsult Sweden AB.

The emphasis of the report is the issue of the development impact of the NGO initiatives funded through the NGO window, i.e. through SIDA's NGO Division. NGO activities funded through other windows, such as Disaster Relief and Democracy and Human Rights, are only briefly summarized and referred to as a comparative background.

The NGO Division currently funds some 2,000 different development initiatives by over 200 Swedish organizations, taking place in over 100 different countries. As it was not possible to assess all the different initiatives funded, choices had to be made. The first choice was to narrow the evaluation to just four countries: Bolivia, India, Kenya and Zimbabwe. Projects were selected on the following criteria: one from each of the major framework organisations working in each country; at least one intervention whose main or only component was "technical assistance", including volunteer intervention; to select projects and programmes which reflected the sectoral spread of activities funded; to choose at least one intervention by a fairly small Swedish NGO; to choose no projects which had not been running for at least 18 months; and to identify at least one project which had already been completed. Totally, 37 projects were assessed.

Each project was assessed at two levels: first in relation to the achievement of the immediate objectives for which the funds had been provided and second in relation to a check-list of nine broader criteria: poverty focus, degree of participation, gender focus, environmental assessment, the role and impact of Swedish technical assistance, the innovativeness, flexibility and replicability of the project; and links between the project; links between the project and democracy and human rights issues.

The purpose of the evaluation was not to judge individual organizations or projects but to use project data to validate general conclusions. The projects were

assessed against broader developments and trends of the particular country concerned and the difference NGOs in general were making to development in the country itself.

## **The Results of the Evaluation**

It was possible to make fairly firm judgements on project impact in the case of 35 of the 37 projects. Two major conclusions were drawn. The first is that the overwhelming majority either have achieved, or are well on their way to achieving, the stated and immediate objectives for which SIDA's NGO Division provided the funds. Only two instances of projects failing to meet their immediate and direct objective were recorded. The second conclusion is that achieving project objectives provides little guidance to the overall development impact of the projects in question viewed more broadly. When the projects were judged against an increasing number of the nine broader criteria, their aggregate performance rating dropped progressively.

It is important to add, however, that such a conclusion was not unexpected. In the first place, a number of these broader criteria are new to many Swedish NGOs. Secondly, comparisons with assessments from other NGO projects of other donor-country based NGOs show that these, too tend to score badly when assessed against an increasing number of broader criteria. Thirdly, "doing development" is a complex and difficult undertaking, especially where addressing poverty means addressing power relationships within a community.

The context of the NGO studies indicates that insufficient attention is paid by many Swedish NGOs to thinking strategically and realistically about development opportunities in the areas in which they are working.

Each of the country studies makes clear that there are a range of windows through which SIDA supports NGOs, although the NGO Division remains the most important window. Diversity can be an asset, but it can also bring a range of complications, not least the increasing possibility that officials responsible for one funding window are not aware of the potential or real overlap between the different activities funded. One inevitable result is that public funds channelled to these different NGO initiatives are necessarily less effective than they might be if one part of SIDA was clearly aware of what the other part of SIDA was doing and funding: shared learning opportunities are repeatedly lost.

### ***Poverty impact***

Perhaps surprisingly, three of four country studies suggested that the NGO projects did not often reach the poorest, and not even necessarily the very poor. It was quite common for the NGOs simply to assume that they were working with the very poor.

All the case studies conclude that there is little evidence to suggest that the work

of Swedish NGOs has had much of an impact on poverty. In many ways this is because many Swedish NGO projects do not begin from a conceptualisation of poverty; of what it is, of what causes it, and of how to address it. Those Swedish NGOs which have engaged in or supported more politically relevant work either have had impact on poverty or have enhanced capacity within the popular sectors to do so.

One dimension of questioning power relationships is to foster activities that question gender relationships. A number of projects claim to be gender sensitive because they meet womens' needs, however in many regards, these activities address the symptoms far more than the causes of gender-linked poverty.

NGO impact on poverty tends to be greater where the state is strong. Similarly, it is likely to be greater where the regional economy is dynamic. This implies that when NGOs work in areas of economic decline and stagnation, their work is likely to be focused mainly on alleviation of poverty and easing some of the pains of economic transition.

### ***Participation***

In general, the extent to which Swedish NGO-supported activities are participatory was found to be disappointing. The rhetoric on participation commonly exceeded reality. In some cases, participation is limited more because of the nature of the counterpart rather than the Swedish NGO. In other cases, where a rapid response is required, participation can cause inappropriate delays. However, these conditions were far from always the reasons for lack of participation.

### ***Innovation replicability and dissemination***

The Indian and Bolivian studies concluded that there were a large number of innovations in the programmes examined. Many of these innovations are replicable. However, in practice, there has been limited replication. To a large extent, this seems to reflect the low profile of many Swedish NGO projects, and their rather poorly developed links with other non-governmental institutions, with SIDA and with the government in the country where they are working. Many NGOs are also more interested in making the ideas work within their own projects than they are in scaling these ideas up for others.

### ***Monitoring evaluation and learning***

Swedish NGOs have carried out some monitoring and evaluation of their projects, in general more monitoring than evaluation. Generally speaking, however, it has been insufficiently rigorous to provide information that might be persuasive to other agencies. If the objective is to generate information which is to be used by others, then it would be important to engage in a different type of evaluation including more assessment of impact and some sort of attempt to equate expected benefits with costs.

## ***Sustainability***

In many cases, the country studies concluded that the processes initiated by the projects assessed were not yet sustainable, and some were never likely to be. Nonetheless, each of the case studies also presented many reasons why we should not be surprised that projects were not sustainable and, indeed, why it is often unreasonable to expect projects to reach sustainability, particularly when the projects work with the poor and very poor.

The issue of sustainability is very complex, partly because of the lack of a clear definition. This evaluation has provisionally defined sustainability in the NGO context in Chapter 3.

## ***Technical assistance***

The sample of projects which included a component of Swedish technical assistance was extremely small. Thus, the comments of this Report should in no way be seen as a comprehensive assessment of Swedish volunteers and linked technical assistance programmes.

In general, the evidence suggests that the quality of work done by Swedes "in the field" and their commitment was indisputable. Yet in only a few instances did the Swedish personnel provide a skill that local people did not have. There is a risk that the volunteer ends up only doing a job, not in building capacity in the organisation. In the worst cases, volunteers can obstruct capacity building because they control and manage all the relationships between the local organisations and the Swedish NGO.

## **Recommendations to SIDA**

Chapter 5 of this report is built around seven main recommendations to SIDA. They are summarized below:

1. New measures/initiatives should be taken by SIDA, in conjunction with representatives of Swedish NGOs, which are aimed at improving the development impact of funds provided by the NGO Division to support the development initiatives of Swedish NGOs.
2. As a matter of some urgency, SIDA should initiate work aimed at producing clearer, in some instances more comprehensive, and, overall, more logically consistent Guidelines for Swedish NGOs wishing to apply to the NGO Division to support their own development initiatives. Inter alia, and minimally, any new Guidelines should specify clearly the status of different criteria by which funding applications will be assessed, distinguishing between those which are mandatory and those which are not.
3. Consistent with broader Swedish aid policies, the four issues of gender, the environment, democracy and sustainability should be listed in the NGO

Development Guidelines as core criteria against which all development project and programme applications submitted to the NGO Division are to be assessed.

4. It is recommended that consideration be given to the compilation and production of an annual report to the Swedish public (presented annually at the time of the parliamentary vote) which provides data, information and evidence of the development impact of projects and programmes by Swedish NGOs which have been in receipt of state funds. It is suggested that this annual report be compiled by representatives of those NGOs/framework organisations in receipt of such funds, and that this report be funded by the annual budget to NGOs.
5. SIDA should place high priority on introducing a procedure for exchanging information within SIDA and between SIDA and the relevant Swedish NGOs about all aid it provides to particular countries.
6. In those countries in which the level of funds allocated to Swedish NGOs is now so large that it is likely to have a significant broader impact, it is recommended that the NGO Division funds be divided into two separate funding windows. The first window should be available for Swedish NGO projects and programmes and processed in the same way as at present. A new second window should be opened. This would also be available exclusively for Swedish NGOs wishing to execute their own development initiatives in the country in question. Yet, this particular window would be available only for funding proposals put forward by Swedish NGOs which fall within given country-specific parameters drawn up by the leading Swedish NGOs working in the country in question (in consultation with others).
7. As a matter of some urgency, SIDA should initiate a process of discussion both internally and with representatives of Swedish NGOs to work out in more detail how a pilot scheme as recommended could begin to operate as quickly as possible, including the choice of the pilot country, or alternatively, put forward an alternative practical way of addressing these concerns.



*An interesting finding of the evaluation was that many projects for disabled people succeeded exceptionally well in improving the conditions for the poorest. The photo shows work in the Jairos Jiri workshop centre for disabled persons in Umtali, Zimbabwe.*

PHOTO: GUSTAF ENEROTH/BAZAAR

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND AND THE BROAD PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

In April 1994, SIDA's Evaluation Department commissioned an evaluation of the development impact of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) interventions (projects and programmes) funded by SIDA, entitled *The Development Impact of the Swedish Government's Support to NGOs*. The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London was commissioned to undertake the bulk of the evaluation. ICS Interconsult Sweden AB provided a range of back-up services to the main British-based team: undertaking data gathering and analysis in relation to the NGO support programme, and contributing **Chapter 2**, *Swedish Government Support to NGOs* to this final evaluation *Report*.

Besides the evaluations and monitoring exercises undertaken by individual Swedish NGOs – a growing (although still far from widespread) phenomenon, encouraged now by SIDA's NGO Division<sup>1</sup> – a number of studies, evaluations, assessments and reviews of NGOs in receipt of SIDA funds have been initiated in recent years by SIDA itself. The three most important initiatives have been capacity studies undertaken of 13 of the 14 framework organisations;<sup>2</sup> an overview of development assistance channelled through NGOs entitled *State Grants for Non-Governmental Organisations*;<sup>3</sup> and an overview study, in 1992, of SIDA's methods and approaches in supporting volunteers. However, none of these three initiatives have been directly concerned with the main focus of this particular evaluation, namely **development impact**. Each, in different ways, has been built around the working assumption that the impact of NGOs development initiatives funded by SIDA is broadly positive.

A comprehensive assessment was commissioned by SIDA in 1985, the results of which were published as "Review of NGO Capability for Development Assistance".

<sup>1</sup> The NGO Division is also known as the Division for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organisations.

<sup>2</sup> A capacity study of the fourteenth framework organisation (the Africa Group) began in early 1995.

<sup>3</sup> The original text was published in Swedish in September 1991; a summary and partial extract were published in English in September 1992. It is the English version which is cited in this Report: F. Albinson and E. Åhlström *State Grants for Non-Governmental Organisations*, Stockholm: SIDA, September 1992.

More recently SIDA has provided funds for the NGOs to expand their own capability in the field of assessment and evaluation.

It was felt, however, that these initiatives on their own remained inadequate. The Terms of Reference (TOR) for this evaluation (see **Appendix A**, below) give a number of more specific reasons for commissioning this evaluation. Since the 1985 study (almost ten years ago), the funds SIDA has provided to NGOs for development has increased many times during the last years".<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the Study *State Grants for Non-Governmental Organisations* recommended that such an evaluation should take place.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, in the ten year period to 1994, the funds SIDA has provided to Swedish NGOs for development have risen more than fourfold. This has occurred concurrently with the decisions to delegate more and more of the decisions about how these funds should be spent to the 14 framework organisations. There has been no requirement for Swedish NGOs to provide evidence that the funds they have received have been used effectively as a requirement for the funds to be provided, no less to be increased at such a pace.

The growing view extending across Swedish society that more information is needed about development assistance funds out of the direct control of SIDA. Thus, the report of the Government Commission published (in English) as *Management and Coordination in Swedish Development Assistance* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1993) comments that

*Parliament also needs to have a cohesive picture of the purpose and content of cooperation with individual countries. Parliament should receive better information about the activities of all Swedish development assistance – at the moment information about SIDA dominates the picture* (p. 10).

Additionally, four recent surveys of public attitudes to Swedish aid all confirmed that what people in Sweden are most interested in

*is not the actual percentage (of aid given)... but how the development assistance funds are utilised and which effect they have.*<sup>6</sup>

The other major Scandinavian and Nordic donors – Denmark, Finland and Norway – are themselves currently involved in, or have recently completed, evaluations of the development impact of funds channelled to NGOs. Thus the SIDA initiative can be seen as part of a wider part of geographically-linked donor initiatives.

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<sup>4</sup> Trend figures are provided in **Chapter 2**, below.

<sup>5</sup> The Study makes the following statements about NGO projects and programmes supported by SIDA (page 37 and following): *A major reason to increase NGO aid is the ability of the organisations to reach the real target groups of Swedish aid – the poorest people in the poorest countries – and to build up mutual cooperation. It is also the impression of the NGOs and SIDA that their strongest side is their ability to reach the grass roots levels, the local population, and to establish direct contacts between people and organisations in Sweden and other countries.*

<sup>6</sup> "Attitudes to Swedish Development Cooperation: an analysis of four qualitative surveys", SIDA Information Secretariat, 1994 (mimeo).



The TOR lay out three inter-related objectives for the evaluation.

1. To provide SIDA with an independent and comprehensive review and analysis of ... Swedish development support through Swedish NGOs and to assess the effectiveness of Swedish NGO support...
2. To provide an assessment of key lessons learnt concerning NGO support as an aid form, its strengths and weaknesses.
3. To provide conclusions and recommendations for the future role of the support in the framework of overall objectives and policies of the Swedish development cooperation.

Consideration of the first two objectives highlights a potential tension: on the one hand, the evaluation is required to focus on "Swedish development support through **Swedish** NGOs", but, on the other, it is required to broaden its horizon both to comment on "NGO support as an aid form" and to contextualise NGO support in terms of wider goals and concerns of Swedish development cooperation. The way in which this tension confronted the evaluation (and the evaluators) is a theme which recurs throughout this *Report*.<sup>7</sup>

Preliminary discussions, largely between the consultants, SIDA's Evaluation Department and SIDA's NGO Division, led to the decision that the predominant focus of the evaluation would be on the development initiatives of NGOs funded by SIDA's NGO Division. In effect, this meant a concentration on initiatives submitted to SIDA's NGO Division by Swedish NGOs. The implications of this decision of SIDA on the ability of the evaluation to draw wider lessons of NGO impact are discussed below, especially in **Chapter 5**.

It should also be noted that the evaluation excludes assessment and discussion of funds provided by SIDA to NGOs for **emergency and/or refugee** work.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, the TOR did not ask the evaluation to focus either on the funds SIDA gives to NGOs for information work in Sweden, or on the importance in Sweden of activities related more to solidarity. It may well be that when other factors are brought into play, the conclusions and recommendations of this particular evaluation will be viewed in a different light.

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<sup>7</sup> As the discussion in subsequent chapters of this *Report* indicates, most clearly in **Chapter 2**, there are a number of different channels through which NGOs receive funds from SIDA to support development initiatives. Some of the NGOs in receipt of funds are Swedish, others are not. Some receive funds from Stockholm, some from SIDA and DCO offices and from Embassies in different developing countries.

<sup>8</sup> A number of recent evaluations have been undertaken which, at least indirectly, assess the impact of this aspect of NGO-funded work. See, for instance, U. Rundin *et al* *Evaluation of Swedish Support to the Drought Operations in Southern Africa: a study commissioned by SIDA*, Stockholm, Ulf Rundin AB, January 1994, and R. Apthorpe *et al* *What Relief For The Horn? SIDA-Supported Emergency Operations in Ethiopia, Eritrea, southern Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti*, The Hague: Institute of Social Studies Advisory Services, September 1994.

## 1.2 Timing and Approaches

In terms of timing, the evaluation formally began in early May and the draft final *Report* had to be with SIDA in the first week of December. In the interim, the evaluation team had to be finalised, Swedish and local NGOs had to be visited to discuss the evaluation, agreement had to be reached on the timing of project visits and related meetings, and country study reports had to be written up. Thereafter, these had to be brought together and further discussions and analysis undertaken focused on drawing up conclusions and specific recommendations.

In relation to **what** to assess, choices also had to be made. The NGO Division currently funds some 2,000 separate projects and programmes across just over 100 countries and it was clearly only going to be possible to focus attention on a relatively small sample of projects. The first decision was to select NGO Division-funded projects and programmes in just four countries. SIDA decided that these were to be Bolivia, India, Kenya and Zimbabwe.<sup>9</sup> These four countries were chosen because they are amongst the largest in terms of NGO Division funds,<sup>10</sup> because of their geographic coverage, and because they encompass initiatives overseen by a spread of different framework organisations, as well as a spread of different types of intervention. However, even in these four countries, the NGO Division currently funds over 200 different projects and programmes, and it was never going to be possible to make a special study of all these. A smaller selection had to be made. It turned out to be possible to look quite closely at 37 projects across the four countries.<sup>11</sup>

The largest amount of time was devoted to preparing for, undertaking and writing up the results of the different individual case studies – approximately 80% of the total person-weeks funded.

Thus, project and programme impact was assessed not in isolation but in relation to the particular **country context** in which the projects were located. This means that this form of development assistance (support through Swedish NGOs) could be compared with other forms of development assistance (Swedish and non-Swedish, within the context of the broad development problems of the four countries. This contextual approach proved invaluable in trying to come to grips to some of the broader objectives of the overall evaluation (see above). It also enabled some comparisons to be made between NGO projects and official aid projects.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Though the decision was made prior to the engagement of the evaluation team, the decision was made following discussion most notably between the NGO Division and SIDA's Evaluation Unit.

<sup>10</sup> In terms of funds allocated by SIDA in 1992/93, Kenya constituted the third largest African recipient of NGO Division development funds, India the second largest Asian recipient, and Bolivia the fourth largest Latin American recipient.

<sup>11</sup> This comparatively high figure (in comparison with the anticipated number) was due largely to the Zimbabwean case study evaluation team splitting up into three separate units. In most other cases, northern and southern evaluators conducted project visits together.

<sup>12</sup> An important attempt to provide such comparisons is contained in SIDA Evaluation Report 1991/3, L. Andersson-Brolin et al *The Art of Survival: A Study on sustainability in health projects*, Stockholm: SIDA.

The overall evaluation was split up into three phases. These were termed: (i) the pre-study; (2) the country case studies; and (3) the synthesis phase.

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London had responsibility for planning and executing the four country case studies, and the synthesis phase of the evaluation. The ODI provided the overall evaluation's team leader, Mr. Roger Riddell, and each of the four country case study co-ordinators and lead-evaluators. They were joined by local evaluators whose main role was to participate in the discrete project evaluations. The main ODI lead evaluators were the principle authors of the four country case-studies. The details are as follows:

<b>Bolivia</b>	<i>Dr. Anthony Bebbington</i> <i>Mr. Adalberto Kopp</i>
<b>India</b>	<i>Dr. David Lewis</i> <i>Ms. Sheelu Francis</i>
<b>Kenya</b>	<i>Mr. Mark Sinclair</i> <i>Dr. Agnes Abuom</i>
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	<i>Mr. Roger Riddell</i> <i>Mr. Simon Matsvai</i> <i>Ms. Soneni Ncube</i>

The ICS Interconsult AB team consisted of Dr. Jan Valdelin (Director), Mr. Lennart Peck and Mr. Göran Schill.

The bulk of the (non-administrative) work in the final, synthesis, phase was undertaken by Mr. Riddell and Dr. Bebbington, who were the main authors of this the overall evaluation *Report*.<sup>13</sup>

The breakdown and timing of each of the different phases of the evaluation were as follows:

#### ***i. The Pre-Study: Early May 1994 to mid-July 1994***

This phase of the evaluation consisted of the following:

- Initial (ten day) visit to Sweden by the evaluation team leader to discuss the details of the overall evaluation with relevant SIDA staff and with the 14 framework organisations.
- Initial (seven day) visits to Sweden by the four ODI country case study main evaluators to discuss the parameters of the case studies with relevant SIDA officials, the relevant framework organisations and, where applicable, the relevant individual Swedish NGOs.

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<sup>13</sup> As noted above, **Chapter 2** was written for ICS Interconsult Sweden AB largely by Mr. Lennart Peck.

- Initial (seven day) visit to each of the case-study countries to make contact with relevant Swedish Embassy/DCO officials; to make initial contact with the relevant local NGOs; to make contact, and devise a plan for co-operative work, with local consultants; to make initial contact, or prepare for subsequent meetings, with officials from the government, the donor and research community and local NGOs regarding broader NGO development impact questions.
- Preparation by the team leader of the *Inception Report* and its discussion with relevant SIDA staff.

## ***ii. The Country Case-Study Phase: Mid-July to mid-October 1994***

This phase of the evaluation consisted of the following:

- Research and analysis of broader NGO and development issues by principle evaluators.
- Extended visits (20-35 days) to the four case study countries to join the local evaluators, in order to undertake the substantive project/programme visits and conduct related interviews.
- Additional research gathering and discussions with Swedish Embassy/DCO staff, government officials, other donors, the research community, local and international NGOs to provide contextual data and information on the case study country.
- Preparation, writing, and (limited) distribution of, the first draft of the country case studies.

## ***iii. The Synthesis Phase: Mid-October 1994 to February 1995***

This phase of the evaluation consisted of the following:

- Gathering feedback on the analysis and recommendations of the four country case studies from SIDA, the relevant framework organisations and Swedish NGOs (to end November 1994).
- Summarising the results of the four country case studies, analysing the conclusions and recommendations, and drawing wider conclusions and recommendations (to early November 1994).
- Discussion with SIDA and relevant framework organisations and NGOs on the country case study material, wider conclusions and tentative recommendations made (mid-November 1994).
- Discussion between ODI and ICS Interconsult Sweden AB of the preliminary drafts and conclusions of the final evaluation report (mid-October to mid-November 1994).
- Preparation of the first draft of the overall evaluation report (mid-October to end-November 1994).

- Submission to SIDA of the first draft of the overall evaluation report (early December 1994).
- Revision of the first drafts of the four country case studies and preparation of the final country case study reports (January 1995).
- Discussion with SIDA and representatives of the Swedish framework organisations of the first draft of the final evaluation report (January 1995).
- Preparation of the final version of the overall evaluation report (January / February 1995).
- Submission to SIDA of the final version of the overall evaluation report (February 1995).

Increasingly over the period allotted for the overall study, the evaluators were conscious of the time constraints under which they were working. A number of NGOs and others felt that they did not have sufficient time to comment on draft reports. Additionally, the final (draft) report, and the final recommendations, had to be put together under extreme time constraints in order to meet SIDA's deadlines, one result of which was that there was little time to provide and write up anything but a very hurried analysis of the wider international context within which the impacts of Swedish NGO-funded development initiatives could have been located.



# SWEDISH GOVERNMENT SUPPORT TO NGOs

Sweden is by tradition a country where organisations and so called “popular movements” have played an important role. Some of these were engaged in development cooperation long before official aid even existed. Swedish churches began their mission work in Africa in the late 19th century. The 1960s saw the emergence of “solidarity movements” of various kinds, and, in recent years, a number of organisations working primarily in Sweden have extended their activities to developing countries. These movements and organisations were an important force in the creation of Swedish official aid, and since then, they have continuously been part of the shaping of the aid programme both through the political process as well as through participation in the board of SIDA, in working groups, and in SIDA programmes.

Additionally, state aid has also been of great importance for the presence of NGOs in developing countries. The development activities of several of the major NGOs are today funded primarily with money from the Swedish state’s aid budget. Some organisations have been created largely as a result of the availability of these funds, and a few framework organisations have been established on the direct initiative of SIDA.

## 2.1 THE ROLE OF NGOs IN SWEDISH AID

On a number of occasions, the Swedish Government has expressed the view that NGOs have an important role in Sweden’s overall cooperation with developing countries. Supporting NGOs is seen as a way of mobilising the resources and initiatives of the Swedish people.

A second argument derives from the fact that Swedish NGOs usually work together with local NGOs in the different countries. As a result of this linkage, NGO assistance is seen to be complementary to official aid, in terms of reaching down to local organisations. Relatedly, it is assumed that NGOs are better at working at grassroots levels and in reaching the primary target group for Swedish aid, the poor and the vulnerable. Another advantage is that NGOs can be used to channel aid to those countries where, for some reason, Sweden cannot, or does not wish to, provide aid officially. Thirdly, when funds provided to NGOs were raised to a

significant level, this allowed agencies other than SIDA to experiment in a meaningful way in promoting their own models of development. For instance, it is widely assumed that NGOs are innovative and that a variety of different approaches is likely to enrich the whole development effort.

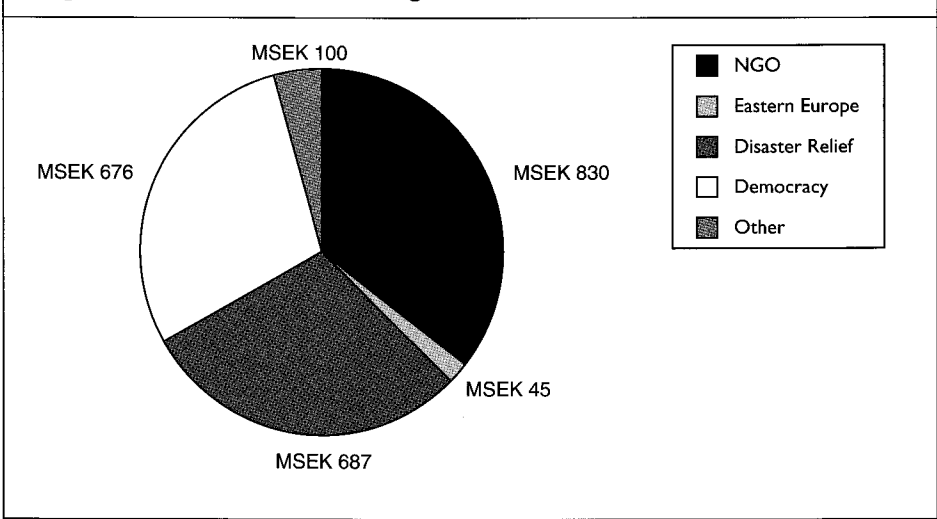
Finally, there is a general conviction that NGOs operate efficiently due to their advantages in terms of the small scale of their operations, their flexibility, the replicability of their initiatives and their degree of beneficiary participation. Increased recognition of NGOs as partners in overall development cooperation is demonstrated by the increase of funds allocated by Parliament and by SIDA. In 1983, approximately 13 percent of SIDA's budget was channelled through NGOs. According to official SIDA information, the 1994 figure was close to 30 percent.

## 2.2 DIFFERENT SIDA FUNDING WINDOWS

There are a number of different windows through which Swedish NGOs receive official aid funds. These are: NGO Support, Eastern and Central Europe, Disaster Relief, Democracy and Human Rights and a variety of other smaller windows, such as through the different country frames, special programmes, etc.

Both the objectives of support and the different roles given to NGOs vary considerably depending on through which window funds are channelled. The following sub-sections describe the different windows and their main characteristics.

**Figure 2.1: Disbursements through different windows 1993/94**



Source: SIDA Finance Division

*Note: SIDA's accounting system does not allow one easily to extract data on funds provided for other "windows". The reason is that different accounting codes are used for the same organisation receiving funds from different windows. Information from the framework organisation themselves indicates that they have received approximately SEK 50 mn from other windows. However, some of the main recipients are outside the framework organisations and thus not included in this figure.*



## 2.2.1 NGO Support

The "NGO-window" has been established to support organisations' *own* development activities. The responsibility for the project rests with the organisation. The share of SIDA's contribution should not exceed 80 percent of total project costs.<sup>14</sup> According to directives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, SIDA's role is only to make payments and to ensure that the state funds provided are used in accordance with the different agreements signed between SIDA and the various framework organisations.

The fundamental goals in providing funds for the development programmes of NGOs are the same as those applied to all Swedish development assistance: These are to contribute to: (1) economic growth; (2) economic and social equality; (3) democratic development; (4) economic and political independence; and (5) sustainable use of natural resources and environmental protection. The *Guidelines* also note that the projects funded need to aim to achieving a permanent improvement.<sup>15</sup>

Procedures and the division of roles have changed over the years, with ever increasing delegation of responsibilities going from SIDA to the different organisations. Some of these organisations are also implementing agencies, others are merely umbrella organisations. In 1994, support was channelled through 14 framework organisations, which were:<sup>16</sup>

- The Africa Groups (AG)
- Assistance and Information through Voluntary Organisations (BIFO)
- DIAKONIA (Free Church Aid)
- Swedish Organisation of Handicapped International Aid Foundation (SHIA)
- LO/TCO Council of International Trade Union Co-operation (LO/TCO)
- Olof Palme International Centre (OPIC)
- PMU Interlife (PMU)
- Rädde Barnen, the Swedish Save the Children (RB)
- Church of Sweden Mission/Church of Sweden Aid (SKM/LH)
- Swedish Missionary Council (SMR)
- Swedish Red Cross (SRK)
- Swedish Volunteer Service (SVS)
- Swedish Co-operative Centre (SCC)
- Training for Development Assistance (UBV)

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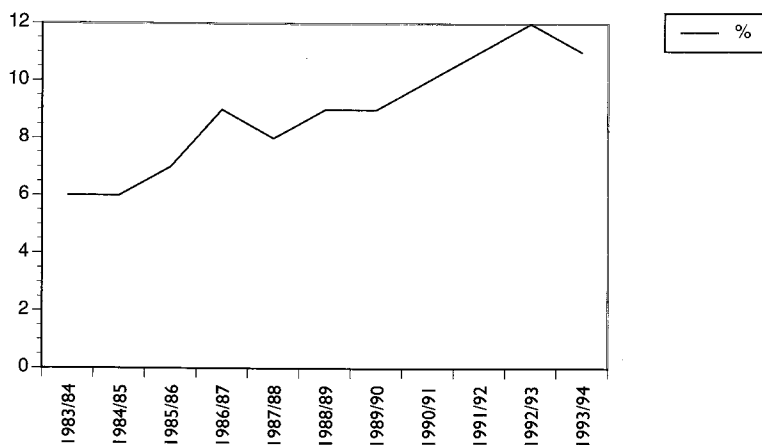
<sup>14</sup> Different organisations have different ways of evaluating this own support. Most of them tend to link *total* SIDA funds with the *total* of their own contribution, rather than apply the 80/20 ratio to specific projects. In fact, most of the projects assessed in the country case studies were 100 percent SIDA-funded.

<sup>15</sup> However the term 'sustainability' is not explicitly used – a point discussed further in **Chapter 3**, (Section 3.4.1).

<sup>16</sup> BIFO and SVS will merge as from 1st July, 1995, reducing the number of framework organisations to 13.

Total disbursements from the NGO-window have increased from SEK 236 mn in 1983/84 to SEK 830 mn in 1993/94, rising from six percent to 11 percent of SIDA's total budget. The total budget of the NGO Division was raised from SEK 875 mn in 1993/94 to SEK 1 bn in 1994/95, a figure more than SEK 110 mn higher than had been requested by SIDA. The budget figures for 1995/96 (released in January 1995) provided for a fall back – to SEK 850 mn – for that year. Yet, given the overall fall in the aid budget (from SEK 8.665 mn in 1994/95 to SEK 7.724 mn for 1995/96), this still constituted (just over) 11 percent of the total budget.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 2.2: Percentage of total SIDA disbursements for development aid channelled through the NGO window**



Source: SIDA Finance Division and NGO Division

Figure 2.3 shows the increase of funds for the major framework organisations since 1985/86. It clearly reveals the dominance of a few big framework organisations, with SMR and PMU in the lead. It also shows that, though there has been a general increase in funds provided, the relative increase has usually been greatest within these large organisations, while the small ones only show a modest increase.

The NGO-window itself has a number of what could be referred to as sub-windows.

### ***Project Support***

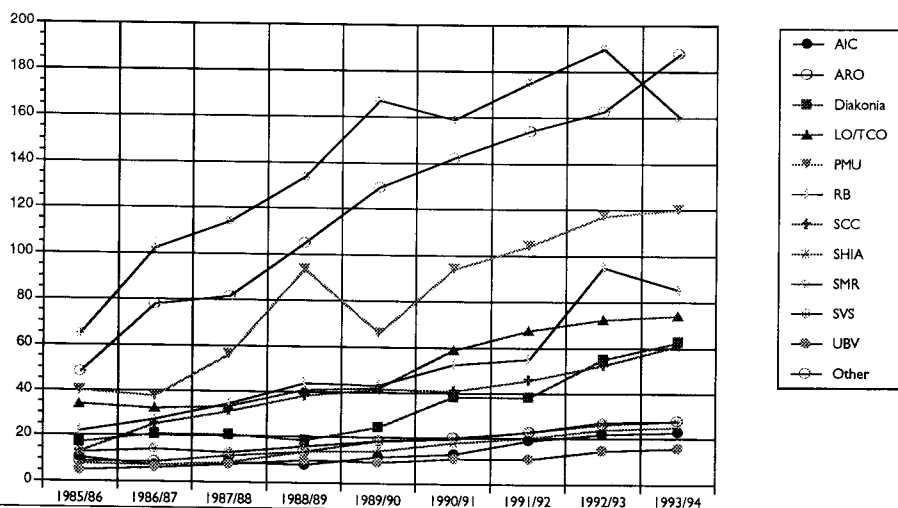
Formally, a "development project" is viewed in terms of a single intervention, and, on that basis, it has been estimated that approximately 2,000 projects are being funded each year by SIDA, using this definition. However, what the statistics record as several projects might very well be components of a single initiative.

<sup>17</sup> Note that some of the differences in funds allocated may have been due to reserves held, advance allocations and changes in the numbers of organisations under a particular framework.

The geographical division of funds allocated are recorded in Figure 2.4. This shows that apart from a somewhat larger share going to Latin America, the allocation of funds reflects the wider allocation of SIDA funds as a whole, though it should be added that Swedish NGOs fund projects and programmes in far more countries, at present somewhat over one hundred in 1994.

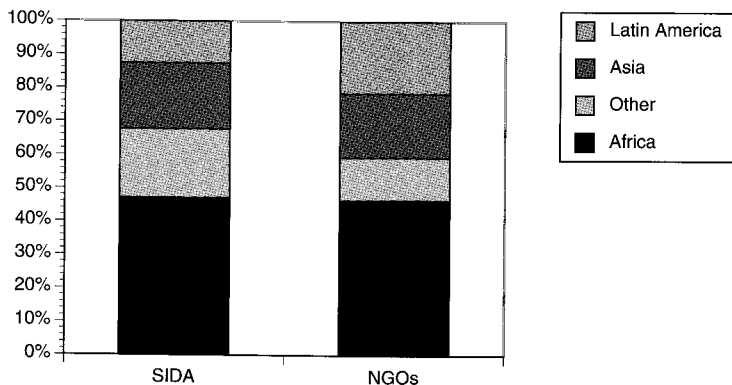
Figure 2.5 records the distribution of funds per sector for the year 1994. This shows that NGO activities were focused more directed on what is usually described as "basic needs" sectors, health and education, than was SIDA as a whole.

**Figure 2.3: Annual Allocations to the major framework organisations**



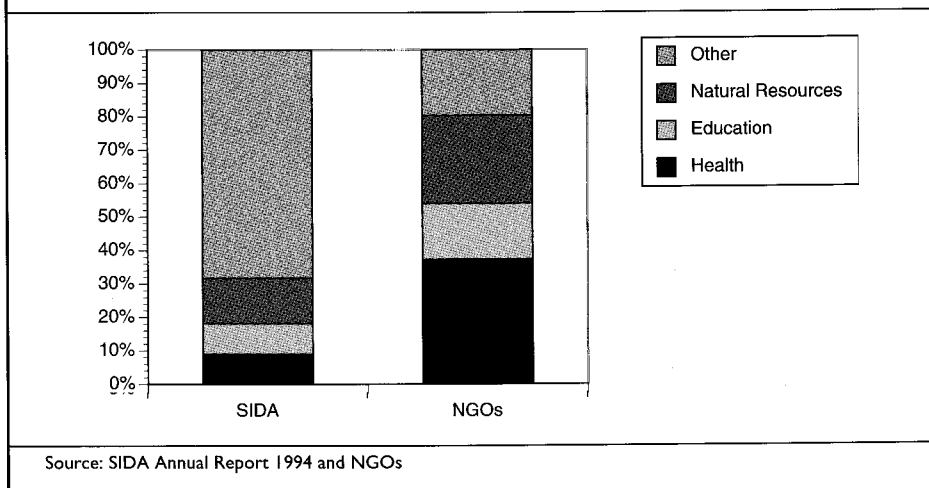
Source: Albinsson and Åström (1983/84-1988/89) and SIDA NGO Division (1989/90-1993/94). LH/SKM (which before 1992/93 were included under SMR) and BIFO are not included.

**Figure 2.4: Geographical distribution of funds 1993/94**



Source: SIDA annual report and NGOs

**Figure 2.5: Distribution of funds per sector 1993/94**



## Volunteers

Within the NGO-window, SIDA also provides special funds for so-called volunteers. There are two purposes for providing such funds. First, the volunteer should perform development work in the country in question, and secondly, s/he should take part in information activities about developing countries in Sweden. According to the framework organisations, in the year 1993/94, there were 700 persons working in developing countries with SIDA-volunteer funding, amounting to a total of SEK 122.5 mn, or approximately 15 percent of the total NGO window funds.<sup>18</sup>

The volunteer funds are used principally in two ways. For three framework organisations, SVS, UBV and AG, the principal activity funded is the administration of the volunteer programmes. Other organisations, in particular SMR, PMU and SKM who provided 65 percent of the volunteers working abroad during 1994, use the volunteer funds to finance technical assistance personnel for their projects. Five organisations, including SCC and SRK, do not normally use these volunteer funds because the conditions laid down are not consistent with their own personnel policy. They prefer to include personnel in overall project support.

A study carried out in 1993<sup>19</sup> showed that 26 percent of volunteers surveyed in that year worked within the education sector, and 25 percent in the health sector, a figure comparable to the ratio for project support. Thirty one percent defined their work primarily as advisors, 25 percent as "gap-fillers", and 23 percent as administrators.

<sup>18</sup> This is the average over the whole period of time.

<sup>19</sup> ICS Interconsult Sweden AB *Volontärbidrag och egeninsats: Utredning av en stödform: SIDA:s volontärschablon*, Stockholm, June, 1993.

### ***Information activities in Sweden***

State support to Swedish NGOs is also intended, according to the *Guidelines*, to "create understanding of and interest in the situation of developing countries", and to "counteract tendencies of hostility towards foreigners and racism in Swedish society". Within the NGO-window, SIDA therefore also supports information programmes on developing countries in Sweden.

Those organisations which have project framework agreements drawn up with SIDA include information activities in their overall block grants. Grants are approved for production of materials, courses, seminars and conferences, meetings, study visits, exhibitions and similar sorts of activities. In 1993/94, disbursements for information within Sweden amounted to SEK 60 mn.

### ***Administration and other uses***

An increasing amount of SIDA-funded development work has put pressure on the administrative capacity of the NGOs. As a result, SIDA finances a certain share of their total administrative costs. For framework organisations, the amount is based on an individual assessment of needs and ongoing programmes. Some of them, primarily those framework organisations largely created to channel SIDA funds, are 100 percent SIDA-funded. Support is also given to non-central organisations as part of the project request, though the amount provided may not exceed more than five percent of the total granted for projects by SIDA. SIDA also provides financing for pre-project planning, monitoring and evaluation.

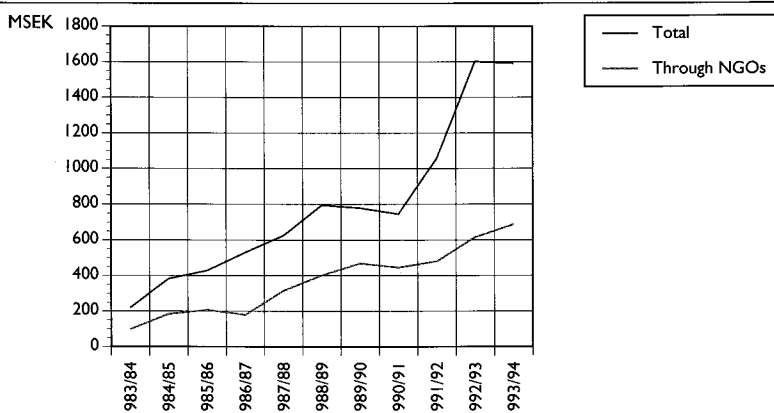
## **2.2.2 Eastern and Central Europe**

Since 1989, the NGO Division has been funding NGO projects in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. The funds come from a special government fund, not from the normal development aid budget. Additionally, the objectives differ: for Eastern and Central Europe, aid to NGOs should be used to support: the restoration and consolidation of the institutions of democracy and the rule of law; the reintroduction of a functioning market economy; and measures designed to improve the environment, especially in the Baltic Sea. The responsibility for the projects rest with the organisations and the organisations have to find no less than 20 percent of project costs. SIDA has signed framework agreements with six organisations for Central and Eastern Europe. During the two fiscal years preceding 1993/94, this funding window amounted to SEK 45 mn, for some 70 projects.

## **2.2.3 Disaster Relief**

SIDA provides funds to NGOs for disaster relief initiatives. This is aimed at supporting people affected by natural or man-made disasters, as well as rehabilitation and disaster preparedness programmes. Figure 2.6 records disbursements for total disaster relief, and the share channelled through NGOs.

**Figure 2.6: Disbursements for Disaster Relief (MSEK), 1983/84-1993/94**



Source: Albinson and Åström (1983/84-1988/89) and SIDA NGO Division (1989/90-1993/94).

In 1993/94, SEK 687 mn out of a total of nearly SEK 1,600 mn were channelled through 55 Swedish NGOs. The main ones receiving this money were SRK, DIAKONIA, LH, Caritas, PMU, Praktisk Solidaritet, the Sweden Afghanistan Committee and RB, accounting together for 90 percent of all NGO disaster funds.

In contrast to both the general NGO window and the window for support to Eastern and Central Europe, the NGOs considered here function as *channels* for SIDA aid. It is SIDA which is using the NGOs for its own purposes, because they are considered professional and efficient organisations with valuable local networks. In principle, the NGOs are responsible to SIDA for the way they operate, just as any consultant would be using SIDA funds to carry out SIDA's objectives. As this window is not based on support to the organisations to promote their "own" activities, there is no 20/80 rule: the organisations receive total project costs from SIDA.

## 2.2.4 Democracy and Human Rights

In 1991/92, SIDA established a special Democracy and Human Rights window. Total funds for the year 1993/94 amounted to SEK 676 mn. Of this, 37.8 percent, or SEK 256 mn, was channelled through 40 Swedish NGOs. Six of the framework organisations also received funds from the Democracy window. Like the funds allocated for Disaster Relief, NGOs are given these funds on the basis of promoting SIDA initiatives.

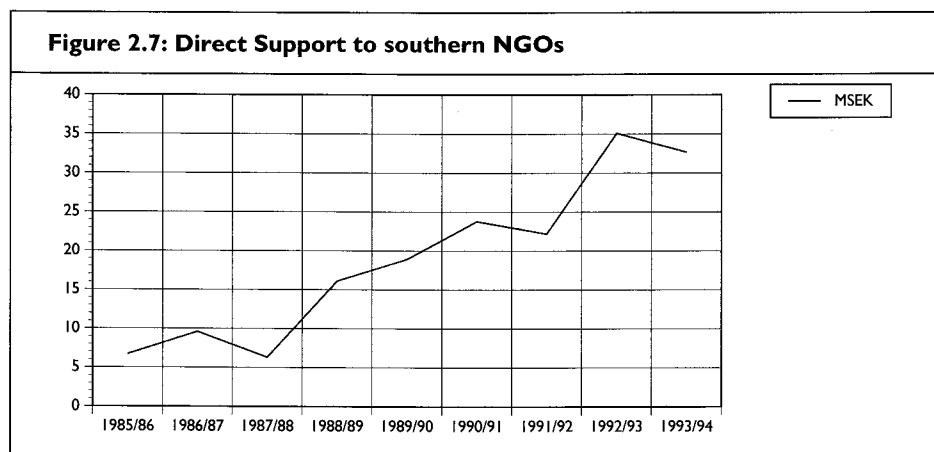
## 2.2.5 Other Windows Open to Swedish NGOs

There are a number of other windows through which NGOs receive funds. These include the different country frame programmes, as well as special programmes,

such as those which focus on environmental and gender issues. Thus, the SCC has entered into a major co-operation agreement with the Division of Natural Resources, SHIA has been given funds from the Health Division, and the Africa Groups work with the Education Division. There are many other particular examples. The overall size of funds granted in these sorts of way is not easily determined.

## 2.2.6 Direct Support

Thusfar, the discussion in this chapter has focused on Swedish NGOs. However local NGOs in particular countries receive funds from Sweden. The bulk of the funds from Sweden which reach southern NGOs from the NGO Division comes to them indirectly, via Swedish NGOs. However, the NGO window does have a facility which allows the NGO Division to fund southern NGOs directly, albeit, thusfar, only in three countries: Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India. As of 1994, there were no plans to extend this particular facility to other countries.



## 2.3 FEED-BACK AND ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

In this section, the criteria for, and the process through which, funds from the *NGO window* are allocated are described. Procedures applying to other windows differ and are not considered here.

### 2.3.1 Policy issues

Policy issues can be examined at three different levels: the level of the NGO, the level of SIDA and the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

#### *NGOs*

The *Guidelines* state that all organisations in receipt of SIDA funds through the NGO window should be democratic. Usually this means a traditional organisation

with annual meetings, an elected board etc. Thereafter, each organisation is free to work with its own ideology, and its own idea of its mission. For example, some churches have expressed a desire to limit their SIDA-funded activities in order not to lose their identity as churches.

## ***SIDA***

SIDA's policy towards NGO assistance has evolved continuously over time. Its main features include an increased confidence in NGOs, shown in increased amounts of money channelled to the NGOs. A marked decentralisation of responsibility to the NGOs has been not only a logical consequence of this development but also an administrative necessity.

The process of major decentralisation started in the late 1970s when SIDA signed one-year framework agreements with two organisations; SCC and LO/TCO. In the early 1980s, framework agreements were signed with another 10 organisations. Another major shift came about in 1985 following acceptance of the recommendations of a study which concluded that NGOs could constitute efficient implementors of development projects and programmes but that their capacity so to act was partly restricted by the prevailing relations with SIDA.<sup>20</sup> The same year the NGO Division was established, and a number of measures were taken to rationalise administrative tasks. Since then, there has been a continuous process of decentralisation of responsibilities to the NGOs.

As the level of professionalism varies considerably between different organisations, SIDA has established partially different procedures for working with different organisations. However since 1993, SIDA has made an effort to unify and tighten procedures, including the publication of new guidelines and general conditions. In 1994, the NGO Division was preparing a "mandate paper" focused on reaching clearer definitions of its particular role and mandate.

## ***Ministry of Foreign Affairs***

Ultimately SIDA's relationship with NGOs depends on instructions that it receives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In practice, however, these are extremely vague.

### **2.3.2 Feed-back from Projects**

When attempting to describe the system of providing feed-back from the projects executed, it is important to keep in mind the complexity of activities funded. There are an estimated 2,000 projects taking place in more than 100 countries.

## ***Organisations***

Each NGO has its own system of project monitoring, dependent on their activities and internal organisation. SIDA's policy has been to encourage NGOs to make

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<sup>20</sup> S. Häppling *Översyn av enskilda organisationers biståndskapacitet*, Stockholm: Liber, 1985.



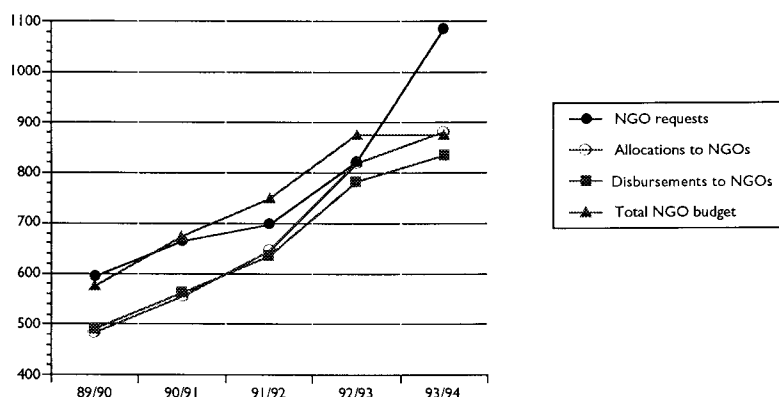
their own evaluations, and funds for this purpose may be sought within the different framework grants. In 1993/94, the framework organisations spent approximately SEK 6 mn, or 0.7 percent of the amount received from the NGO Division (including SIDA funds) on evaluations and similar activities.

## SIDA

Information provided to SIDA by the organisations has changed over time with the changing division of roles between SIDA and the NGOs. At present, SIDA's main role is to ensure that state funds provided are used in accordance with the signed framework agreements. SIDA should not, and does not have capacity, to review the details of the projects.

The feed-back on projects provided to SIDA includes both formal and informal information. The main formal instrument of feed-back to SIDA is the *annual report* submitted by organisations in November each year, following the ending of the previous fiscal year. Other formal feed-back includes brief *financial accounts* prepared in connection with requests for funds and information provided in the application forms. SIDA has full access to project reports, as well as to any other relevant information, on request.

**Figure 2.8: Requests, allocations and disbursements to the major framework organisations**



Source: SIDA NGO Division

Evaluations carried out by the NGO Division have focused not so much on development performance and impact, but on the general capacity of the framework organisations to carry out development work. From 1987 to the end of 1994, 13 such "capacity assessment studies" were carried out; the fourteenth (the capacity study of the Africa Group) commenced in early 1995. Additionally, a

major study on the NGO support programme was produced in 1991<sup>21</sup>, and a few smaller studies on more specific issues, such as the volunteer study<sup>22</sup> and the recent study on information activities in Sweden<sup>23</sup> have been produced. However, there has never been any comprehensive evaluation of the development impact of NGO support prior to this study. In 1993/1994, SEK 1.6 mn, or 0.2 percent of total disbursements, were spent on evaluations. In previous years the figure was far lower. These sorts of formal information are complemented by continuous informal communication between the organisation and the NGO Division.

Co-ordination between the NGO Division and SIDA's country desk officers, or any other department or division of SIDA, varies. It tends to take place on an *ad hoc* case by case basis, depending on the persons involved.<sup>24</sup> The absence of a uniform reporting system and the fact that much of the information is of an informal nature implies that there is very little information compiled systematically on projects. As a result, the funds which organisations receive from other SIDA windows is often not known to officials in the NGO Division.

### ***Ministry of Foreign Affairs***

Formal reporting to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is limited to SIDA's annual report and consultations that might take place during the year. Despite the fact that NGO assistance accounts for a major share of SIDA's budget, reporting to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was limited to one and a half pages in the annual report of 1993. Partly as a result of this paucity of information, one study of Swedish development aid described NGO support as a "black hole".<sup>25</sup>

## **2.3.3 The Allocation of funds**

The allocation of funds by SIDA to the NGOs is a process involving several discrete steps. A first screening of projects is made at the NGO level: each organisation has its own criteria for selecting projects. The funds provided are considered a support to the organisations' own activities. SIDA has neither the mandate nor the ability to influence the content of the projects as long as they are not contrary to the *Guidelines*.

SIDA's decisions are based on the organisations' overall performance over time. The different annual reports produced reach SIDA only four months after

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<sup>21</sup> F. Albinson F and Åhlström E. *Solidaritet med statsbidrag: Översyn av biståndet genom enskilda organisationer*, Stockholm: SIDA, September, 1991.

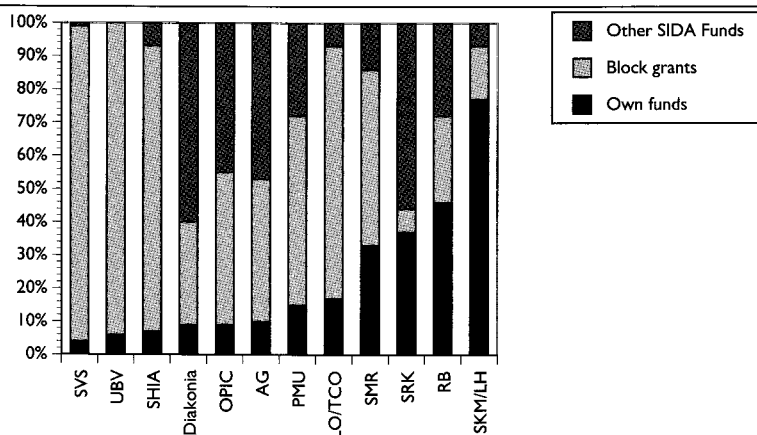
<sup>22</sup> ICS Interconsult Sweden AB *Volontärbidrag och egeninsats: Utredning av en stödform: SIDA's volontärschablon*, Stockholm, June, 1993.

<sup>23</sup> Norberg Network AB *SIDA's bidrag till U-landsinformation i Sverige – verksamhetsåret 92/93*, Stockholm, April, 1994.

<sup>24</sup> The country case studies indicate that there is considerable room for improvements in this regard.

<sup>25</sup> Gustavsson L. and Johansson S. *Rena roller i biståndet – styrning och arbetsfördelning i en effektiv biståndsförvaltning*, SOU 1994:19, Stockholm, February, 1994.

**Figure 2.9: Relation between SIDA funds and other funds per organisation**



Source: SIDA and NGOs

the fiscal year has ended. These include brief information on activities, but usually very little on actual project performance. The fact that each organisation has its own format for reporting implies that there is no way of making comparisons between the performance of the projects of different organisations.

Another issue to be considered is the expansion of funds provided for the NGO-window. To 1994, total funds were usually not a break on potential activities. Figure 2.9 provides trends in relation to funding requests, allocations and actual disbursements between 1989/90 and 1993/94, showing that disbursements have consistently been lower than requests for funds. This implies that unless projects are contrary to the signed framework agreement, SIDA will usually grant the funds that the organisation is likely to spend.

Different working relations have been established between SIDA and the different organisation in regard to how requests are assessed. For some organisations, SIDA reviews individual projects to assure that they are in line with the *Guidelines*.

As already noted, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs receives basically no information on project performance from SIDA, nor on development impact of NGO support. The increase of NGO funds must therefore be seen as exclusively policy based, reflecting the government's conviction that NGOs should have a greater role in Swedish development cooperation. It should be remembered that state aid has been heavily criticised in recent years. One of the reasons for providing more funds to NGOs may have been the absence of information on the impact of NGO support funds - nobody has ever had anything bad to say about it.

One final factor to note is that disbursements of SIDA-implemented aid projects has sometimes been slow, while NGOs have shown a great willingness to expand their government funded activities.

## 2.4 DEPENDENCY AND SIDA INFLUENCE

At one and the same time, it is stressed both that the organisations receiving funds from SIDA are independent of SIDA and the projects funded are their own, and also that they have to conform to SIDA conditions to qualify for financial support. The state has provided a framework for NGO activities to be supported by public fund, by defining what may be supported and what may not. Activities falling within this framework are not subject to any influence other than administrative ones concerning reporting rules. In this sense, there would appear to be no obvious contradiction, though it is possible to address and analyse this issue somewhat differently.<sup>26</sup>

It should be remembered that state funds for development form the basis not only for most of the development projects of the NGOs discussed here but also of the very existence of some of the more recently established NGOs themselves. Figure 2.10 provides some data on the (mostly project-focused) incomes of (most of the) the framework organisations. As mentioned above, there is a requirement for at least a 20/80 funding relation between own funds and SIDA funds for the project window. However, only 10 out of 14 organisations meet this criteria; for various reasons, the others have been exempt from the rule. From an overall dependency perspective, of course, SIDA resources obtained from the other funding windows are no less important to the overall build up of total income. According to data in Figure 2.9, nine organisations received more than 85 percent of their funds from SIDA in 1993/94. The exceptions were SMR, RB and SRK, which lowered their average SIDA dependency ratio to 70 percent.

SIDA has undoubtedly had a strong influence on the NGOs in terms of procedures to be followed and organisational requirements. Representatives of the NGO Division and the framework organisations both confirm that in only exceptional circumstances has SIDA sought to interfere, and insist that revisions be made to project applications as a condition for funds to be granted.

However, attention should be drawn to the notion of fungibility. The fungibility of funds within NGOs also limits SIDA's influence: SIDA funds provided for one activity inevitably release an organisation's own funds for other activities which, perhaps, SIDA would not necessarily have supported.

In conclusion, it can be stated that even though there exists strong financial dependence of Swedish NGOs on funds from SIDA, the organisations have been able to maintain an operational independence characterised by limited SIDA influence. To the extent that SIDA exercises an influence, in practice it tends to be informal rather than formal.

As Swedish NGOs now have access to close to the equivalent of a third of all Swedish bilateral aid funds, one can probably best characterise the relationship between SIDA and the Swedish NGOs as one of mutual dependency and a mutual influence.

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<sup>26</sup> As will be clear from the discussion below, in **Chapters 3 and 5**, the external evaluation team assessed the issue in a somewhat different way, and come to a rather different conclusion.

## METHODS AND APPROACHES

The core objectives of this evaluation are to provide a comprehensive assessment of the development impact of (a certain group of) SIDA-funded Swedish NGO projects and programmes, and draw wider conclusions on the basis of the case-study material obtained. Immediately, fundamental questions arise in terms, especially, of methods and approach questions which could potentially give rise to differences of opinion.

### 3.1 JUDGING IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS: THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The TOR specify that assessments are to be made in the four specified countries (Bolivia, India, Kenya and Zimbabwe) and that the main emphasis is to be data and information obtained by focusing on discrete projects and programmes funded by SIDA.

However, the TOR also emphasise that the "general purpose of the evaluation is **not** to judge individual organisations or projects but *to use project data (from country studies) to validate general conclusions*" (emphasis added).

The TOR do not specify explicitly how the project data will be gathered and what norms should be used in judging the development impact of the interventions funded by SIDA. However, they do contain a list of over 25 direct, and some further indirect, questions, which the evaluation is expected to answer.

In devising a practical way of carrying out the evaluation, it was found beneficial to rearrange these questions into four different clusters, representing a movement from immediate project-focused concerns to far broader considerations.

More explicitly, these four question-clusters focus in turn on the following:

1. project assessment in relation to the achievement of direct and immediate objectives;
2. project assessment in relation to the achievement of additional near-term objectives;
3. project assessment judged in relation to factors beyond the project, including institutional and policy issues, as well as comparisons with non-NGO development efforts; and,

4. broad-based assessment in which NGO achievement beyond the discrete project is viewed in relation to even broader, but in many ways even more relevant, contextual criteria.

Grouped together in this way, the different questions posed in the TOR would read as follows.

1. *Project assessment in relation to the achievement of direct and immediate objectives*

The questions posed in the TOR relevant to this cluster are as follows.

To what extent do the projects achieve their overall objectives?

What are the key factors that determine the extent to which the projects are able to achieve their specific objectives?

Have the projects been executed efficiently?

Have overall costs been appropriate to the range, level and distribution of benefits?

Have assessments of risks and consequences been made before implementation of the projects?

2. *Project assessment in relation to the achievement of additional near-term objectives*

The questions posed in the TOR in this cluster raise a series of questions some of which may have, but many of which probably have not, been raised explicitly with the NGOs prior to, or during, the SIDA-funding period. They include the following.

What are the other major basic impacts and effects, intended and unintended, in terms of technical, economic, socio-cultural, institutional and environmental factors resulting from the activity?

Are the project-supported institutions likely to continue beyond the project completion?

Are resources available to fund the activities after external funding has ended?

Do the projects have the necessary support from the beneficiaries, eg in the form of active participation, operation of facilities and use of services?

Have the institutional arrangements for project implementation strengthened or hampered the possibilities of sustained project activities?

What indications of multiplier effects or project replicability exist?

Do the projects generally stimulate community participation and respond to community requests?

Does the long term participation of women receive special attention?

Do the projects support local mobilisation of resources?

3. *Project assessment judged in relation to factors beyond the project, including institutional and policy issues, as well as comparisons with non-NGO development efforts*

There are two sub-groups of questions which fall into the parameters of this particular cluster. The first concerns not the project funded *per se*, but the NGO concerned, with questions focused on issues beyond the project. The relevant questions posed in the TOR are the following:

To what extent are NGOs effective in the planning, implementation and evaluation of environmentally sound and sustainable development activities, in emphasising especially the needs of women, the poverty problem, local capacity-building regarding equality, and in building democracy and regard for human rights?

How effective are Swedish NGOs in strengthening collaboration, equal partnership and local participation by NGOs in developing countries?

Have Swedish organisations supported capacity development (management and/or other) within cooperating organisations?

Have the Swedish organisations emphasised core funding or project funding in the cooperating organisations?

Are the projects planned and implemented in coordination with other donors/NGOs?

Have new institutions been planned to fit in to the government or existing institutional set-up of the cooperating country?

The second group of questions posed in this cluster focus on **comparisons** of the projects against (it is assumed) the performance of non-NGO donor agency projects in general, and SIDA projects or wider interventions in particular. Thus, in outlining the reasons for the evaluation, the TOR draw the following comparisons:

*It is generally ... assumed that NGO projects are **more cost effective** due to low operating costs, and (**more**) **effective** since the projects are carried out with the target group. Other assumptions are that support through NGOs is **more flexible, innovative and reaches the poorest groups** (emphasis added).*

The generally assumed effectiveness and efficiency of NGO-supported development projects is seldom corroborated by systematic monitoring and evaluation. It is felt that an overall assessment is needed both in order to have a firmer ground for future decisions on NGO support and to learn from experiences on handling and running NGO projects... (p. 2-3).

The context in which the word term "more" is used would appear to assume that NGO interventions are more cost effective **than official donor programmes, most notably more effective than SIDA's own interventions**. The implication – and particularly the reference to the need to corroborate this assumption – is that the

evaluation should attempt to make a comparison between NGO initiatives funded by SIDA and Swedish official aid projects.

4. *Broad-based assessment in which NGO achievement beyond the discrete project viewed in relation to broad development criteria*

Finally, the TOR raise a further set of questions related to the role of NGOs in the whole development effort. The relevant questions here are the following.

Are the NGOs effective as a form (of) development assistance cooperation in the framework of the development objectives of Sweden and of the cooperating countries?

Are the NGOs effective in relation to (their) development impact in the cooperating country?

How effective are Swedish NGOs in strengthening collaboration, equal partnership and local participation by NGOs in the developing countries?

Have new institutions been planned to fit in to the government or existing institutional set-up of the cooperating countries?

## 3.2 THE METHODS AND APPROACHES ADOPTED FOR THE EVALUATION

This section outlines the methods and approaches used and adopted for the evaluation.

### 3.2.1 Selecting projects

The NGO Division funds some 2,000 NGO development projects a year worldwide; it funds over 200 in the four countries selected. It was never going to be possible to review all projects. On the basis of a number of broadly similar evaluations of NGO projects undertaken, and within the constraints of the time available for different phases of the overall evaluation, it was decided to try to select between five and eight projects in each of the four countries, and to subject these to close scrutiny. This would give a total of between 20 and 32 projects overall.<sup>27</sup>

Besides **numbers** of projects, decisions had to be made about the **types** of projects to be selected for closer scrutiny. A first problem encountered here was the difficulty of obtaining a complete list of development projects funded by SIDA's NGO Division for each of the four countries. Though to the outsider it may seem

<sup>27</sup> In the event, it was possible to spend time examining closely a total of 37 projects, broken down as follows: Bolivia, nine; India, eight; Kenya, seven; and Zimbabwe, thirteen. The time spent on each project (project visits plus interviews, report reading etc) was between three quarters of a day and four days. The Overseas Development Institute's (ODI's) study of British NGO projects in four countries carried out in the early 1990s assessed 16 projects, the FINNIDA evaluation, 29 projects (See **Chapter 4**, below).



surprising, in practice no such list exists.<sup>28</sup> As a result, it was decided to approach each of the 14 framework organisations requesting them to provide the consultants with lists of current and recently completed NGO Division-funded projects under their particular umbrella, country by country. As there remained a lack of comprehensive project data by country, project selection could not take place on the basis of choosing a sample from the whole population of projects funded. Indeed, even by the time the country-study drafts were being finalised, the complete list of all Swedish NGO development projects funded by the NGO Division was still not in the hands of the main country authors.

It was thus decided to choose projects on the basis of the following six criteria:

- to select projects and programmes from all the main framework organisations which receive funds from the NGO Division for development in each of the four countries;
- to select at least one SIDA-funded intervention whose main or only component part is that of "technical assistance", including volunteer interventions;
- to select projects and programmes which, as far as possible, reflect the spread of type of activities of total SIDA-funded interventions in the country concerned: education, health, income generation, technical assistance etc.;
- to ensure, additionally, that at least one, and hopefully more than one, intervention selected was a fairly small project of a fairly small Swedish NGO; and
- to ensure that no SIDA-funded NGO intervention selected for assessment had been operating for less than 18 months; and
- to search for at least one project which has already been completed.

Project selection was made additionally difficult because the task at hand was not simply a matter of assessing projects of organisations which receive money from SIDA's NGO Division. In most cases, the funds are passed on to some sort of non-governmental organisation in the country in question to be implemented by them. It is by no means exceptional for the organisation which receives NGO Division funds for development projects to be a government agency, local or central government: while in many cases the projects could be termed "NGO" projects, in some cases they are not.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> SIDA does have data on the global amount allocated each year by recipient country, and on the amount within each country given to each framework organisation, in readily accessible form. Yet it does not have readily available project data lists broken down by individual country. Although the data and information clearly do exist within SIDA, the manner in which staff tasks within the Division are allocated (by framework organisation rather than by country) mean that SIDA has not grouped the data in this particular way.

<sup>29</sup> A further complication arises in the cases of Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka, where the NGO Division also provides funds to the respective local DCOs to fund development interventions of local NGOs. This issue is discussed most fully in the India Country Case-Study (see *Supplement II*).

In some cases, to get the green light for undertaking project assessments, and to discover who was the ultimate “project holder”, it was necessary to go through **six administrative layers**: from SIDA (1) to the Swedish framework organisation (2); from the framework organisation to the Swedish NGO (3); from the Swedish NGO to the local organisation in receipt of the funds (4); from the local organisation receiving the funds to the local organisation executing the project (5); and, finally, from the local executing agency to the actual project beneficiaries (6).

In practice, project selection took place in the following manner. First, the evaluation team leader visited each of the 14 framework organisations to outline the parameters of the evaluation and to seek their help in project selection.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, in their first preliminary visit to the country, each of the team leaders made contact with the relevant local organisations to seek permission for the project to be the subject of study for the evaluation, and to work out the parameters for project visits etc.

### 3.2.2 Undertaking project evaluations

In conformity with the TOR for the evaluation, the individual projects selected for closer scrutiny were assessed by the relevant international consultant in collaboration with locally-based consultants.<sup>31</sup> Each of the individual project assessments comprised a process of analysis and information-gathering which included the following elements: discussion and data-gathering with the relevant framework organisation and Swedish NGO in Sweden; discussion and data-gathering with the relevant indigenous project holder; one or more project visits which included a series of discussions and interviews with both beneficiaries, staff and other appropriate third parties (government officials, local government organisations, other NGOs working in the vicinity, etc.). It ended with the writing up of the project assessment. Time and financial constraints did not permit systematic discussion and feedback of project findings in Sweden following the in-country visits. However, time was provided for at least the relevant Swedish NGOs to review and react to the first drafts of the country case studies.

The different project assessments which were made followed quite closely the first two question-clusters described above. Thus, each project was assessed at two levels: first in relation to the achievement of the immediate objectives for which the funds were provided, and second in relation to a check-list of nine broader areas/questions which were asked of each of the projects assessed.

<sup>30</sup> For some time, the framework organisations had been aware that SIDA was proposing to fund an impact evaluation. However, some had not been fully kept in the picture as regards the timing of the evaluation.

<sup>31</sup> In most cases, local SIDA staff in-country assisted in the process of selecting these locally-based consultants and, in conformity with the TOR, none of the local consultants contracted had any professional or personal interest in any of the projects assessed. In the Zimbabwe case, two local consultants were contracted which explains in part why more projects could be assessed in Zimbabwe than elsewhere.

In order to assess their achievement in relation to their immediate objectives, the projects were assessed against the following criteria:

- how closely they conformed to core stated objectives for which SIDA originally agreed to provide state funding;
- the degree to which they are succeeding, or have succeeded, in achieving their stated objectives; and
- how the benefits achieved relate to the costs outlaid.

The TOR raise a series of wider questions which, when addressed, helped to locate the specific project objectives in their wider context.

Thus, based on the questions posed in the TOR, each project was then assessed against the following nine broad criteria, and finally, in terms of overall performance by forming an overall judgement of project performance against these criteria considered all together.<sup>32</sup>

1. the extent to which the project was assisting the poor, and, in particular, the extent to which it was assisting the poorest;
2. the extent to which the intended beneficiaries had participated, and were participating, in different aspects of the project;
3. the extent to which gender issues had been incorporated into the project, in both its preparation and while running, as well as the nature of the project's impact on prevailing gender relations;
4. the extent to which environmental factors were considered in designing and executing the project, and what the environmental impact of the project is and has been;
5. evidence from the projects/programmes assessed of the impact of Swedish technical personnel: their importance, their training of local people, the potential for their replacement and lessons learnt;
6. the extent to which the interventions funded have been innovative, have exhibited flexible and adaptable characteristics, and the extent to which they have been, or have the potential to be, replicable elsewhere;
7. the extent to which pre-project assessment took place prior to start-up, the extent to which, and the methods by which, ongoing project monitoring has taken place, and whether final evaluation has taken place or is planned;
8. the extent to which the projects reviewed could be considered sustainable; and, finally,
9. the extent to which issues related to democracy and human rights have been considered in drawing up and executing the project.

<sup>32</sup> As the following list indicates, a number of these nine criteria themselves embrace additional sub-groups of criteria. Thus, for instance, category 6 raises three questions, concerning the extent to which particular projects are considered: first, innovative; secondly, flexible; and thirdly, potentially replicable.

### 3.2.3 Addressing issues beyond discrete projects

Addressing the issues raised in the next two question-clusters necessitated widening the analysis and context still further. The chosen projects were assessed against, and within the context of, broader developments and trends of the particular country.

Thus, what the country case-studies tried to do was to build two pictures of the selected Swedish-funded development initiatives, one from the bottom upwards, the other from the top down. Within this context they have attempted to answer the question: what difference do these NGO interventions make to broader attempts, locally and nationally, to address the development problems the country faces, and in particular to help resolve the problems of poverty?

They have tried to do this in various ways. Most particularly,

- by reviewing the extent to which the Swedish-funded NGO initiatives “fit into” – and are typically similar to or different from – other NGO initiatives in the country in question.
- By assessing the Swedish development effort in relation to the strengths, weaknesses and potential of the whole NGO development effort in the country in question.
- By reviewing this particular SIDA-funded way of assisting NGOs both in relation to other ways in which SIDA interacts with the NGO movement in the country in question. And, in a limited way,
- by comparing the development performance and impact of Swedish NGO-funded initiatives and the broader Swedish official aid programme.

The way the evaluation attempted to answer these questions was as follows. By reviewing previous evaluations and impact assessments of NGOs and NGO work in the countries in question, especially any overview assessments including, but not confined to studies undertaken by other donors; by reviewing the current and recent Swedish official aid programme in the country in question, including relevant evaluations, and enriching written sources of information with interviews with SIDA, Swedish Embassy and other relevant Swedish staff in Stockholm and in-country;<sup>33</sup> by reviewing broad economic analyses and survey data from the country in question, including especially World Bank country reports; and, by discussing these issues, where possible, with other donors, and with NGOs not directly involved with Swedish-funded programmes.

Utilising the information gathered from the discrete projects which were the subject of closer scrutiny, and placing this in the wider context of the issues just discussed led to the writing of the four country case-studies.

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<sup>33</sup> The term “other relevant Swedish staff” means officials from other agencies such as the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries (SAREC).

### 3.2.4 Drawing the threads together

The data, evidence and analysis of the country studies provided four building blocks upon which to draw together the different threads to provide the broad overview, general conclusions and recommendations required by the TOR.

This work took place in three (inter-linked) stages. The first stage involved analysing the data from the four country studies. The main tasks here involved comparing and contrasting the evidence and data from the four country studies, to trace through similarities and to find differences and, more importantly to see the extent to which explanations for these similarities and differences could be found.

The second stage involved the main authors receiving feed-back on the analysis, conclusions and recommendations of the country case-study reports. This was received, *inter alia*, from SIDA officials in Stockholm, SIDA officials in-country, the relevant framework organisations and Swedish NGOs, and, in a few instances, the local NGOs or umbrella organisations in-country executing the development projects and programmes funded.

The third stage of drawing together these different threads involved an attempt to draw general conclusions and make recommendations to SIDA, focusing – as ever – on recommendations based on and seeking to enhance **development impact**.<sup>34</sup>

### 3.2.5 The validity of making generalisations

At two key stages of the evaluation generalisations are made beyond the raw data collected. The first involves making generalisations about Swedish NGO-funded initiatives beyond the sample selected. The second stage involves making generalisations for a programme of development initiatives which cover just over 100 countries on the basis of a (partial) examination of projects in just four countries.

Scientific sampling techniques suggest that, provided the sample is large enough, the population from which the sample is derived is uniform, and the selection is random, generalisations about the whole population **can** validly be made on the basis of the data and information obtained from the random sample.<sup>35</sup> However, the procedures adopted for this evaluation fall far short of those required for these conditions to apply.

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<sup>34</sup> The words “in part” used here are important. They are meant to convey the point that because of constraints of time, processes which, ideally, should have run consecutively, had to run concurrently. Most especially, analysis of the country case-studies, the drawing of initial conclusions, and the interchange with Swedish NGOs and SIDA on the recommendations made by the evaluators had to take place only when the first drafts of the country case studies had been prepared, not subsequent to the finalisation of the country case-studies.

<sup>35</sup> The larger the sample the lower will be the standard error, and the higher will be the levels of confidence achieved.

The conclusion has to be that it would be illegitimate to make wider generalisations, conclusions and recommendations solely on the basis of the (biased sample) data and information obtained, both at the country level and beyond. But this is different from arguing that it is illegitimate to make **any** recommendations, conclusions and/or recommendations on the basis of the data and information gathered. They can be made, provided they are understood as provisional, rather than firm, and that they remain open to revision, as and when additional information comes to hand.

The following seven points provide the context for understanding the strengths of particular conclusions made.

1. The method of project selection used for the evaluation is likely to be **biased more in favour of better development impact** than would result from selection based on a more random survey.
2. On the other hand, as most projects assessed are ongoing rather than completed projects, the judgements made need to be treated as **more tentative** than if the selection contained a greater balance of completed and ongoing projects.
3. However, it is also important to note that projects were assessed in very different contexts. Therefore, to the extent that project impact is similar across these different environments, and causes of project success and failure are similar, the conclusions initially drawn in isolation will provide a growing basis for believing that they apply more widely and generally. Conversely, to the extent that it appears difficult to make generalisations beyond the specific project and country, one should be increasingly wary of assuming that the results and conclusions drawn here can be applied more widely.<sup>36</sup>
4. As the countries selected were biased in favour of those in which more NGO Division development funds are placed, the wider impact of these funds on overall development and on enhancing the role of NGOs in development is likely to be greater than in countries in which fewer NGO Division funds are channelled. Thus, if the country case studies show that the wider development impact is small, it is likely to be even smaller in countries with lower levels of NGO Division funds.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> As the Bolivian country case study notes (*Supplement, I*): Evaluations such as this are asked to present a synthetic assessment of enormously different projects: projects that are different in almost every conceivable sense. These are projects in different sectors, of different sizes and with different objectives. They are simply in-comparable, yet they fall into the same programme. If we are to evaluate the programme, we therefore have to talk about these incomparable, fundamentally different projects in the same paragraphs.

<sup>37</sup> One obvious proviso needs to be made. Overall impact of NGO Division funds on a country's development is related not only to the volume of funds provided by the NGO Division but also by the size of the recipient economy, as well as the quality of the work done or funded. Thus, the possibility exists that the overall impact of fewer NGO Division funds could be greater in Country A (which is smaller) than in Country B (which is larger) with the insertion of fewer funds.

5. These evaluations did not take place in a vacuum. As the methods used in this evaluation are broadly similar to those used elsewhere, they **do** form the basis for enabling judgements to be made against the backdrop of this wider literature.
6. Relatedly, while the evaluation was certainly a sample, it was by no means insignificant. Together the development funds provided by the NGO Division in the countries selected accounted for 12 percent of the total SIDA funds allocated for development by the NGO Division in the year 1992/93, while the sample of projects selected probably accounted for some 15 percent of all NGO Division development projects currently funded in the four countries selected.
7. However, the projects funded by the NGO Division are only one part of the whole SIDA NGO-funding enterprise. The criteria used for funding both other Swedish NGOs and other Swedish NGO projects by different SIDA windows and the criteria used for funding non-Swedish NGOs and their projects are very different from those used by the NGO Division.

### **3.3 JUDGING DEVELOPMENT IMPACT AND MAKING JUDGEMENTS ABOUT SWEDISH NGOS**

At first sight, it would appear that it is **only fair** to judge performance on the basis of the specific criteria and conditions for which the SIDA funds have been granted.

But, as discussed fully in Section 3.2 above, the TOR for the evaluation raise a whole series of different sorts of questions, many of which were clearly not broached or raised by SIDA when granting funds to the Swedish NGO concerned. Evidently in judging performance, NGOs in receipt of SIDA funds for development should be judged more rigorously in relation to criteria which **were** applied when funds were given than against criteria which were not.

#### **3.3.1 Own criteria or SIDA criteria?**

On the one hand, SIDA states that it is providing funds to support the NGOs' **own** development projects and initiatives. On the other, SIDA states that in receiving funds from the NGO Division, Swedish NGOs have to comply with the general objectives of Swedish development assistance. It appears to be quite widely accepted in Sweden that these two principles generally work in harmony with each other. However, if and when these two principles come into conflict with each other, there appears to be no established, and accepted way, of resolving the conflicts.

Thus, as just noted, it is an important principle of SIDA that funds given to Swedish NGOs through the NGO Division are provided to NGOs in order to

promote **their own** (development) programmes: those the NGOs **themselves** select as appropriate.<sup>38</sup> This certainly suggests that SIDA should not concern itself with developing criteria or imposing conditions on the initial choice of how the money should be spent.

*SIDA's support is primarily considered a contribution to the organisations' own programmes for which they have the whole responsibility (emphasis added). SIDA therefore concentrates its efforts on evaluating and following up the programmes rather than on examining the plans. (SIDA's Strategies, June 1993, p. 34.)*

However, as Albinson and Åhlström go on to point out, this is not an absolute principle; it needs to be tempered with another (1992: 47).

*On the other hand, the state is not obliged to provide financial support to all organisations which run programmes of development assistance. If an organisation is to receive state grants it must fulfil certain criteria.*

The place where one would expect these (other) criteria to be spelt out most clearly would be in the *Guidelines* issued to Swedish NGOs and framework organisations wishing to utilise state funds for their own development projects. At first sight it appears that they do, inasmuch as the *Guidelines for SIDA's support to the development programmes of Swedish NGOs* state that:

*... (t)he overall goals of SIDA's grants to the development programmes of NGOs are the same as for all Swedish development cooperation: economic growth, economic and social equality, democratic development, economic and political independence, and sustainable use of natural resources and protection of the environment.*

Swedish NGOs can make their own decision, but **only** provided that the use to which the funds are put conforms to SIDA's overall goals. In other words, the decision made by NGOs is clearly viewed as **dependent upon** them conforming to this **higher and prior** criterion.

The *Evaluation Manual for SIDA* states that (1994: 45):

*Each individual development assistance input does not have to fulfil all five goals, but should not work against any of them.*

The five factors listed need to be seen more as general norms than as specific criteria against which NGO projects should be judged and/or evaluated.

Additionally, (though this is not contained in the *Guidelines*), SIDA provides far more explicit and direct criteria for the funds it provides to NGOs. Thus, the document *SIDA Strategies* (published in the same month as the current *Guidelines* states that:

*activities of the organisation should comply with the overall objectives of Swedish official development as determined by the Swedish parliament (SIDA's Strategies, June 1993, p. 34).*

<sup>38</sup> This contrasts, for example, with funds provided through the Democracy and Human Rights Section of SIDA's Public Administration Division which are explicitly provided to promote SIDA's agenda.



This comment is important because it **requires** Swedish NGOs in receipt of development funds from SIDA's NGO Division to ensure that the projects and programmes which they put up for SIDA funding work to achieve the underlying objective of all Swedish development assistance. This objective has recently been summarised thus (Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs *International Development Cooperation, Summary of the Budget Bill 1994/95*, Stockholm 1994, p. 3):

*The primary goal for Swedish development assistance continues to be to improve the standard of living of poor peoples (emphasis added).*

Applying this principle to the funds which Swedish NGOs receive through the NGO Division means that the projects proposed for funding **can** be judged (indeed, **ought** to be judged) in relation to their success in improving the living standards of poor peoples.

But there is more: both the *Guidelines* and the *SIDA Strategies* documents point to how this important objective should be understood, most notably by highlighting (and in part interpreting the meaning of) the notion of sustainability. Thus the *Guidelines* comment:

A development project (or programme) is expected to lead to permanent change for the people in the target group or for the activity supported by the project.

The principle for Swedish projects in receipt of assistance from SIDA is that the grant shall provide a temporary consolidation of resources in order that a permanent improvement in the recipient country can be achieved. Even if the activity supported in the recipient country is of a continuous nature, the development project for which a grant is applied shall have a definite purpose and a time limit. Grants can be approved for three years application.

The thrust of these statements suggests that, far from their being no criteria for Swedish NGOs to receive NGO Divisions funds other than their own decisions on how best to spend it, the NGOs concerned are explicitly required to ensure that the funds they receive

**have the aim of improving the standards of living of the poor, and that improvement should in some senses be permanent.**<sup>39</sup>

The implication is that there are legitimate grounds for NGO Division development funds to be judged against this particular yardstick. The Albinson and Åhlström study (presumably) articulates a widely shared view not only that Swedish NGO projects do succeed in reaching the poor, but that they reach the poorest people. Thus they write that (1992: 37):

<sup>39</sup> This leaves open the question of how long it might take to achieve a permanent improvement in living standards. The June 1993 publication, *SIDA's Strategy for Its Programmes of Assistance in Support of Democracy and Human Rights*, provides the long view, when it notes that: *Experience shows that almost all work concerned with the development of a country should have a time perspective which extends over decades...* (page 25).

*A major reason to increase NGO aid is the ability of the organisations to reach the real target groups of Swedish aid – the poorest people in the poorest countries – and to build up mutual cooperation.*<sup>40</sup>

It would appear legitimate to judge, and pass judgement, on the projects or programmes funded against the stated (development) objectives for which the funds were originally provided. The more evidence that accumulates indicating that a Swedish NGO repeatedly fails to achieve the development objectives to which it commits itself when receiving funds, the greater the grounds for questioning whether such an NGO should continue to receive state funds for these purposes.

If the general thrust of this discussion is accepted, it seems that we have moved on considerably from the view that SIDA has no right to vet potential projects put forward to the NGO Division for funding, and has no right to assess their development impact.

### **3.3.2 Broadening the criteria still further**

As discussed extensively above, the TOR for this evaluation raise a host of questions about development impact well beyond the two types of criteria just discussed – impact on the poor and impact against specific immediate stated criteria. The question to be discussed here is how fair it is to judge Swedish NGOs and the projects they promote and sponsor against these further criteria.

It could be argued that Swedish NGOs should not be judged **at all** against criteria which were not applied when funds were provided, or have never been applied or discussed subsequently. Within this perspective, for example, Swedish NGOs could contend that it is wholly inappropriate to judge and assess their projects in relation to the direct involvement of the beneficiaries, or against the objective of strengthening the institutional capacity of the executing organisation (NGO) if such factors were never raised during the process of receiving funds.

The view taken here is slightly different. It is readily acknowledged that different criteria vary in their nature and importance, and that a distinction needs to be made between judging development against, on the one hand, the two linked and explicit criteria of poverty alleviation and permanence, and, on the other, against all others. But, equally, it is argued that care needs to be taken before sweeping all these other criteria aside as “irrelevant”.

The *Evaluation Manual for SIDA* states *inter alia* that:

*One of the basic principles of Swedish development assistance is that Swedish supported projects shall benefit both men and women.... For evaluations this means that assessment is... (made in relation to) the degree to which women and men respectively have participated and been affected... (p. 47).*

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<sup>40</sup> This statement was not based on analysis or scrutiny. It was merely a boldly stated assumption.

*All evaluations must include an assessment of environmental impact. The task of the evaluators is to examine any environmental impact made by the project.” E. Lewin Evaluation Manual for SIDA, ... (p. 51).*

*The decisive issue concerning the value of a development project is whether the activity supported can continue and be maintained retaining a reasonable level of quality after support from external sources has been withdrawn. (p. 51). And*

*If the programme is to be sustainable in the long term, (it) is not merely dependent upon the attainment of its primary goal, but also to a considerable degree on (whether) the sub-goal – the strengthening of the recipient organisation – has been attained. For this reason most evaluations must include an assessment of institutional development and competence. (p. 50).*

Additionally, and in relation explicitly to NGOs, the 1993 publication of the Planning Secretariat *SIDA and the Environment* states that

... SIDA requires that non-governmental organizations, too, integrate environmental aspects into projects supported by SIDA.

For its part, *SIDA Strategies* (1993) requires that

*(NGOs)... must be able to ensure that activities are sustainable..., and that they support development towards democracy.<sup>41</sup>*

For SIDA, two immediate questions arise. The first is whether the **Guidelines** should be altered, extended or made more comprehensive so that all Swedish NGOs are made aware of all the different factors against which SIDA is likely to assess development projects of NGOs which they fund. The second – based in part on the **results** of the current evaluation – is whether SIDA should draw more explicit attention in its **Guidelines** to additional criteria, because of a mix of their importance to development and because so many NGOs appear to ignore them, or fail to understand their deeper significance.

### 3.3.3 Concluding comments

The time has come to summarise the points made in this discussion and draw some tentative conclusions. The extreme view which contends that because the NGO Division funds projects and programmes submitted by Swedish NGOs, SIDA should play no part in choosing which projects and programmes to fund and in judging development impact is rejected.

A review of what are perceived as the relevant documents<sup>42</sup> indicates that the NGO Division has a core responsibility **at the funding stage** to ensure that the projects and programmes submitted are aimed at enhancing the lives of poor people, and that improvement should in some senses be permanent. It is quite legitimate for these

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<sup>41</sup> The point about democracy is not new, what is new is the stress which is now laid upon it.

<sup>42</sup> It should be noted that the evaluation team did not have ready access to all Swedish documents. Though the team was able to request translations of Swedish documents, without a translation, it did not always know which Swedish documents were relevant to its analysis!

projects and programmes, and the Swedish NGOs which seek funding for them, to be judged against their ability to achieve these different development objectives. This view would appear to be confirmed in the *Guideline* (pages 20 and 21).

The aim should be to seek continually to utilise, in a dynamic way, the insights and information obtained from a succession of development impact assessments in order for SIDA and the NGOs to work out together how the criteria for funding NGO projects and programmes should be altered in order to enhance their overall development impact and, in particular, further permanent improvements in the lives of the poor.

### **3.4 ASSESSING THE SUSTAINABILITY: POSSIBLE CONCEPTS AND CRITERIA**

Sustainability has received such prominence that in many circles it is now far from uncommon to see replaced the purpose of aid – to achieve development – by the purpose of achieving sustainable development. It is thus not surprising that the TOR for this evaluation makes specific reference to the issue of sustainability requesting that

*The generalised concept of sustainability in the NGO context shall be analyzed and defined.*

#### **3.4.1 Initial definitional issues and SIDA's current input**

Sustainability is a complex issue: most frequently because of the emphasis given in the debate to different development goals.

The term sustainability is not explicitly used or referred to in the pre-conditions for SIDA providing funds to NGOs. However, the notion, is clearly implied in the comment that "the grant shall provide a temporary consolidation of resources in order that a permanent improvement in the recipient country can be achieved" (page 5), and in the requirement that final project reports shall "state how activities shall run in the future" (page 21).

Far more explicit is the statement in the document *SIDA's Strategies* in relation to grants given to NGOs. This states that (1993: 34)

Organisations which apply for state grants through SIDA in support of their activities with NGOs in developing countries are required to meet certain criteria as regards policies, orientation and implementing capacity... (T)hey must be able to ensure that activities are sustainable.

Here, however, though sustainability is **demand**ed, it is not defined.

The *Evaluation Manual for SIDA* quotes and, in general, voices approval for the OECD/DAC definition of sustainability.<sup>43</sup> Here, a development programme is defined as sustainable when:

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<sup>43</sup> Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) *Sustainability in Development Programmes: A Compendium of Evaluation Experience, Selected Issues in Aid Evaluation 4*, Paris: OECD, 1989.

*it is able to deliver an appropriate level of benefits for an extended period of time after major financial, managerial, and technical assistance from an external donor is withdrawn.*

Thus, here, sustainability is viewed solely as the survival of the project and programme (that is its outcome or the benefits expected) after an initial period of investment – financial, physical or technological. The OECD/DAC Evaluation Committee *Compendium* lists seven factors likely to influence sustainability. These are: government policies; management issues; organisation and local participation; finance; technology; socio-cultural factors; environmental and ecological factors; and broader external political circumstances. These are followed quite closely in the *Evaluation Manual for SIDA*.

### 3.4.2 Sustainability as process

A different approach – and one which has a range of more practical implications for NGO evaluations – is to concentrate less on **whether** a particular intervention has become “self-sustaining” (meaning, simply, that it is able to survive without the continued intervention, input and support of the donor), and to focus more on broader issues. One of these broader issues would involve an examination of the ways in which the individuals or groups of people, or specific organisations involved in the project or programme have the capacity to take over successfully the distinct project or activity when the sponsoring NGO withdraws. Broader still would be an examination of the way in which the project or programme has enabled not so much the project but the **beneficiaries themselves** to be or become more able to survive without external inputs. Within this context, it is useful to make a distinction between *financial* sustainability, *institutional* sustainability and *environmental* sustainability.

#### *Financial sustainability*

Financial sustainability is achieved to the extent that those other than external agents (including funders) are able to provide the financial input required to maintain and run the programme/project. Various possibilities present themselves. Thus, the beneficiaries themselves could be paying for a greater share of the costs; the host government takes over the financial burden of the donor; or again, the form of the project/programme could be changed in order to create more, or even new, internally-generated revenue-raising opportunities.<sup>44</sup> It is acknowledged that it will often be difficult for NGO projects/programmes to obtain accurate data on the extent to which financial sustainability has been achieved. Yet it should be easier to indicate whether there are visible signs of any **movement** towards greater financial sustainability.

<sup>44</sup> An example of the latter could be a hospital which previously had been open only to “the poor” but which now runs a private patient facility, with the revenue from the “rich” providing self-generating income to help provide the service for the poor.

A tension can often arise between attempting to achieve greater financial sustainability and maintaining the quality of service provided. For instance, if a health post becomes financially sustainable only as a result of now providing a service which is so inadequate that no one wants to use the facilities on offer, then achieving financial sustainability is a chimera. If a movement towards greater financial sustainability is achieved largely by altering the nature of the intervention such that only those who can afford to pay for the service now have access to the project, then again, from the viewpoint of the poor and in terms of the objectives of the project, the greater financial sustainability achieved is no real achievement at all.

It is a common characteristic of the poor that their development requirements cannot be met by the market; thus for the poor to be served with the services they require in order for them to take an active and productive role in the economy, they will often require interventions which, at least in the short term, are subsidised. What this suggests is that it can often be inappropriate to apply the same criterion of sustainability on interventions targeted specifically to the poor as it is for other groups.

Support for such an interpretation of the core issues to be addressed comes from a number of respected international sources. Thus, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environmental Programme has stated that:<sup>45</sup>

*In broad terms, the concept of sustainable development encompasses (1) help for the very poor because they are left with no option other than to destroy their environment.. and (5) the notion that people-centred initiatives are needed: human beings, in other words, are the resources in the concept.*

To the extent that people remain in sub-poverty conditions, the most important requirement is to work to raise their living standards above the poverty line. In such circumstances, financial sustainability of discrete interventions must always remain a secondary issue, and be accorded a lower order priority than the more important aim of giving "overriding priority" to meeting the poor's basic needs.

In many ways, such a view is not considered radical. Indeed, there are hints of it in the OECD/DAC *Compendium*, which, as noted, receives the seal of approval in the *Evaluation Manual for SIDA* (1994: 16).

*It is not necessary for sustainability that the programme be totally supported by local resources. The objective of a sustainable programme is to make a country self-reliant, not necessarily self-sufficient in a selected development activity... The sustainable programme is characterised by the developing country's having the primary responsibility for the activity, the institutional capacity and commitment to carry it forward and the ability to mobilise the necessary resources to maintain it. It is not necessary for this to be accomplished without any assistance from other sources.*

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<sup>4</sup> M.K. Tolba *Sustainable Development - Constraints and Opportunities*, London: Butterworth, 1987. p. 98.

The main conclusion to be drawn from this discussion is that one should not necessarily assume that

*when NGO projects and programmes involve interventions to assist the poor, neither the NGOs themselves nor their funders should always strive to achieve greater financial sustainability.*

The challenge of financial sustainability requires moving away from the view that poverty and deprivation solely justify any action for the poor, away from the view that the only important thing is that the poor are "helped". Such a view discourages attention from being focused on different ways in which they might be helped, or even on reviewing whether it might be possible to provide the services required by the poor in a better/more efficient way. In such cases, there is an **urgent** need to focus on the issue of financial sustainability.

At one level, there is often a great need to encourage NGOs to focus on the issue of financial sustainability: the evidence suggests that it is still all too common for NGOs not to address the issue of financial sustainability until they are well into funding the project. At another level, it is important that attempts to enhance and improve financial sustainability at the project level are not viewed as ends in themselves.

### ***Institutional sustainability***

This dimension of sustainability commonly involves the imparting of management abilities and, more generally, the building, sustenance and strengthening of local capacity, and often, local institutions. It involves the growth and development of different "capacities": the capacity to identify and resolve problems; the capacity to negotiate; the capacity to manage and administer; the capacity to strengthen the power of poor groups, and to utilise that power to draw resources to the poor. A number of these notions are captured in the OECD/DAC *Compendium* and apply equally to poor people as they do to developing countries. Thus (1989: 17)

*It should be the goal of a development programme to help establish and strengthen the foundation on which future activities can grow and spread. There is a need to develop and nurture capabilities so that developing countries can take charge of the pace and direction of their own development. From self-reliance can come the experience needed to sustain development efforts.*

And when focused explicitly on beneficiaries, it involves the building and nurturing of skills, ideas, networks, contacts, enthusiasm and vision among those who participate in the particular activity funded.<sup>46</sup> Indeed from this perspective, it is the creation and enduring aspects of building peoples' capacities which is most often of greater value and importance than either the financial sustainability of discrete projects.

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<sup>46</sup> This list embraces more widely what Albert Hirschmann has termed "social energy". See A. Hirschmann *Getting Ahead Collectively: Grassroots Experience in Latin America*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1984.

### ***Environmental sustainability***

At a general level, negatively and narrowly, discrete projects and programmes need to be drawn up and carried out in a manner which, minimally, ensures that they do no lasting harm to the environment. Ideally, given the way that the environment has been damaged and continues to be damaged, NGO projects and programmes should, like other interventions, be drawn up and executed in a manner which leaves the environment in better shape for future generations than in the pre-project period. These notions are well encapsulated in the *Brundtland* definition given above that development should meet "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"...

Yet again, however, when the basic needs to the poor and working to provide them with life's bare necessities are considered, complications can and do arise. There could be reasons for tolerating (but not condoning) projects for the poor which have adverse environmental consequences, most notably if the environmental damage done can be addressed through other measures.

In particular, if the environmental costs are localised and less than permanent, then it could be argued that a project for the poor should go ahead, provided that alternatives are not available and that measures are taken to redress the damage done. However, one needs to be careful about pressing this analogy with financial sustainability too far because they are differences between them. If the poor are provided with goods and services in a manner which involves contributing in a permanent way to environmental damage, then a more difficult dilemma is presented: weighing the fulfilling of basic/core needs now against being able to leave the earth's resources intact for future generations.

### **3.4.3 Defining sustainability**

The sustainability of projects and programmes needs to be understood in terms of their financial components, their institutional components, their human resource components and their environmental components, without exclusive focus on any single element. It is increasingly important to judge NGO projects and programmes within the context of their ability to stand on their own feet, in terms of achieving greater financial sustainability, in terms of achieving greater institutional sustainability, and in terms of their influence and impact on the environment. Yet, there is an equally important need to focus all the time on quality of delivery and access, and to guard against an extreme view that those unable to utilise the market can be provided with basic needs, including productive needs, without the payment of any subsidy. Sustainability in the NGO context is provisionally defined thus:

All NGO projects and programmes need to be implemented with a view to furthering the ability of the beneficiaries to take more control over their lives. This will mean from the outset (pre-project assessment stage) that the funding/



external organisation will need to review the steps required not only to encourage the executing agency/organisation to become more direct owners of the project or programme as soon as possible, but, equally, to ensure that the focus of attention extends beyond the discrete project or programme funded to the primary beneficiaries.

Most immediately, all NGO projects and programmes need to be drawn up with a view to assessing the extent to which they should attempt to achieve financial and institutional sustainability, wherever possible within a explicit time-table, and in relation to the direct and indirect impact they will have on the environment. This assessment will need to include reviewing the concrete steps that need to be taken in order to increase the likelihood that an appropriate level of benefits will continue to be delivered for an extended period of time after major financial, managerial, and technical assistance has been withdrawn.

Equally, however, the requirement to *review and assess* all initiatives funded against the achievement of sustainability does not necessarily mean that future financial or institutional sustainability should in all cases be a *necessary* requirement for funding discrete projects or programmes. In particular, financial and institutional sustainability need to be pursued only on condition that, especially for the poor and where basic needs or services are being provided, the quality of, and access to, the basic good or service provided will not be radically compromised. Where the good or service provided is considered essential to the basic well-being of the beneficiaries, and where alternative funding cannot be found, the inability to achieve either financial or institutional sustainability should not constitute an impediment to funding such NGO initiatives.



*Christian organisations in Sweden have a long history of missionary work, especially in Africa. Traditionally, the Christian organizations worked mostly with educational and health projects, but today they are involved in all sorts of development projects. In Zimbabwe, the Swedish Christian organisation Lutherhjälpen supports the construction of dams to prevent future drought disasters.*

PHOTO: BROR KARLSSON/BAZAAR

# THE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT OF SWEDISH NGO INTERVENTIONS

*Results from the Country Case Studies and Some International Comparisons*

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of the chapter is to provide a synthesis of the findings of these country studies in a form that draws attention to patterns, trends, similarities and key differences among the four countries. This is not so much an attempt to draw generalisations from just four countries, which are clearly very different. It is more an attempt to identify critical questions and issues that emerge from the studies, especially those of particular interest to SIDA. The chapter ends by reviewing, all too briefly, studies of the development impact of NGO projects funded recently by two other bilateral donor countries: Finland and the United Kingdom.

## 4.2 SUMMARY OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE ACROSS THE FOUR COUNTRIES

A major part of the overall evaluation consisted of assessing the development impact of some 37 different projects funded by SIDA's NGO Division. These 37 projects were distributed across the four countries as follows: Bolivia, nine; India, eight; Kenya, seven; and Zimbabwe, 13. What was their development impact?

It was possible to come to fairly firm judgements on project impact in the case of 35 out of these 37 projects (94 percent of the total). In the other two cases – one in Kenya and one in Zimbabwe – the failure to be able to form an overall judgement was due, in part, to the complexity of the two projects concerned. What characterised these two projects in particular was not exclusively their complexity, but complexity married with a marked lack of transparency within and across the implementing agency. To the extent that there exists a substantial lack of transparency within any implementing agency, it is likely that the impact of a project upon primary beneficiaries will suffer.

The assessment of the remaining 35 projects points forcibly to two major conclusions. The first is that the overwhelming majority either have achieved, or are well on their way to achieving, the stated and immediate objectives for which SIDA's NGO Division provided the funds. Schools have been built; study circles

have been formed; trees have been planted; NGO networks have been established; and land has been designated as planned. Only three instances of projects failing to meet their immediate and direct objectives were recorded across the four countries. As this constituted less than 10 percent of the sample, it suggests quite a high rating: reviews of official aid projects suggest that a success ratio of around 15-20 percent is often considered "acceptable". Nonetheless, one also needs to recall the point made in **Chapter 3** that the projects selected for investigation were almost certainly biased towards those more likely to be among the more successful.

The second prominent conclusion across all four country case studies was that success at achieving immediate project objectives provided little guidance to the overall **development** impact of the projects in question when viewed more broadly. While achieving immediate project objectives is certainly a **necessary** condition for the project to have a substantive and sustained development impact on the beneficiaries, it is by no means a **sufficient** condition. We still know very little about how peoples' lives have been changed. It would certainly have been worrying if immediate project objectives had not been achieved. In most cases, the achievement of direct/immediate objectives fails to answer central questions about development impact.

All the projects were assessed in relation to nine broad criteria which, when taken together, provide a guide to their broader development impact. These were: their poverty focus; their degree of participation; their gender characteristics; their contribution to the environment and to environmental awareness; their sustainability; the manner in which Swedish personnel were utilised; their innovativeness, flexibility and replicability; the extent to which they have engaged in pre-project appraisal, ongoing monitoring and post-project evaluation; and, finally, the manner in which the projects funded have worked to promote democracy and human rights concerns.

The evidence from the project assessments across all four countries shows that when these projects are judged against more and more of these broader criteria, their aggregate performance rating drops progressively. Indeed, very few of the projects examined scored consistently high marks in relation to a majority of these broader criteria.

It is important to add, however, that in many respects such a conclusion was not unexpected, for three main reasons. In the first place, a number of these broader criteria are new to a number of Swedish NGOs. Most criteria were not raised when SIDA provided funds for the projects supported. Secondly, comparisons with assessments of NGO projects of other donor-country based NGOs funded by other bilateral donors reveal that these, too, tend to score relatively poorly when assessed against an increasing number of broader development criteria. Thirdly, and relatedly, it needs to be recognised, probably more widely than it is, that "doing

development" is a complex and usually difficult undertaking.<sup>47</sup> Helping to provide the means for the poor to take more control of their lives can often be an extremely difficult undertaking. Especially where addressing poverty means addressing power relations within a community and across communities, development work can often not escape the issue of conflict.

Equally, however, a recognition of these factors needs itself to be placed in perspective. If the aim is to further and promote development, then the fact that there is a gulf between what is intended and what happens on the ground ought not to breed complacency. If there is a gap, and it is large, it should raise questions about how this gap might be narrowed. This is a central theme for the discussion in **Chapter 5**.

The project assessments also showed that when grouped together, the projects reviewed achieved high scores in relation to practically all the different broader development characteristics examined. Thus, some projects **are** succeeding in reaching down to the very poorest and were clearly making a significant difference to their lives; some are substantially succeeding in addressing gender bias in the wider society, others are having a major positive impact on the environment; some are extremely innovative, others had survived and are now achieving notable successes because of the flexibility to change in response to external influences. Of major importance, too, some projects (though very few) are well on the way to standing on their own feet and have a high chance of continuing to function without external financial or institutional assistance.

This does not provide evidence of major indicators of success. Rather, it shows is that, when viewed collectively, **none** of the broader development criteria and questions posed in the TOR are totally alien to the NGOs and projects in question.

One final general feature of the projects examined across at least three of the four countries, was the relatively good performance of the (small) cluster of projects for disabled people. In Kenya, India and Zimbabwe, these were judged as making a significant impact in relation to a range of broad development criteria, scoring particularly highly in relation to their reach to the poorest and at least their potential for making often a major difference to the lives of the beneficiaries assisted. The common weaknesses identified for this particular cluster of projects was that they tended to touch only an extremely small **number** of beneficiaries, and in some cases, they appeared to be quite costly to run.

The four *Supplements* to this evaluation *Report* contain further details of analysis of the projects in each of the selected countries.

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<sup>47</sup> The evaluation was not asked to analyse the literature produced by Swedish NGOs for circulation in Sweden. However, evidence in other countries indicates a distinct bias in much NGO literature: far more emphasis is put on stating how a particular NGO is able to help the poor than in providing evidence that it succeeds in doing so.

## **4.2.1 Bolivia**

Swedish NGOs primarily support education projects, followed by health and human rights projects. Swedish volunteers have been concentrated in health, education and natural resources. The main counterparts of Swedish NGOs are Bolivian NGOs and Bolivian church related organisations.

Like most NGOs working in Bolivia over the last ten years of structural adjustment programmes, Swedish NGOs have had limited impact on the poverty of the people with whom they work. They have focused very little on income generation, employment and credit initiatives, and where they have, they have had little lasting impact. The two most striking exceptions to this are two initiatives which have recovered or defended the territory of two indigenous nationalities.

Some of the infrastructural work supported by Swedish NGOs has been very visible and on a massive scale, but faces serious problems of sustainability. The popular education work is far less visible, but is potentially very effective, with its impact likely to endure at a grassroots level in the form of human knowledge, experience and capacity.

Swedish NGO projects tend not to have particular environmental or gender dimensions: there are few projects specifically aimed at these issues, but nor do many projects have negative impacts. Although projects are sensitive to issues of participation, much could be done to improve participatory project planning, and participatory monitoring and evaluation.

Some Swedish NGOs are closely involved in project implementation. This allows increased control but can create a degree of paternalism and dependency between the Swedish NGO and the local organisation. In other cases, the Swedish NGOs are peoples' groups who are not present in Bolivia, and send funds from Sweden. This approach has the advantage of being people-to-people development, but the disadvantage is that a lack of knowledge and monitoring capacity tends to create more problems in these particular projects. This case-study suggests that more mechanisms need to be in place for improving the quality of Swedish NGO projects and for monitoring them. This implies creating a capacity for this in Bolivia.

The other principle weakness of the Swedish NGO programme is that like most or all NGO programmes in Bolivia, it supports a project-oriented approach. They are not able to create a sustainable and permanent capacity within Bolivia to finance and support initiatives within the wider, civil, society.

## **4.2.2 India**

Most of the projects assessed in India have succeeded in meeting their own objectives: they reflect, in general, high levels of commitment by their staff, and indicate a quite responsible level of management of the Swedish funds provided. However, this country case-study concludes that, in many cases, there could be

substantial improvements in the development relevance of these projects both locally and more widely.

Few, if any, of the NGOs visited were able to point to concrete evidence that they worked with the very poorest sections of the local population, but most made an attempt to reach poor people and succeeded, at least partly, in this attempt. The projects visited threw up a tension between reaching the poorest and innovation. Thus, many of the most successful innovators who try ecological farming techniques have done so because they can withstand the costs of failure, at least at the start. Few – if any – of the NGOs visited are concerned with any direct assessment of costs against benefits.

The assessment of project impact, the promotion of wider participation (not just in implementation but also in planning and decision-making), the consideration of gender issues and frank discussion of the difficult issue of sustainability are all areas where more clearly needs to be done. The projects visited tend to suggest, overall, that aiming for complete financial sustainability is in many ways unrealistic under conditions of external funding. NGOs can find great difficulties in making this work, especially if they have little market/private sector experience. For many NGOs, the only option for achieving project sustainability is to tie the work in directly with the Government.

Many Swedish organisations working with Indian NGOs do so within purely 'funding' relationships, or are more linked by principles of church fellowship than by a joint sense of wider development priorities. This may not constitute the best use of Swedish NGO funding resources in meeting SIDA's overall objectives within the Indian context.

Several of the NGOs visited seemed excessively dependent for decision-making on one or two key founder members: the development of strong second level staff remains a difficult issue. There were two exceptions to this. A problem frequently mentioned by the NGOs is the difficulty of keeping good staff. Relatedly, some NGOs find building their own administrative capacity difficult.

### **4.2.3 Kenya**

In Kenya, the projects selected comprised a mix of national member organisations (trades union and farmers), a national disability organisation, three rural economic development projects, and a vocational training school. In terms of the narrow objectives for which funds were provided, all projects one seemed to have, or be in the process of, achieving success except for one whose impact was falling well short of realisable objectives. In terms of the nine broader development indicators, however, the picture appears to be far more mixed.

Thus, in their ability to reach the poorer members of the community, all but one project was exceptionally weak. In relation to their degree of participation, four out of seven projects could be judged positive, with two of the four having started

in a non participatory manner. The gender aspect of the projects, however, were far more impressive. Thus, six of the seven projects gave gender and women a high profile, going beyond the mere targeting women of women as beneficiary recipients. In contrast, little thought was given to environmental issues except in the two projects which were initiated to address environmental problems.

Swedish technical personnel are only present in two projects, although in earlier stages of the project cycle there were more. Innovation was not a strong point of any of the projects, with one notable exception. Flexibility of approach was clearly evident in two projects, but not generally seen otherwise. In terms of replicability, most of the projects were themselves evidence of approaches which had been well known and tried (such as trade schools, maize mills, study circles, agro-forestry extension services).

Project monitoring is clearly evident in relation to both reports being carried out and visits taking place, in all projects. Evaluations had taken place in the case of four out of the seven projects, and they were of a high standard. Democracy and human rights issues were not explicitly to the fore in any of the projects, except for one.

Finally, in relation to sustainability, almost no project or host organisation could be viewed as capable of passing the test: if SIDA withdrew its funds all would be likely to collapse in the near future, except one. Yet in the case of two projects, the beneficiaries, their communities and families will permanently be in a more sustainable position to live than they were before the project started.

#### **4.2.4 Zimbabwe**

The Zimbabwe country case study focused on 13 individual projects. In terms of achieving the immediate objectives for which the funds were given, it is judged that eight projects (66 percent) had achieved the immediate objectives for which the funds were given, or, in the case of those which had not yet been completed, were well on the way to doing so. One clearly failed to achieve its immediate objectives, and three other projects could be termed "borderline". Few attempted to assess benefits against costs outlaid, though in at least three cases, the benefits clearly far outweighed the costs.

Assessing the projects in terms of the nine different broader criteria, judging each in terms of three broad results – clear success, borderline, and clear failure – and then averaging out the results produces quite a different view of impact. Only four (as opposed to eight) would be judged as (reasonably) clear successes; four would be almost certainly be judged as failures, leaving the remaining four as borderline, or as projects for which it is not easy to form firm judgements. The project evidence shows that a number of projects have been quite impressive, exhibiting a range of positive features, in relation to innovation, flexibility, and even, in one case, financial and institutional sustainability.

Out of the 12 projects upon which some sort of judgement could be made, it was



found that three (25 percent) were clearly failing to reach the poorest, while a further one most mostly benefiting those with the funds to participate. In contrast, four projects (33 percent) were clearly succeeding in reaching the poorest. Of these, two, in particular, were exceptional – providing skills to poor disabled people who in the absence of the project would for their whole lives be totally economically dependent on their (mostly poor) relatives.

Very few projects are likely to be sustainable without external assistance, with the exception of one which was focused on groups which were certainly far from poor. Gender and the environment were not prominent in the vast majority of projects: in the case of five projects where it was believed environmental factors were “irrelevant”, adverse environmental impact was found or suggested. Out of the 13 projects visited, five currently have Swedish volunteers working. It would appear that (with perhaps one exception) all the Swedish volunteers were making a positive contribution in terms of the task set and its execution. Some were considered outstanding.

## **4.3 CONTEXTS OF NGO ACTIVITIES IN THE FOUR COUNTRIES**

### **4.3.1 Political and economic contexts**

All four country studies indicate that the economic and political context have a critically important bearing on the nature of NGO activities and their scope for improving the lives of the poor. They set the stage for the roles and types of work in which NGOs engage in each country.

The four countries in which case study work was conducted are in many senses enormously different. However, within this diversity there are common trends and patterns. These are all ethnically diverse, poor countries. Most significantly for this study, each has embarked on a programme of structural adjustment and public sector reform over the last decade. This process began earliest in Kenya (in 1980), though profound changes did not really occur until the early 1990s. It has been most radical in its effects in Bolivia, beginning in 1985. In India and Zimbabwe, these programmes began far more recently, in the early 1990s, though they had been planned beforehand.

The forms and pace of these structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) vary. But notwithstanding these differences, the SAPs have had important implications for the work of NGOs and for participatory grassroots development more generally, increasing the need for all NGOs to address SAPs and their consequences for what they are trying to do for and with the poor. Increasingly, SAPs shift the geographies and structures of economic opportunities. In Bolivia, for instance, the SAP has reduced the economic development possibilities of parts of the highlands, but perhaps enhanced the possibilities of other parts; it increases the possibilities for some economic activities and reduces the chances of others. NGO programmes

have to take these realities into consideration if their impacts are to have a chance of being sustainable.

These programmes are also associated with short and medium term aggravation of poverty in some sectors. They tend to expect that non-governmental, voluntary and commercial initiatives will take on an expanded role in the delivery of social services and the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. In some cases, the state has or is planning to create special funds that set priorities for service delivery and infrastructural projects, and then finance non-state organisations to implement these programmes. The first (global) experience with such "social funds" began in Bolivia in 1985/86; Zimbabwe, rather half-heartedly, introduced a social development fund in 1991/92, while both India's and Kenya's SAPs contain plans for such a fund. So the SAPs have changed the opportunities to, and pressures on, NGOs in the different countries, and promoted an interest in closer NGO-state relationships – on the side of the state at least.

### 4.3.2 NGOs, the wider society and the state

A general pattern is that early voluntary initiatives derived from church and missionary activity, and in India also from the Gandhian movement. This early "NGO" work tended to be welfarist, voluntaristic and service-providing, and, to the extent that these NGOs interacted with the state, the relationship was often cordial. These patterns within the NGO sector subsequently changed in each country in conjunction with broader political changes, which, in turn, often led to a steady politicisation of major parts of the NGO sector. In India, for instance, this change grew out of radical critiques of welfarism, and in Bolivia it came from resistance to periods of repressive dictatorship. These periods led to the emergence of a different type of national NGO, that attempted to combine the delivery of services with the elaboration of alternative approaches to social development.

One of the most significant characteristics of much of these NGOs was that they did not emerge **from popular sectors within the wider, civil, society**, but rather from political, professional, religious and social sectors that in some way aimed to work **with** the grassroots. Because of this form of linkage with and to the poor/grassroots, these sorts of NGOs are now increasingly termed **intermediary** NGOs, or **grassroots support organisations** (GSOs), that is organisations that give some form of support to others, usually those "below" them, or, as is commonly termed in Latin America, the bases.<sup>48</sup>

A relatively recent phenomenon has also been the growing number of small groups or individuals who have created their "own" NGO, sometimes being no more than a consultancy firm or business.

As a result of these developments, it is becoming increasingly unhelpful to talk

<sup>48</sup> For a discussion of different types and classifications of NGOs, and, in particular, for a discussion of intermediary NGOs see Carroll, T. *Intermediary NGOs: The Supporting Link in Grassroots Development*, Hartford, Connecticut: The Kumarian Press, 1992.

of the NGO sector as a coherent whole. Swedish NGOs work with a range of very different organisations, with very different functions and very different social origins. To lump support to trades unions, churches, GSOs and community organisations into the same development basket can be confusing, especially when one is trying to focus on impact and effectiveness questions.

Conversely, in different countries, the state perceives the role of NGOs in somewhat differing ways – or at least with differing emphases. However, with the advent of structural adjustment programmes, the state across many countries has become increasingly interested in NGOs – of diverse types – as partners in the implementation and delivery of social programmes. This has encouraged the emergence of new so-called NGOs that in essence merely implement programmes as contracting agencies to governments or donor agencies. In contrast, the scope for advocacy and popular educational work has not increased in the same way, and in some cases, such as in Bolivia and in Kenya, there appears to be a move on the part of the state to exercise more control over NGOs engaging in such activities. By and large, the private entrepreneurial sector seems to have a similar view to that of the states. For their part, some popular organisations want NGOs to be service providers and project implementers. Others, however, feel that NGOs, especially the GSOs, should primarily give support to popular organisations in training and other activities for organisational strengthening.

Another phenomenon noticeable in recent years is a growing criticism of NGOs, or at least of GSOs in recent years. There is perceptibly more scepticism about their impact, their efficiency, the quality of their relationships with the grassroots, and even, in some cases, of their honesty. In part, this reflects assessments of what they do and how they act, but it is also partly political. Governments are not immune to welcoming criticisms of organisations, like NGOs, as a way of aiming to weaken their legitimacy as an independent force within society.

This is the growing context for NGO activities and the context within which an assessment of the development impact of Swedish NGO activity needs to be placed.

### **4.3.3 Funding NGOs and NGO activities**

Almost all the projects and administrative costs of the NGO sector depend very much on external financing. This aid dependence of NGOs is reinforced because, thusfar, few donors have focused on the issue of how to help nurture and support independent and domestic mechanisms to fund initiatives of organisations within civil society such as NGOs and GSOs. In some countries, however, there is a growing, yet still small, phenomenon of domestic financing. Thus in India, an increasing number of NGOs now receive individual and company donations, a phenomenon which appears also to be growing in Kenya and Zimbabwe. In Bolivia, there is some private venture capital investing in credit funds for small scale lending that are managed by NGOs or social enterprises.

Another increasingly important national source of NGO finance is government funding of NGOs involved in the implementation of government coordinated programmes. Often, of course, these government-managed funds use (official) aid monies rather than domestically generated government revenue, and so are ultimately still external funds, as occurs, for instance, with the social funds. The general point stands: that financial flows from government to NGOs are tending to increase. This brings new financing opportunities to NGOs; it changes the relationship between NGOs and the state; and in some cases it encourages the emergence of organisations calling themselves NGOs who are primarily concerned to capture these new sources of funds, rather than to foster social change. But, most notably, it challenges GSOs and grassroots organisations to develop the capacity to negotiate these new sorts of relationships with the state to tap the resources without losing their autonomy.

## **4.4 PATTERNS IN SWEDISH AID**

### **4.4.1 General structure of Swedish aid**

The country studies present two main contexts of Swedish aid distinguished by the presence of a strong DCO or not. India, Kenya and Zimbabwe have been large country programmes for many years now, and have well-established DCOs. In contrast, SIDA's support to Bolivia has only grown to any significant size in the 1990s, and the SIDA office was only opened in La Paz in 1992 with just one staff member. Clearly then the operational capacity of SIDA is greater in the other three countries.

This difference is also reflected in the composition and orientation of the bilateral programmes in the different countries. In the cases of India, Zimbabwe and Kenya, where there is a strong SIDA DCO presence, this translates into a tendency to support defined operational projects which are Swedish projects sometimes with Swedish technical staff attached and linked to the purchase of Swedish inputs (eg consultancy). These have been particularly concentrated in social forestry, education, health and infrastructure with a notable poverty focus. The Bolivian programme is significantly different in that it tends to support existing state programmes, such as educational and civil service reform, and programmes of other agencies.

This difference has implications for potential synergies between SIDA NGO support programmes and the bilateral programme. By the same token, there is also far more scope for duplication or contradiction (for example in Kenya, where the bilateral forestry project and a large Swedish NGO forestry project work side by side with very different methodologies). Conversely in Bolivia, there is no scope for transfer of lessons from bilateral to NGO programmes or vice versa because they work in very different ways: but there is far less scope for overlap or contradiction.

These two contexts also point to different ways in which there can be coherence

between the bilateral and the NGO programmes of SIDA. In Bolivia, for instance, the clear potential for complementarity lies in the idea that the bilateral programme can concentrate on working with national and multilateral institutions such as the state and the Inter-American Development Bank in order to create a more enabling environment for initiatives such as through educational reform, local government reform, or micro-enterprise credit programmes. Swedish NGOs would then operate within this civil society. In India, Zimbabwe and Kenya, where the bilateral programme is operational, the scope for complementarity with NGOs would appear to lie more in joint learning and scaling up through the bilateral programme innovations developed within the NGO programme.

All the country studies showed that SIDA staff were very busy with their bilateral responsibilities. There are real time constraints on the extent to which mutual learning can occur between the SIDA and NGO programmes, unless extra personnel resources are provided, either in-house or contracted in.

#### 4.4.2 Patterns in the structure of SIDA NGO Division-supported work

In all four countries, one or two framework organisations dominate the portfolio of Swedish NGO development activities supported by SIDA's NGO Division in that country (Table 4.1). In the cases of Bolivia and India, one framework organisation has received over half of all NGO Division funds for development work – in the most extreme case for 1992/93, PMU received 66 percent of NGO Division development funds spent in Bolivia. In Zimbabwe and Kenya, the distribution was more balanced between two or three framework organisations.

**Table 4.1: Principal framework organizations by country  
Percentage of NGO Division funds received in 1992/93**

Bolivia		India		Kenya		Zimbabwe	
PMU	66%	SMR	52%	SMR	33%	SMR	30%
UBV	8%	BIFO	15%	BIFO	27%	SCC	22%
DIAKONIA	4%	LO/TCO	12%	SCC	14%	SVS	19%

*Source: Country Case-Studies (Supplements)*

This pattern of the distribution of funds means that it is the priorities, policies and approaches of a particular framework organisation that dominates the overall patterns of any country level portfolio of NGO Division supported development projects. It is also notable that in all four countries, it was a missionary framework that dominated activities. In this sense, the NGO programme continues to reflect the history of Swedish mission and evangelising work in each country.

Another feature is that in each country, one or two projects stand out as particularly large and dominant projects. The most striking instance of this is the

Vi Tree Planting project in Kenya which, in the last few years, has received around 25 percent of all NGO Division expenditure in Kenya. That is clear is that not all Swedish NGO Division-supported projects are small!

Another feature is the tendency for Swedish NGOs to continue supporting the same counterpart over a number of years. In many instances what happens is that the Swedish NGO supports a programme of work of its counterpart, selling this to SIDA as a series of separate projects. In doing so, there are often dual objectives: one is to implement particular activities, the other to sustain, support and strengthen the counterpart.

#### **4.4.3 Other windows of SIDA support to the NGO sector**

Each of the country studies makes clear that there are a range of windows through which SIDA supports NGOs in each of the countries and that, although the NGO Division remains the most important window, this importance may be declining. In Zimbabwe for instance, the NGO Division only accounts for SEK 23 mn of the approximately SEK 40 mn that are channelled through a broadly defined NGO sector. In Kenya, the corresponding figures are SEK 32 mn of a total of SEK 50 mn. Direct funding of Indian NGOs has also shown an increase.

In those cases where the DCO is relatively strong, some DCOs have developed programmes of direct funding to local NGOs in which there is direct negotiation and contact between the DCO and the local NGO. This happens in India, Zimbabwe and Kenya.

In Bolivia, where the DCO has just one professional, there is far less direct funding because there are no personnel to manage such a programme: the bilateral programme primarily supports programmes implemented by the Bolivian government and other agencies. The more general lesson of the Bolivia office is that where DCO human resources are limited, SIDA engages in less direct funding and management of projects in general, in both the government to government and NGO sectors. SIDA is supporting three networks of Bolivian NGOs so that they can systematise their project experiences across regions and sectors of activity (eg agriculture, health, informal economic development etc), and translate those lessons into alternative programme and policy proposals that could be taken up by the state or other political actors within Bolivia (including the donor community). This is a complex project that requires much monitoring and management, which DIAKONIA is monitoring.<sup>49</sup>

There are still more mechanisms for funding to the NGO sector. In Stockholm, the Democracy and Human Rights section of the Public Administration Division, the Emergency section of the NGO Division, and the Natural Resources and Management Division all fund NGO initiatives, or initiatives that then support

<sup>49</sup> More widely in South America, DIAKONIA is implementing an NGO component of a regional SIDA gender programme, coordinating and monitoring the work with 10 NGOs in eight different countries.

NGOs. In some cases, these are channelled via a Swedish NGO, and in other cases they may be direct to local NGOs. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the Democracy and Human Rights Section provides funds to the Fond för Mänskliga Rättigheter (The Swedish Foundation for Human Rights), which then passes these funds to ZimRights which then distributes them to a number of Zimbabwean NGOs.

In other cases, SIDA channels funds to NGOs via multilateral agencies. For instance in Bolivia, a coca substitution project<sup>50</sup> has been implemented by PMU/MSLB (Mision Sueca Libre en Bolivia) with SIDA funds channelled through the United Nations Drugs Control Programme. Finally, other parts of the Swedish aid family have funded activities of the NGO sector. For instance, SAREC has funded the activities of a number of Zimbabwean NGOs who receive funds from other parts of SIDA, including the NGO Division.

Diversity can be an asset – but it can also bring a range of complications, not least the increasing possibility that officials responsible for one funding window are not aware of the potential or real overlap between the different activities funded. In practice, the country studies point out that there is little or no attempt to aim for coherence among these different funding windows. For instance in Zimbabwe, SIDA's bilateral programme has worked for many years on initiatives focused on raising the health status of farm workers. Swedish NGOs funding the main farm-workers union has been unaware of these initiatives, and so have not tried to build on the work done while, for its part, the bilateral programme has failed to make use of the union, which NGO Division funds are being used to try to strengthen.

Diversity gives NGOs, especially Swedish NGOs, the relative freedom to “do their own thing”. In some cases, it allows NGOs (Swedish or local) to move projects between different budget heads inside SIDA. This can be desirable for several reasons: if a project is rejected by one part of SIDA, it may be accepted by another (as has happened in Zimbabwe); and if funds are tight, a project can be sent to the Human Rights and Democracy Section's 100 percent funding window rather than the NGO Division's 80 percent window (as has occurred in Bolivia and India, for instance). But the existence of diverse windows also increases the transaction costs in the relationship between SIDA and Swedish NGOs.

## **4.5 PATTERNS AND PERFORMANCE OF SIDA NGO DIVISION SUPPORTED PROJECTS**

### **4.5.1 Patterns**

In the four case study countries, Swedish NGO-supported projects are concentrated predominantly in the social sectors: education, followed by health (Table

<sup>50</sup> Coca substitution projects are those which aim to promote alternative economic opportunities in coca producing areas, and in the areas from which the migrants who work in coca producing areas originate. The optimistic thesis is that these opportunities can be sufficiently attractive to persuade farmers to produce the alternative rather than coca.

4.2). Projects supporting productive and income generation activities are far less frequent and most of these are clustered in agricultural and rural development work. There is not much human rights work, except in Bolivia.<sup>51</sup> There is also very little work focused on productive activities in urban areas, even though it is to urban areas that large numbers of the landless or land scarce rural poor migrate. An exception would be initiatives for disabled persons.

This concentration in health and education reflects the primary concentration of Swedish NGO-supported projects in service delivery activities. It also reflects the fact that the portfolio of Swedish NGO projects in each country is dominated by the mission framework organisations: SMR, SMK and PMU. Missionaries have long had a tradition of providing health care and schooling in the areas where they are active. Equally, however, it is important to recognise that the category "education" encompasses a wide range of activities, embracing both formal and informal education, including trade union study circle activities in Kenya and Zimbabwe, and popular education programmes for leadership training in Bolivia.

Complementing the sectoral breakdown given in Table 4.2, it is helpful to consider the distribution of local partners of Swedish NGO-supported projects. This allows one to build up a sense of where these different activities are located within the wider (civil) societies of the four different case study countries.

**Table 4.2: Sectoral distribution of SIDA NGO Division supported projects and volunteers by number of projects**

Sector	Bolivia	India	Kenya	Zimbabwe
Education	28	60	32	20
Health	14	24	8	13
Agriculture/rural development/				
environment/forestry	5	11	7	9
Relief/emergency/welfare	5	7	1	
Income generation/credit	3	3	2	3
Organisation/institutional development	2	3	10	5
Building/infrastructure	2	2		
Human rights	7	4		
Youth				2
Housing				1
Communication	1			

*Source: Country Case-Study Reports (see Supplements).*

<sup>51</sup> Note that these are generalisations about activities funded by the NGO Division, not about SIDA-funded NGO activities as a whole.



As Table 4.3 makes quite clear, Swedish NGOs have two main types of partner: church organisations and local NGOs, though popular organisations and trades unions are also relatively important. It is striking that the links with government are very weak in Bolivia, Kenya and India, yet prominent in Zimbabwe, where 17 of 21 SVS volunteer placements work with local or central government organisations.

**Table 4.3 Partners of Swedish NGOs**  
**Numbers of partners and percentages (in parentheses)**

Partner	Bolivia	India	Kenya	Zimbabwe
Church/church related group	21	43	38	10
Local NGO	28	45	13	11
International NGO	0	0	2	3
Popular organisation/trades unions	11	12	7	10
Local trusts	0	7	—	0
Government	2	0	—	20

*Source: Country Case-Studies (see Supplements).*

These different partners reflect the Swedish NGOs and their own origins within Sweden: mission organisations work with church partners, LO/TCO with trades unions, DIAKONIA with NGOs, and the Swedish Red Cross works with local Red Cross societies. It is largely among the projects of framework organisations like SVS that one sees a variety of types of partner; this reflects the nature of these particular organisations which have emerged primarily out of a general concern to working on development issues.

## 4.5.2 Performance: poverty and livelihood issues

As discussed in **Chapter 3**, the core principle underlying all the funds the Swedish Parliament provides in the form of development assistance is that they should be used to improve the standards of living of the poor. This provides the focus of the discussion in this section, namely to assess performance in terms of its poverty orientation and impact. This is done in two stages. First, we consider how far the Swedish NGO projects in fact work with and reach the poor, indeed right down to the poorest – a claim widely made by NGOs inside and outside Sweden. Second, we consider the extent to which the funds provided make a sustained impact on this poverty.

Here, poverty is viewed quite broadly; it is deemed to be a lack of both economic and political status and opportunity, or, in other words, the existence of constraints which limit peoples' opportunities to participate in the economy and to express their voices effectively in the political arena. One way in which poverty has been conceptualised is understanding it as a lack of **entitlements**, and more specifically an inability

to claim these entitlements.<sup>52</sup> The power to claim entitlements can derive from various (re)sources, but in particular monetary income and political power.

### *Poverty reach*

Perhaps surprisingly, three of the four the country studies suggested that the NGO projects often did not reach the poorest, and not even necessarily the very poor. In large measure, at least a contributory factor was the absence of any initial baseline studies in order to identify and target the poor, and indeed the absence of any thought about undertaking such a survey. It was quite common for the NGOs simply to **assume** that they were working with the very poor. In some cases – such as the trades union-supported projects – the absence of a poverty focus arose because the natural partners of the NGO were not organisations that usually represent the very poorest: trades unions by definition are organisations of those in formal employment. The Zimbabwe case study concluded that only a third of the projects reviewed reached the poorest, and, as in Kenya, some of the most effective in this regard were those working with disabled people.

It is by no means an easy task to identify the very poorest, even if one wishes to do so. It is often even more difficult to find a way of working with them when they are identified. The very poorest frequently lack the resources, as well as the individual and group security, to allow them to participate in any sort of project, and can only really be helped by more general employment generation. Attending meetings and participatory rural appraisal exercises are an unaffordable luxury for the poorest.

Additionally, in some cases of service provision programmes there may be sound reasons for working with both the poor and the relatively wealthy, for instance in order to be able to use funds provided by the wealthy to cross-subsidise services to the poor. This was a strategy used by the Caritas supported Sadhana school in India and may have to be used by the PMU/MSLB supported school in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Equally, there may be some tension between having an orientation towards the poorest in projects and being innovative and experimental, precisely because the poorest cannot afford experimentation. For instance, in India, Kudumbam's work on innovative ecological farming techniques with Svalorna support has been most successful with slightly wealthier farmers who can afford to innovate.

The purpose of these cautionary observations is to stress that even if an NGO is alerted to the need to focus explicitly on the issue of poverty, working effectively with the very poorest is **often** not easy. This point is all the more apparent when we consider questions of impact. All the case studies come to a similar conclusion in this regard – that there is little evidence to suggest that the work of Swedish NGOs has made much of an impact on poverty.

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<sup>52</sup> This is the approach used, and popularised, by Professor Amartya Sen. See, especially, A. Sen *Poverty and Famine*, Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1981.

### ***Poverty impact and economics: of income, employment and markets***

If one clear indicator of poverty is lack of, or very low levels of, income, then one of the principle ways in which Swedish NGO supported programmes can have an impact on poverty will be through increasing the income of the poor. This may be done through improving the income they derive from their existing economic activities: for instance through improving product quality; accessing new higher value markets; or expanding output by removing economic constraints to production (such as credit). It can also be done by generating new employment opportunities for the poor.

Three things are striking across the case studies in this regard. First, many Swedish NGO projects do not begin from a conceptualisation of poverty: of what it is, of what causes it, and of how to address it. Without a theory of poverty, it is largely going to be a hit and miss affair as to whether a project will address poverty. Interestingly, one sector in which there was a greater conceptualisation of poverty was that of projects with disabled people.

Secondly, there are very few Swedish NGO projects that even attempt to achieve any of these objectives. Projects are dominantly service delivery and training projects which only very indirectly attempt to address poverty. Thirdly, of those few projects that do aim to enhance income and employment, the impact is very limited – and sometimes totally dependent on continued funds provided by the Swedish NGO.

There are many reasons for the state of affairs just described. On the one hand, they reflect a situation common not only among Swedish NGOs but elsewhere too. Quite simply, the staff and experience of Swedish NGOs do not equip them well, nor predispose them, to focus on analytic issues related to income and employment generation, or markets and market analysis. On the other hand, the limited resources of individual NGO projects are often not sufficient to make the types of investment necessary for some of this sort of work, such as the investments in an initial capital fund for a reasonably sized rural credit programme. The challenge of generating income and employment in stagnant economies where markets are weak or absent surpasses the resources and capacities of many Swedish NGOs.

### ***Poverty impact, power and advocacy: of development politics, gender and human rights***

Political and power relationships that marginalise poor people are both a condition and a cause of poverty. This political dimension of poverty is a complicated one for Swedish NGOs to address as foreign institutions operating in another country, and some therefore restrain from this. Yet it is equally clear, from the case study evidence, that those Swedish NGOs which have engaged in or supported more politically relevant work have had impacts on poverty, or have enhanced capacity within the popular sectors to have such impacts. In the former case, they address the power relationships that cause poverty; in the latter instance, they strengthen poor peoples' abilities to claim and defend entitlements.

The most striking instances of the former case came from a project in Bolivia where PMU/MSLB worked to demarcate, petition for and gain a Presidential decree to recognise traditional territory of an indigenous group, the Weenhayek, whose land has been progressively occupied by non-Weenhayek. Although these territorial rights are not yet guaranteed (see below) this is at least more likely now. By protecting the land rights of the Weenhayek, MSLB's intervention has protected their access to entitlements that are critical to the survival of the economy of this minority and marginalised ethnic group.

Swedish NGOs have supported popular educational, leadership training and legal aid work that aims to enhance the capacity of the poor to organise and to assert their rights, and of local NGOs to support the poor in these political and livelihood strategies. Cases include much of DIAKONIA's work in Bolivia and India, and the study circle work supported by LO/TCO in Kenya, Zimbabwe and India. The livelihood impacts of this work are more difficult to trace, for they are indirect and longer term. Nonetheless, the principle underlying the work is coherent: that to build organisational and political capacity in the popular sectors will build capacity to question dominant power relationships.<sup>53</sup>

Having said this, one dimension of questioning power relationships in which Swedish NGOs have not been strong has been to foster activities that question **gender relationships** and that enhance the capacity of women to do so. A number of projects examined claim to be gender sensitive because they meet womens' needs (for instance in maternal and child health service provision). The case studies did identify a few cases where gender relations are questioned. Thus the DIAKONIA supported Indian NGO, SIRD, has begun to address issues of dowries, female infanticide and domestic violence in its work, and has worked in the establishment of a womens' group based credit and income generation programmes. It is also providing legal aid and training para-legal workers. In other cases, activities which, at one level, may appear to endorse stereotypical gender roles can nonetheless help create new spaces of organised womens self management which have a significant empowering and symbolic effect in the communities where they operate. This seems to have happened in Kenya, in the SMR supported posho mill project with the Young Womens' Christian Association (YWCA), and in some of the women's groups supported via BIFO and Future Forest, It is also visible in PAS's work in highland Bolivia.

Yet these examples tended to be the exception rather than the rule: the primary way in which projects considered themselves gender sensitive was that they delivered services and benefits to women. This reflects a broader limitation in the ways in which Swedish NGOs deal with poverty – namely they respond to its symptoms rather than in its causes.

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<sup>53</sup> This is consistent with Albert Hirschmann's thesis that once built, this capacity (or "social energy") never disappears, but continues to resurface in a range of organisational guises.

### ***Poverty impact: what is it reasonable to expect of NGOs?***

In many instances, poverty is only going to be ameliorated if structural changes occur in regional economies and social relationships. In areas such as parts of highland Bolivia, where regional markets are weak or absent, and where there is little dynamism in the economy, then it is difficult for any NGO to make much of an impact. If a multi-million dollar rural development programme such as the European Union supported programme for peasant self-development in Potosí feels it can make little impact, then we should not expect much of small and isolated NGO projects.

This provides a supplementary view to the observation that NGO impact on poverty tends to be greater where the state is strong.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, it is likely to be greater where the regional economy is dynamic. This implies that when NGOs work in areas of economic decline and stagnation, then their work is likely to be focused mainly on alleviating poverty and easing some of the pains of economic transition. Their work is only likely to have a sustained development impact in areas where the economy is relatively dynamic.

In short, one's expectations of NGO poverty impact should not be exaggerated, certainly not as exaggerated as they sometimes are. By the same token, NGOs should not claim to have the degree of poverty impact that they often claim to have – in most cases, they simply do not have this impact.

This does not mean that nothing can be done. The case studies suggest NGO work that is most likely to have an impact when it directly addresses the social relationships that underlie poverty – such as land holding relationships, territorial conflicts, or having greater power to influence the distribution of profits – and which increases the organisational, political and entrepreneurial capacities of the poor to tackle these relationships for themselves. Some of the most striking examples of this impact – and the complexity of getting involved in this type of work – comes from Bolivia.

Conversely, service delivery programmes are not likely to make much of a difference, although they are easier to implement, less politically charged, and are more visible in the field (in the shape of schools, water systems and health centres). They are also easier to monitor: bureaucratically they are more attractive projects to support, but developmentally their potential contribution is likely to be far more limited.

### **4.5.3 Performance: partnership and participation**

There are different types of stakeholders in projects supported by Swedish, and other, NGOs. When we think of participation we usually refer to the participation of the direct beneficiaries – sometimes referred to as the “primary stakeholders”.

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<sup>54</sup> See, for instance, S. Annis and Hakim P. (Eds) *Direct To The Poor*, Boulder: Lynne R Rienner, 1998.

However, there is also a range of secondary stakeholders involved in these interventions: the counterpart organisation in-country, and the different offices and individuals within the organisation; other interest groups affected by the intervention, such as the local state, or those living in the locality but not included in this particular project. As a general rule, for a programme to be successful, it is usually necessary for each of these stakeholders to feel that it has a "stake" in the successful outcome of the project. Thus, when we talk of participation we ought also be thinking of how far these different groups have a chance to participate in the conception, implementation and the monitoring and evaluation of a project, even if our principal focus will be on the participation of primary stakeholders.<sup>55</sup>

The country case studies report that at the conception/design/planning stage of projects there has been limited participation of the primary, and many of the secondary, stakeholders. There was little or no evidence of community-based planning and a prioritising of needs preceding project conception and design, although there was more evidence of consultation with beneficiaries prior to the commencement of activities (of already designed projects. UBV in Bolivia, an exception in this regard, is one of the few NGOs which has decided only to work with community and membership organisations; these community organisations plan the project that UBV then supports.<sup>56</sup>

More widely, the evidence collected from this sample of projects suggests that pre-project participation in church or mission implemented projects was particularly weak. This seems to have been particularly so in Zimbabwe where, in the cases examined "... the pattern seemed to be that the church authorities would decide that institutions would be built ... with no indication of consultation among the church membership of their development priorities" (see *Supplement, IV*). There was evidence of similar patterns in Bolivia. In a number of cases, it even appears that the local counterpart played a limited role in the design of a project. Thus the Kenya case-study notes that, with the sole exception of the maize mills project, the original project ideas came from Swedish people, even though in some cases projects were drawn up in consultation with the local partner.<sup>57</sup>

Weak participation at the stage of conception and design is a critical failing, and can lead to problems deriving from a poor fit between project goals and local priorities. This can be partly righted when there is on-going participation in the monitoring of projects, allowing feedback and adaptive planning. Although this

<sup>55</sup> This terminology of stakeholders is being used now with increasing frequency. A recent report which describes the term and its usage in more detail is World Bank "The World Bank and Participation: Report of the Learning Group on Participatory Development", Washington: The World Bank, 1994 (mimeo).

<sup>56</sup> Ironically, UBV in Bolivia seems to be too hands-off in relation to project design. Indeed, the quality of this project would have been enhanced had it been more assertive and questioning of the ideas presented by the base organisation.

<sup>57</sup> These points are not new to Swedish NGOs. They were raised, for instance, in the SIDA Evaluation Report 1991/3, L. Andersson-Brolin *et al* *The Art of Survival: A Study on sustainability in health projects*, Stockholm: SIDA.

occurred mostly at a project level only, there were exceptions, such as that of DIAKONIA in Bolivia, whose counterparts periodically monitored the general performance, orientation and management of DIAKONIA's broad programmes and certain of its sectoral activities. In several cases, this on-going participation resulted in considerable improvement of projects which were initially very prescriptive and top-down. This occurred for instance in the Vi Tree Planting and Future Forest programmes in Kenya.

It should be noted, however, that it is not directly as a result of the nature and work procedures of Swedish NGO that participation was limited in the projects examined. In many instances, this is a result of the culture and style of the organisation with which the Swedish NGO is working. Some of these – for instance some of the unions in Kenya and Zimbabwe – appear to have a somewhat authoritarian management style. In other cases, as noted in the India case study, local partnership organisations work on the basis that poor people “need educating.” Likewise, in some instances, the counterpart can have a rigid internal structure which does not allow its staff or component divisions to participate in programme management. This occurred with the Red Cross in Bolivia, for instance, where until recently authority over the use of Swedish funds was vested so absolutely in one person that although the field impact of the programme was reasonable, the institution as a whole began to feel very resentful of the situation, and was consequently weakened as a result. The tendency of Swedish funds to lead to a centralisation of authority, either at headquarters or, more narrowly, in the power of one or two individuals, was also observed in Kenya and Zimbabwe. Such trends are the very opposite of participation.

Participation has the potential to reorient projects towards stakeholder concerns particularly at the stage of evaluation, before another cycle of support begins. The evidence of the limited number of evaluation suggests that it can have dramatically positive impacts. For instance continuing with the case of the Bolivian Red Cross, changes of staff in Sweden and in Bolivia led to a change of management style: an institution-wide participatory evaluation of the Red Cross' whole programme of institutional strengthening was conducted involving all the regional branches of the Red Cross and all its staff. The impact on morale and the sense of ownership of the next stage of the project was remarkable. In Kenya, a consultative evaluation (though not participatory) undertaken by Future Forest had a major effect on the future direction and methods of the project.

The greater the extent to which the counterpart organisation participates on equal terms with the Swedish NGOs in all these stages of the project cycle, the more that one can talk of a “partnership” between the Swedish NGO and the local NGO. In general, the relationship becomes more of a partnership the more that it goes beyond a simple funding relationship. In some instances, the Swedish NGO was making moves in this direction. In Bolivia, DIAKONIA holds annual and termly meetings in which its partners are able, among other things to comment on

DIAKONIA. In an interesting case, Caritas in Tarija Bolivia wrote a short paper evaluating the way in which Caritas Sweden was working – a phenomenon that is now far from uncommon among other northern NGOs. However there are limits on how far partnership can go. While Indian NGOs were generally positive about their relationships with Swedish NGOs, one commented that in the final instance “when you are at the receiving end, you cannot be an equal partner ...” (see *Supplement, II*).

On the other hand, it is important not to take the partnership argument too far. Swedish NGOs are also stakeholders in these projects; they, too, have a right to exercise voice and opinion – so a partnership in which the local organisation makes all the decisions would also not be ideal. Indeed, the quality of projects supported could well increase if the Swedish NGOs were to express this voice. For instance, UBV's experience in Bolivia suggests that the quality of projects would probably be improved if it were to work with its membership organisation counterparts in developing strategies, rather than simply responding to the strategies that the counterparts develop by themselves. Conversely in Kenya and Zimbabwe, it would appear that some Swedish partners tend not to be sensitive to finding out and acting upon the views of the primary beneficiaries. Finally it needs to be recognised that southern NGOs do not always behave as ideal partners and can use the rhetoric of partnership to try to dissuade Swedish NGOs from becoming engaged in projects they support, or from enquiring into the work of the local NGO. For instance, it is not unheard of for local organisations either to conceal sources of funds provided by other donors, sometimes for similar activities as those funded by SIDA.

To conclude, in general, the extent to which Swedish NGO-supported activities are participatory was found to be disappointing, and, as in the case of other NGOs, the rhetoric on participation commonly exceeds the reality. But it is important not to take these arguments too far. In some cases, participation is limited more because of the nature of the counterpart than the Swedish NGOs. In other cases, where a rapid response is required, participation can cause inappropriate delays – this was the case, for instance, for the NGO MCC (an SMR partner) in India.

In the end, the most crucial dimension of participation is that in which grassroots capacity is built: a participation that empowers primary stakeholders to become stronger economic and political actors in their own right. Suffice to say here that Swedish NGOs, like all NGOs, could do much more in this regard and that with some notable exceptions (UBV, Caritas, DIAKONIA), the case studies threw up all too little evidence of the Swedish NGOs attempting to address these principles seriously.

#### **4.5.4 Performance and policy impact**

One of the primary challenges laid before NGOs, is how they can “scale up” their



impact beyond the limits of the projects they support. In this section we look specifically at how far Swedish NGO projects have been innovative, and of wider relevance, and the extent to which they have aimed to widen their impact through learning and dissemination activities.

### *Innovation, replicability and dissemination*

The country case studies offer a mix of evidence as to how far Swedish NGO supported programmes are innovative. There was little innovation encountered in Kenya or, with one notable exception, in Zimbabwe. Conversely, the Indian and Bolivian studies concluded that there were a larger number of innovations in the programmes examined. The innovations which were encountered included the development of languages (a SHIA supported project developing sign languages for deaf people in Kenya); MSLB's written alphabets for indigenous people in Bolivia); the elaboration of therapies for mentally handicapped young people in the Caritas supported Sadhana school in India; and a new approach to providing clean water and sanitation at the village level in Zimbabwe.

Many of these innovations are replicable, especially when the group with which the organisation works is part of a larger social group in that country, or when the project design techniques are neither too costly nor complex. However, in practice, there has been limited replication. In large measure, this seems to reflect the low profile of many Swedish NGO projects (for example in India), and their rather poorly developed links with other non-governmental institutions, with SIDA and with the government in the countries where they are working. But it also reflects a certain institutional culture that is common to many NGOs – namely they are more interested in making the ideas work within their own projects than they are in scaling those ideas up to others. In the Kenyan case, a high proportion of the projects examined were replications of (tried and tested) projects carried out by other NGOs either elsewhere in Kenya or abroad.

This artifact of institutional culture is further deepened by the tendency of most projects to focus on actions rather than on dissemination – on tangibles rather than ideas. This is, perhaps, less likely to occur when the counterpart is an organisation that has representation and advocacy as its mandate, and when it has a national reach. Thus, SHIA's work with the Kenya National Association of the Deaf in developing a sign language for the deaf is likely to reach beyond Kenya because the project's principal researcher and team leader are each advisors for the African work of the World Association of the Deaf.

It should also be noted that the most significant innovations identified in the country studies grew out of prior research work: the development of sign and indigenous languages in Kenya and Bolivia; the Mvuramanzi Trust water and sanitation work in Zimbabwe; and ecological farming techniques at Kudumban in India. This research was either done in house, or by other institutions. NGO innovations do not derive simply from action and practice: they also require

research, reflection and experimentation. In many cases, the absence of innovation, in Swedish NGO projects may reflect a weak institutional commitment to the idea of research.

### ***Monitoring, evaluating and learning***

Innovations and experiences must also be supported by information derived from monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation is essential for NGOs to learn from their own, and other NGOs' experiences and adapt accordingly, and in order that they do not disseminate faulty ideas. Successful scaling up requires therefore that NGOs be learning organisations.

Swedish NGOs have done some monitoring and evaluating of their projects, in general more monitoring than evaluation. Sometimes this is informal and internal, and at other times it is more formal and external. In general, however, it has been insufficiently rigorous to provide information that might be persuasive to other agencies. And often monitoring and evaluation have not been conducted much with a view to learning as with a view to focusing more on the internal operations of the projects. This is perfectly reasonable to the extent that the object of the monitoring is to assist and improve management. However, if the objective is to generate information that might help convince other agencies to adopt and adapt the NGO's approach, then it would be important to engage in a different type of evaluation including more assessment of impact and at least some sort of attempt to equate expected benefits with costs outlaid.

The case studies seem to suggest that, in not a few cases, evaluation and monitoring is done merely in order to meet SIDA's needs and concerns. In such cases, there is a bias towards a financial, accounting and management audit of how SIDA's funds are being used rather than to concerns about development impact. There is little to suggest that SIDA is particularly concerned to generate policy lessons.

## **4.5.5 Sustaining performance**

### ***Some initial cautionary considerations***

The country studies presented many reasons why we should not be surprised that projects were not sustainable and, indeed, why it is often unreasonable to expect projects to reach sustainability, particularly when the projects work with the poor and very poor. Indeed, the Zimbabwe case-study suggested that if projects had already reached the point of being sustainable after such a short period of time, this would indicate bad judgement on SIDA's part because it would be injecting funds into initiatives that had clearly had the potential to become sustainable more rapidly than the duration of the funding period.

The case studies also point out – in different ways – that while the sustainability

of the projects beyond the funding period is of course desirable, there are other benefits to consider. This is perhaps clearest in the case of training programmes which form leaders, impart skills, and build human capacity in general. All projects are primarily investments, and the return to that investment can take multiple forms. The most valuable sort of project, and the one whose impacts will be most sustainable – even if it not in the most immediately intended form – is often the project that invests in human and organisational capacity.

Rather than describe the litany of unsustainable projects pinpointed in the case-studies, the following discussion draws attention to different themes identified as pertaining to the question of sustainability. These revolve around: stakeholder interests and conflicts; financing; capacity building and institutional sustainability; and environmental considerations.

### ***Stakeholder participation and sustainability***

What was clear from the case studies was that the likelihood of sustainability is greater when primary and different groups of secondary stakeholders are committed to the project and the processes that has been initiated. If they merely participate because of the benefits that the existence of external funding delivers to them, rather than because they see the ideas underlying the project as priority concerns to them, then there is little likelihood that the processes and activities initiated by the intervention will continue once Swedish funds have been withdrawn.

This is an apparently obvious point, but it is not at all trivial. Some Swedish NGO projects come with packages which they implement because that is what they know and are good at doing. For instance, Find your Feet works with machinery to extract concentrates from leaves, and LO/TCO works with study circles among local trades unions. Providing a package, especially one which is home-grown in Sweden, runs the risk that the project has not grown out of priorities as defined by local stakeholders. This increases the risk that what is imparted will not be sustained beyond the duration of the funds provided. More generally, the relatively limited use of participatory problem identification, pre-project appraisal, and participatory design methods in the work of Swedish NGOs means that there is a higher risk that projects will not respond to stakeholder priorities.

### ***Stakeholders, sustainability and conflict***

To complicate the issue of stakeholder participation yet further, there is no reason why all interest groups with a stake in the project should view the project with equal glee. Indeed in many cases, there may be real conflicts of interests between different stakeholder groups. This is particularly true in those projects that address and aim to change relationships of power, be these between social classes, between women and men, or between different ethnic groups. Yet, as noted, these are precisely the projects that are likely to have a positive influence on the livelihoods of the poor.

Conflicts, of course, will challenge the sustainability of an intervention, but they may well be necessary to make a lasting difference. There may be conflicts not only between those with power and those without power, but also between different groups of poor people, if some of the poor feel they are losing out as a result of other poor people benefiting from the project intervention. The most dramatic case of this is the work of the PMU/MSLB with the Weenhayek people in Bolivia. As mentioned earlier, this was a project to gain presidential recognition of a demarcated area as being the territory of the Weenhayek – a territory that has been progressively occupied by other interest groups over the years. These groups include a multi-million agro-enterprise programme of the departmental development corporation, large scale livestock ranchers, and very poor ranchers. In order to expedite the demarcation, the project did not consult any of these groups – for understandable reasons. When the decree was issued, it called into question the legality of the occupation of those ranchers without title, many of whom are very poor, and it meant the agro-industrial project had to be frozen.

This has generated resistance from the livestock producers organisations, and the principle civic organisation of the area. These are still lobbying to have the decree overturned or modified, and, in some cases, for the Swedish mission to withdraw from anything other than evangelising activities.

The point is clear: when a project cuts through opposing stakeholder interests it carries with it the risk that it will trigger existing latent conflicts. In order to survive these, and sustain the project intervention, the project therefore must also nurture mechanisms and relationships between different actors that can help in the resolution, or at least alleviation, of those conflicts.

### *Financing sustainability*

Financial sustainability is particularly problematic in projects that work with the poor. Despite this, and perhaps because of it, many of the Swedish NGOs and their partners appear to have given little or no thought to financial sustainability at the onset of the projects. One local Red Cross society stated explicitly that it would only start thinking about financial sustainability when it believed the Swedish funds would dry up, admitting, quite openly, that it would probably completely rethink the approach when this time came.

The major conclusion deriving from the case studies is that even if financial sustainability may be an impossible panacea, what can be generalised is that in the future all Swedish NGO projects must **from the very outset** consider how they are going to address the issue of financing the sustainability of the processes that they initiate.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> This confirms the point made in the discussion and definition of sustainability: see Chapter 3, section 3.4, above.

The problem of financial sustainability is particularly acute in projects that deliver services to poor people. Often by definition, these people are too poor to afford to pay for such services, and indeed in other societies – including above all Sweden – they are not expected to pay for these services. Rather, services are financed through taxation systems that transfer resources from wealthier interest groups. The problem in the case study countries is that the state is too poor, the economy too weak, and redistributive taxation systems too underdeveloped to allow this cross subsidisation on a national scale.

However, one means through which some Swedish projects have sought, and which others may well consider, to sustain services to the poor is through internal cross-subsidisation. Typically this is done by providing services to wealthier and poorer members of the community and charging for these on a sliding scale. Experiences with this approach are mixed. This approach has been relatively successful in the Caritas supported Sadhana school for the mentally disabled in India. It is only recently beginning in the PMU supported Buenas Nuevas school in Bolivia; and in one dental care programme in Zimbabwe it has not led to financial sustainability. These differing experiences tell us that cross-subsidisation *per se* is not sufficient for sustaining service provision, even if it probably has a very important role to play. The scope for using this means of financing sustainability is often limited to those areas where there is a relatively large middle/lower middle class in the area of the project. In areas where **everybody** is very poor, there is nobody to cross-subsidise the service provision to the poor. A further problem is that in practice it can be very hard to identify who can afford to pay.

A particularly difficult element of financial sustainability concerns service delivery programmes that have involved large scale construction. The installation of large physical edifices creates a new set of recurrent costs for maintenance that will have to be financed in some way. Some Swedish NGOs have dedicated large amounts of SIDA NGO Division resources to building schools and hospitals. The case studies from Zimbabwe and Bolivia, in particular, suggest that little thought was initially given as to how the maintenance of these installations was to be sustained, or who would provide the maintenance funds. These sorts of problems have tended to mushroom in the era of SAPs when governments are under pressure to spread costs and reduce state expenditure. Not so often, it leads the government to privatise and/or introduce user fees.

Other market based mechanisms for financing sustainability have been tried in addition to cross subsidisation. The PMU supported carpentry youth training project in Kenya is attempting to sustain its work through the sale of products, and appears to have some hope of doing this. In other cases, however, efforts to sustain processes through engagement in the market seem to have had little success. This was the case for the NGO projects visited in Zimbabwe, for instance. Among the reasons for this are a lack of skills in accounting and product pricing, and a more general lack of entrepreneurial and economic expertise and orientation.

One potential means of working towards achieving financing sustainability open to those NGO projects that are implemented by membership organisations is through membership subscriptions (as opposed to user fees). Several trades union based projects have attempted this, though the only possible success appears to be that of the Zimbabwe Teachers Association. Significantly this is a union of predominantly middle class members who can pay comparably large union fees, which can then be used to finance the continuation of the study circles that were initiated with LO/TCO support from Sweden. Other cases are less auspicious. The Kenya Railway Workers Union study circle project – also supported by the LO/TCO – is unlikely to be sustained via membership fees, and the SCC supported organisational strengthening project of both the Zimbabwe Farmers' Union and the Kenya National Farmers' Union could only be maintained through membership fees if the unions were to increase their membership to unimaginably high levels.

Confining the discussion merely to the project, the Zimbabwe case-study argued that two particular factors seemed to be of major importance to the prospects of achieving eventual financial sustainability: the living stands (level of poverty) of the beneficiaries, and the degree to which the beneficiaries are committed to the project in question. Thus, from the evidence of these projects, it would appear that financial sustainability is likely to be greater: if the project holders place major emphasis on the issue; if the beneficiaries are not among the poorest; and if they are very committed to the project in hand. Obversely, financial sustainability is likely to be lower: if the project holders do not consider the issue of sustainability early on in the project cycle; if the beneficiaries are very poor and have few if any assets of their own to contribute to the project; and if they do not consider the project to be a very high priority to their lives.

Rather than look to the market or the membership for financial sustainability, Swedish NGO-supported projects have looked more frequently to government funding. This probably only provides a durable and viable option for projects that deliver services. Even so, governments are not likely to sustain popular educational programmes to train indigenous leaders, or to fund trade unions study circle programmes. Indeed, it would almost certainly be undesirable that governments impinge on the autonomy of these programmes.

Several health, dental and educational projects have sought government funding, or have expected that this would be available to sustain the projects initiated by the NGOs. PMU's health and educational work in Bolivia initially hoped that the government would pick up the running costs of their schools and health centres. They have been partly successful in this regard, and the government does now meet some salary costs. However, it seems almost impossible that the government will be able to take over the full running costs of these programmes. In Zimbabwe, another dental project has attracted Ministry of Health support for some of the running costs. Once again, though, it seems increasingly

unlikely, in the days of structural adjustment-induced budget constraints, that the Government will be able to assume all the running costs.<sup>59</sup>

If governments are similarly unable to ensure a sustainable service provision programme, then one should be cautious before damning NGO projects for not being sustainable: government initiatives may often be no better. Another point is that even when governments do agree to take over the running costs of a project, then it is often able to do this because it too is heavily supported by external bilateral and multilateral funds. The problem of unsustainability has merely been passed from the NGO to government: the problem of unsustainability in the wider economy remains as before.

For many of these NGO initiated service delivery programmes to be sustainable, two types of structural change need to occur. First, the host government, whether centrally or locally, has to develop mechanisms through which it can tax, mobilise and transfer resources from wealthier parts of society in order to sustain the delivery of services to people who cannot afford to pay for them. And secondly, the economy needs to be sufficiently endowed and expansive that it can generate the wealth to pay these taxes in the first place. For poorer economies, the problems of financial sustainability of discrete projects can only be solved through long term development.

### *Capacity building, organising and training*

Swedish NGO projects have also faced a range of managerial and institutional challenges. These revolve primarily around the nature of their partners, and more specifically around qualities of their partners which enhance or undermine their sustainability as institutions.

The case study evidence suggests that in a number of instances, Swedish NGOs have worked with partners who are themselves not sustainable. For instance, where Swedish NGOs work with local support (as opposed to grassroots) organisations, these are typically financially dependent on external funding, or, in rare cases, on domestic government funding that is tied very closely to specific project activities. Consequently, their ability to continue the activities initiated with the help of the Swedish NGO is limited. In those countries, such as India, where government wages are higher than NGO wages, NGOs can also have the problem of keeping hold of staff.

On the assumption that pursuing managerial and institutional sustainability is a goal which should always be aimed at, it is therefore important for the Swedish NGO to focus on ways in which capacity can be built in more sustainable forms of organisation. Of particular importance is to support membership organisations

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<sup>59</sup> In the current era of structural adjustment, some of the assumptions made 10 to 15 years ago that governments would take on the running costs of NGO capital projects now look dated and, in some cases, naive. It is important, however, to place these historical decisions in perspective. Ten or 15 years ago, such decisions did not seem anything but reasonable. The benefit of hindsight should thus not be grounds for misplaced blame.

that have legitimacy, and will be able to mobilise resources of their own. This can be done, indirectly and most readily, by working with those intermediary NGOs that explicitly help build membership organisations. Some of the NGOs, such as Caritas in Bolivia, and SIRD in India have worked hard to achieve this. Conversely, it can be done directly: UBV in Bolivia has decided to work only with membership organisations. Whatever the approach used, it is far from easy to make tangible progress: it requires time and specific skills. But, above all, it requires Swedish NGOs to focus on the issue continually. The case study evidence suggests that this has not always been the case.

In some ways, those Swedish NGOs who work with church intermediaries suffer fewer problems of institutional unsustainability among their partners, as the church is expected to last forever. However, in these cases there is a risk that the Swedish NGO can be supporting an organisation which because it benefits from a paternalistic dependency relationship with the north, runs the risk of replicating such a relationship with its members. The Zimbabwe research found evidence of SIDA projects funded as part of a larger flow of funds to local churches which, in many ways were viewed by the local church groups as permanent.

A further dimension of building capacity must be to encourage the broadening of authority, experience and skills within an organisation so that it is not too dependent on one individual. This is awkward because it can appear as if the Swedish NGO is interfering too much in the internal dynamics of an organisation, and indeed it would be. At the very least, though, the Swedish NGO must avoid developing the type of relationship with a counterpart in which the Swedish NGO itself contributes to the concentration of power and authority in just one person. The case studies suggest that this has happened in one or two cases, albeit usually unconsciously. To minimise this occurring it is important, for instance, to develop and sustain contacts with a range of actors within the counterpart organisation and to foster a wide distribution of information on the nature of the relationship between the local and the Swedish organisation.

Although personal relationships are critical for the quality of many projects and collaborations, they do not guarantee sustainability. Indeed, when key individuals leave an organisation or a project, there is often a high risk that processes and relationships that they have initiated will also come to an end. To minimise this particular risk will often mean that as the Swedish NGOs work with their partners, they need to focus on encouraging the institutionalisation of many of the relationships on which projects depend.

These different observations imply that ultimately the surest way in which capacity can be built is through nurturing the emergence of membership organisations with a wide distribution of skills and authority within the organisation. Additionally, and more generally, capacity building will be furthered when there is longer term funding available for capacity building. But this should not be "easy" long term funding. The case studies show that this can lead to bad practices among



local and Swedish NGOs. Rather, it should be funding guaranteed against the progressive satisfaction of indicators of capacity building, and of the progressive transfer of authorities from intermediary down to membership organisations.

### ***Environment and sustainability***

Only a relatively small number of the projects assessed in the country case studies were explicitly concerned with environmental considerations. Those that were included forestry work in Kenya and Bolivia, and ecological agriculture in India. The only really significant environmental project visited was the Vi Tree Planting Project in Kenya which aims to work with 45,000 farmers and pastoralists each year and has had a budget of SEK 7.6 mn a year since 1991/2. It installs tree nurseries, and works in different aspects of soil conservation. Its impact has been positive.

A minority of the projects incorporated environmental concerns into their operations, while a small number of other projects have positive environmental impacts. What was particularly worrying was that a not insignificant number of projects were found to be having negative effects on the environment in large measure because the project promoters were unaware of, and in some cases had not addressed the issue of, environmental impact. In Zimbabwe, five instances of this were discovered in the 13 projects visited.

But perhaps the most significant feature of the projects as a whole is that environmental considerations were in large measure not really relevant. The small scale of most projects meant that ultimately they had very little capacity to have either much positive or negative effect on the environment. By the same token, environmental disturbance or regeneration is not a particularly significant impact on the sustainability of the project initiatives.

A small intervention that is nonetheless coherent with broader social processes in a region, and which could as a result be scaled up through those very social processes, has the potential to have a large impact in the longer term. This, for instance, is the objective of the Kudumban ecological farm in India, and UBV's forestry support to a peasant federation in Bolivia. In the latter case, the principle is that if the federation is able to establish a coherent tree nursery programme then the structure and reach of the federation could widen the impact of a volunteer enormously. So far, however, that coherence has been elusive and the nurseries still depend entirely on the presence of the volunteer.

Individual NGO projects, especially if they stay small and discrete interventions, are never going to have much of an environmental impact. However, if they are able to develop mechanisms that have a synergistic relationship with existing social and economic processes in a region, then those very processes can scale up the initial intervention significantly. Such interventions also have the potential of being replicable in a way that large projects, such as the Vi Tree Planting project, are presently not. So far, however, there is little evidence of Swedish NGOs having achieved such an impact.

#### 4.5.6 The performance of Sweden's added value, including Swedish technical assistance

One of the justifications of an indirect as opposed to direct funding mechanism to support local NGOs is that the Swedish NGO adds value to the SIDA funds that are channelled in this way. Value can be added in a number of ways, through financial contributions, specific and relevant knowledge of the NGO sector, technical assistance, and complementary work in Sweden.

In most of the cases examined, the Swedish NGOs work with their "natural" counterparts (unions, churches). This has the positive result of focusing on nurturing and developing contacts with the one "natural" partner. But, equally, it can run the risk of "blinding" the northern organisation to problems arising in those projects and within the organisation – transparency in institutional sustainability being two to which the case studies draw particular attention. In other cases, small Swedish NGOs work with chance contacts, and have no special knowledge of the local NGO world. So the value that Swedish NGOs add in these regards is less certain.

What about **technical assistance**? The first thing to emphasise is that while efforts were made to assess a group of Swedish NGO projects which had a Swedish technical assistance component across all four countries, the sample was not only biased (see Section 3.2 below) but **extremely small**. Thus, the comments made here should in **no way** be construed as constituting a **comprehensive** assessment of Swedish volunteers and linked technical assistance programmes.

The extent to which the projects visited had Swedish technical assistance varied among countries. There was least assistance in India, where local staff are very well trained anyway: indeed in India no Swedish NGO whose projects were visited have a local office. Conversely in Zimbabwe, five of the 13 projects visited had Swedish volunteers. Five out of seven in Kenya have or have had technical assistance, and, in Bolivia. Swedish missionaries or volunteers were involved in four out of nine projects.

The projects examined raise a number of questions about these technical assistants/volunteers. In general, the quality of their work and commitment was indisputable. This fact should be broadcast widely. Yet in only a very few instances did the Swedish personnel possess and provide a skill that local people did not have. Additionally, the volunteer would usually have to take time to adapt to the local context, to understand what was going on around them, and to ease their way into their work.

In most cases, local NGOs were therefore taking volunteers, or projects were using them, for reasons other than the uniqueness of their professional and technical contributions. The principal reason appears to have been that the volunteers provided the project with free or cheap labour. A peasant federation in Bolivia, the Corporacion Agropecuaria Campesina (CORACA), that had two UBV

volunteers saw them as filling jobs that CORACA could not afford to fill. In Zimbabwe, an SMR – supported urban dental programme could only continue because of the Swedish volunteer who was prepared to work for wages below those that a Zimbabwean dentist would charge.

If the volunteer is perceived as free labour, the risks rise that local organisations will not assign her/him a counterpart, so the volunteer ends up only doing a job, not in building capacity in the organisation. In the worst of cases, as reported in Kenya, volunteers can obstruct capacity building because they control and manage all the relationships between the local organisations and the Swedish NGO, thus preventing any learning within the local organisation. However, it is also important to point to exceptions. In Zimbabwe, SVS volunteers appear successfully to have trained local counterparts to take over their work, thereby making a major impact on the future viability of the projects in question.

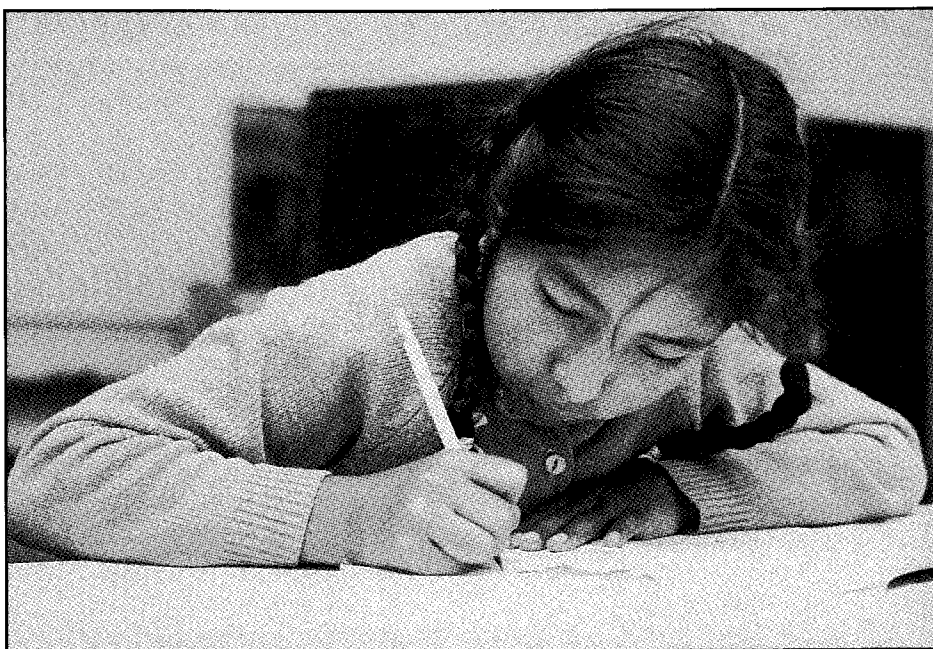
The cases examined suggest that it is often necessary to assess whether this type of assistance could be used more strategically, and be linked more closely to the challenges of building capacity and the means for sustainability within projects. It is certainly for this reason that two of the case studies also concluded that the impact of volunteer work is greater when there are local coordinators for the volunteers, and indeed when the local office has significant capacity to plan, support and think strategically with the counterparts as to how most effectively the volunteers could be used.

Another value that Swedish NGOs can add is through their educational and lobbying work back in Sweden. A few of the organisations assessed do engage in such work. In some cases the local counterparts of the NGOs saw the value of such work – in others they either did not see it as important or were unaware of the possibility of it. Indian NGOs, for instance, seem not to distinguish between SIDA and Swedish NGOs as sources of funding. They are therefore unlikely to feel that the Swedish NGO might play any special role back in Sweden.

Finally, note should be taken of a potential inverse link between technical assistance, sustainability and solidarity. A succession of Swedish volunteers has, from the point of view of the local organisation, the desirable result of cementing relationships between the project and Sweden. From a solidarity point of view there are a host of sound reasons for applauding the cementing of such links. However there is sometimes a risk that these links lead to a permanent flow of funds from north to south.

## **4.6 PATTERNS AND PERFORMANCE IN NON-NGO DIVISION NGO PROJECTS**

The comments made in this section should, perhaps, be viewed more as an addendum than as part of the flow of the main text. Yet, in that context, some comparative, interview and evaluation data was collected. The activities supported



*In Bolivia, NGO support has become a counterweight to government. Here a twelve year old girl concentrating on her schoolwork in the PMU-supported school Buena Nuevas, in Cochabamba, Bolivia.*

PHOTO: BENGT HÄGGLUND/PMU

in non-NGO Division funded NGO projects tend in large measure to reflect the priorities of the funding windows. Thus, Human Rights and Democracy projects revolve around legal support, media and civic work; environment and natural resource funds go to technology development, training and informational work relate to those sectors; gender funds support womens' income generating projects, gender training to NGOs, training to women leaders, and so forth.

Where the bilateral projects support NGOs then the stated objective is usually that these NGO activities are supported as they relate to the broader bilateral programme. This is sometimes born out in practice, as in the Social Forestry programme in India in which Indian NGOs are supported because SIDA sees them as playing an important role in linking the Forestry Department and rural people. In Kenya, however, the link often seemed more rhetorical than real.

An interesting twist on the theme of the relationship between the government to government support and direct bilateral support to NGOs is that in Bolivia. In this case, the principle underlying a whole programme which supports the NGO sector in developing policy proposals is that the programme aims to strengthen NGO policy proposals, as an explicit counterweight to government. Here, then, SIDA aims to use the bilateral programme to strengthen both state and civil society, on the grounds that both are needed for an effective and democratic development.

Whilst the Swedish NGO supported projects tend to work with a range of

organisations in the non-profit sector, there is probably more tendency for the other SIDA funds to work with more traditional support-type NGOs.

Within the bilateral programme, local NGOs are perhaps mainly expected to bring a more social dimension to programmes, as for instance in the forestry programme in India. They are expected to organise people, foster participation, and link government and beneficiaries. Evaluation data in India suggest that this is broadly what is achieved, but also warn that NGO participation in bilateral programmes and projects is no miracle cure to underlying problems in those projects.

NGOs are also looked to for innovation within these bilateral programmes and indeed the image from the country studies is that by and large the directly funded NGO activities (ie those funded from the DCO) do tend to be innovative, indeed perhaps more innovative than the broad sweep of projects funded via Swedish NGOs. There is probably also a greater tendency to support more interesting policy development work in these directly funded activities – the most notable example being SIDA's support to NGO networks in Bolivia.

One of the reasons for this interest in experimental funding relates to the government-to-government programmes. In Bolivia, as mentioned, the interest was in supporting a counterweight to government and to help the NGO sector develop policy proposals that could be of interest to actors in civil society and to other donors. In India, the DCO expressed an interest in NGO experimentation with approaches that, at a later date, might be integrated into, and scaled up through, the government-to-government programme.

This tendency towards experimental funding reflects the knowledge of the SIDA staff in the local office, and in particular how far they are, for personal or professional reasons, knowledgeable of the local NGO sectors. Of course, direct funding would be far more complicated in those cases where there was no DCO, or where staff resources are limited. But, in general, the country studies made the point that the work funded through these non-NGO Division windows and involving local DCO knowledge, included a number of interesting and important initiatives.

## **4.7 COUNTRY CASE-STUDY CONCLUSIONS**

### **4.7.1 Coherence and impact**

The discussion in this section points conclusively to the general observation that in most cases the development impact of the initiatives reviewed could have been more effective. This leads on to a consideration of those factors which seem to have been particularly important in influencing the quality and the outcome of the work of these NGOs.

Looking across the sweep of projects reviewed in the country case studies, it appears that projects that do not build on processes of economic and social activity

and change that are already underway, nor on priority concerns of the people with whom the project is ostensibly working, stand less chance of making much of an impact, far less a sustained impact.

Thus, insufficient attention is placed by many Swedish NGOs on thinking **strategically and realistically** about the development opportunities in the areas in which they are working. This gap appears to be particularly marked for those NGOs who do not have a presence within, and knowledge of the country. Indeed, some of the evidence suggest that the projects involving direct DCO funding of local NGOs have been more coherent and relevant than those projects that are funded by the NGO Division via Swedish NGOs. On the other hand, they also note that there are real capacity constraints on the DCOs' ability to handle more projects.

What these two conclusions together imply is that many Swedish NGO projects would gain if mechanisms existed to ensure that more local knowledge of the NGO sector and of development realities feeds into the design, screening and adaptation of Swedish NGO supported projects. Developing this point further, the case studies suggest that there is scope for more information-exchange and mutual learning between the bilateral and Swedish NGO programme in each country, and that this could enhance the coherence, impact and quality of Swedish aid in general.

#### **4.7.2 NGO capacities and impact**

An important observation that emerges from the country case-studies, one which is similar to most NGO programmes, is that Swedish NGO supported projects are not very successful in promoting viable income generation projects. The evidence suggests that Swedish NGOs are more active in funding the delivery of services. If success is to be judged by the fact that the services reach the people, then many of the projects reviewed would be deemed successes. However, they have been less effective in evolving new means of service delivery that raise the possibility of those services to be sustained – financially, managerially and technically. In general, the continuation of the services provided will need to depend on the continued injection of support from outside.

This combination of features is critical because it implies that Swedish NGOs have neither been very successful

- (i) in fostering processes that generate wealth among the poor; nor,
- (ii) in developing methods for service delivery that mobilise and redistribute existing resources in ways which maintain the capital (wealth) introduced by the Swedish NGO but ensure it continues to be used to the benefit of the poor.

In exhibiting these characteristics, they tend to share the weaknesses of many other donor-based NGO efforts funded across a range of different developing countries.

The reasons for the poor performance of Swedish NGOs in this regard are clearly related to the difficult economic contexts within which they have worked. Yet is probably also true that most Swedish NGOs have not had, or have not sought to devote, the internal resources to engage effectively in economic activities, and have often been too concerned to **implement** works rather than to experiment with means of ensuring the sustained poverty orientation of those works and the services linked to them.

More positively, an important socio-political pillar of inclusive development is the enhancement of capacity among the poor through training, learning and organisation. In working to enhance this capacity, there have been more successes among Swedish NGOs, in large measure reflecting their skills and past experiences. Nonetheless, the case studies make clear that there is still much more that can be done to enhance this capacity building impact within the popular sectors.

## 4.8 SOME INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS:

### *Projects and Programmes of Donor-Based NGOs supported by the Finnish and United Kingdom Governments*

The purpose of this final section of the chapter is to provide some data and evidence from other countries in order to make some judgements of comparability.

However, at the outset, the evaluators would like to stress that in their judgement the data and information are **not** available with which to make strict and direct comparisons. There are three main reasons for this. First, all NGO evaluations undertaken by and for official donors have been evaluations of **sample** data. When groups of projects from one country are put up against those of another country, one is certainly not comparing like with like. Secondly, the group of Swedish NGO projects examined here are probably biased towards what the NGOs perceive as more successful projects. Thirdly, as has been emphasised continually throughout this chapter, impact of discrete projects is usually critically dependent upon the wider context in which they are located. It is highly unlikely when comparing performance of a sample of projects across different countries that one is making comparisons within this same contextual framework.

Thus, the most that these comments can do is to show relative comparisons drawn from the confines and constraints of the particular circumstances within which each was made. It is within these parameters that the following summary points are made.

The remaining sections of this chapter are drawn from studies of the development impact of projects of British and Finnish NGOs, part funded by their respective official aid agencies. Comments on the impact of British NGO projects are derived from two sources: R. C. Riddell and M. Robinson *The Impact of NGO Poverty Alleviation Projects: results of Case Study Evaluations*, Overseas Development Institute, London, Working Paper No. 68, November 1992 and Overseas Develop-

ment Administration (ODA) *Evaluation of NGO Projects: Synthesis Report*, London: Overseas Development Administration, Evaluation Report, 1995. Comments on Finnish NGO impact are drawn from a recent FINNIDA Evaluation Report (1994/1) entitled *Strengthening The Partnership: Evaluation of the Finnish NGO Support Programme*, FINNIDA: Helsinki, February 1994.

The ODA report is based on a synthesis of 12 evaluations of British NGO projects in Bangladesh, Burkino Faso, Ethiopia, India, Kenya and Sierra Leone. The ODI report is based on a synthesis of 16 projects biased towards income-generating interventions undertaken in Bangladesh, India, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The FINNIDA study involved a development impact assessment of 29 projects funded by Finnish NGOs, with financial support from FINNIDA in Ethiopia, Nepal, Nicaragua and Uganda.

#### **4.8.1 Overall impact and impact on the poor**

Of the 12 British NGO projects evaluated and reviewed in the ODA report, eight have succeeded in meeting their main objectives, three were considered partially successful and one was considered largely unsuccessful. However, the report stresses that these results should **not** be seen as representing all British NGO projects.

The results of the 16 British NGO projects studied by the ODI revealed that none were set up exclusively for and exclusively benefited the poor. Almost without exception the poor benefited more than the poorest, and men to a greater degree than women. In only a quarter of the projects evaluated were the incomes of the poorest raised significantly, in two thirds of cases, they were either bypassed or the benefits were limited in comparison with those who were less poor. As regards those projects which are intended to deliver services to the poor, the ODA report indicates that 65 percent have done so successfully, about 28 percent were partially successful and one clearly failed to do so. The evaluations suggest that a more careful targeting of the poorest in the design stage and implementation, and focusing more on participation is likely to enhance impact and reach to the poor.

Finally, the ODA report notes that the main way of effectively alleviating poverty is likely to require challenging existing social structures, adding that very few of the projects evaluated produced results significant enough for this to occur, even if a small number of projects were exceptions and were having a significant wider impact.

The evidence from the Finnish case studies suggested, at its most neutral, that Finnish NGO-supported projects have performed no worse than other NGOs in the four countries: the share of projects which exhibited substantial problems was no higher than similar evaluations of other donor NGO programmes have revealed.

More positively, Finnish NGOs have performed better in supporting the



delivery of services than in influencing the policy of national governments or the donor community (including FINNIDA). Their ability to articulate concerns for participation, gender sensitivity and sustainable development has exceeded their ability to put these concerns into practice. They have been weak in systematising and learning from their experience, which has at times been quite innovative and of potential relevance to a wider community. Additionally, it was difficult to assess the cost effectiveness of these interventions, and it seemed that the benefits have not always justified the costs.

The case study evidence showed that a number of Finnish NGOs were doing work or supporting work of a very high calibre. Indeed in three of the countries Finnish NGOs were supporting primary and curative health programmes which had gained a national reputation for quality of service, innovativeness and/or impact. Similarly, a few activities in other sectors supported by Finnish NGOs were notable for their innovativeness, gender orientation and social welfare impacts.

A general pattern was that social impacts were often significant, whereas there was little evidence of significant economic impacts on the livelihoods and income generating capacity of beneficiaries. In large measure, this pattern reflected the fact that Finnish NGOs have concentrated their activities on social rather than productive projects. Another general pattern was that those (frequently smaller) projects with more clearly defined and less complex objectives, and with more closely targeted beneficiaries, were often more effective. The more diverse and complex the objectives, the greater difficulty the implementing organisations have had in meeting them.

What about impact on the poor and the poorest? In general, the Finnish NGO projects evaluated were targeted to the poorer sections of society. Whether these were the poorest or not was harder to discern, though a few projects which claimed to be for the poorest were in fact not. Nonetheless, a significant number of projects preferentially targeted women, children, low castes and the disabled, groups that are typically among the poorest and weakest in developing countries. Addressing symptoms of poverty is one thing, addressing its causes are quite another, and in this regard the Finnish NGO projects performed particularly poorly.

The British ODA studied addressed the issue of the time horizon for projects and donor funding. It expressed concern about what is termed the artificially short time horizon adopted by some donors, including the ODA, where a time period of over three years is often a reason for not funding an NGO project for fear that it will be unsustainable. One result is that NGOs often unrealistically compress time periods in order to obtain funds. This can both accentuate failure, and cut off donor funding, prematurely.

Finally and importantly, it has been recognised increasingly, not least by the donors funding the NGO projects, that the policy environment in which the projects operate and are located is seen as critical not only to development more broadly, but also to success at the local micro-level.

### **4.8.2 Gender impact**

Gender is an important theme for many British NGOs, and women played an important role in many of the projects examined. Though there are exceptions, the general pattern is for the impact on women to be quite limited, often falling short of expectations held at the start of the project. Cases were found of local NGOs being willing to be seen to be adopting policies in favour of women, partly in order to secure donor funds, but failing to provide the benefits expected. Most projects which assisted women did so within existing social, political, economic and cultural frameworks; examples of projects which successfully challenged prevailing discrimination were very rare.

For the Finnish evaluation, gender sensitivity of the 29 projects was assessed in two ways. First, in their orientation towards women as preferred target groups in projects. Second, and more fundamentally, in relation to the way they challenged the underlying structural problems which marginalised and disempowered women face, and continue to face.

In relation to the first dimension, a number of the Finnish NGO programmes scored quite well. This partly reflected the sectoral objectives of such programmes. Community-based and maternal and child health care programmes and child development programmes are by their nature more oriented towards issues that affect women more directly than men. On the other hand, other projects scored badly because of the place at which they enter the development (and gender) process. Far fewer projects really addressed the relationships that keep women disempowered, or aim to work with and strengthen women's own organisations. There were, however, a few notable and impressive exceptions.

### **4.8.3 Participation**

There is an observable shift in British NGO projects which are now focusing more and more on group participation, with primary stakeholders increasingly involved in the process of identifying, designing, implementing and evaluating projects. NGOs now regard beneficiary participation as essential. However, the evaluations found some confusion of what precisely was meant by participation. Nevertheless, an important finding of the ODA evaluations is confirmation that where projects have been successful this has been facilitated by the effective participation of beneficiaries at all stages of the project cycle. Conversely, though, where projects failed it was often factors other than the degree of participation which also influenced the impact. Finally, it is noted that increased participation is usually not costless, even if the costs seem to be justified in relation to the likely benefits obtained.

Most of the Finnish NGOs visited claimed that they promoted grassroots participation and strengthened local capacity to sustain local development. The evidence suggests that in general they probably were more participatory than

public sector institutions, though not as participatory across **the range of potential areas of participation**, as they often claimed to be.

At the planning stage, when objectives are identified, most Finnish NGOs beneficiary groups did not participate. There was, however, a more institutional participation in project preparation. In most projects, the participation of local populations was limited to the implementation of the actual project.

#### **4.8.4 Sustainability**

The FINNIDA studies examined sustainability in terms of two dimensions: sustainability of impacts, and sustainability of the processes and institutions supported. In many cases, Finnish NGOs only began thinking seriously about how to sustain the processes they had supported part-way through the project. This has made the effort to shift to sustainability more difficult: in some cases, it has involved the introduction of user charges half way through or towards the end of a project. This has led to a decline in use of services (primarily among the poorest), and some misunderstanding on the part of beneficiaries as to why fees had been introduced.

As a result, it is not surprising that only very few of the Finnish NGO-supported projects visited seemed to have their sustainability more or less guaranteed. Very few have addressed the problem of maintenance costs of building and other physical/infrastructural projects. Most of the projects for poorer people and poorer groups have neither hope nor intention of finding a means of being self-financing. The report argues that as it is impossible and unreasonable that most of these projects should be asked to meet this goal of sustainability and one needs to question whether the broader ambitions of achieving financial sustainability ought not to be altered. Relatedly, the Finnish report stresses that Finnish NGOs are operating in environments where many other types of project, and where many bilateral and, indeed government, programmes also have great difficulty in achieving sustainability.

As for process sustainability, many Finnish NGOs have not given it much thought, although they have at times (in some cases understandably) felt it was not "their" problem. In a number of instances, Finnish NGOs gave too little emphasis to this issue because they believed that government would ensure the sustainability of the initiative by providing necessary financial, administrative and technical support. In some cases, the government had often agreed to this. In the end, however, government has usually been unable to provide support, unwilling to do so, and/or was replaced by a regime less sympathetic to the idea of continued public support to such initiatives. Indeed, one conclusion drawn by some NGOs is that they should think twice before expecting the host government to be the source of sustainability.

The British ODA review notes that very few indeed of the projects and activities assessed are judged to be sustainable, in the sense of the beneficiaries or local

executing agency having the capacity to take over and run the project when the sponsoring NGO withdraws. It is argued that financial sustainability should be viewed more as a long term issue, whereas, in practice, it is all too often viewed as a short term one. Nonetheless, some projects were found to be sustainable, in the sense that the activity sponsored was sustainable, even if the overall project was not. Additionally, the report notes that the work of some NGOs has made a contribution to the spread of new ideas, and that initiatives focused on empowerment, for example, can spread well beyond the life of a particular discrete project.

Lack of sustainability, in the sense of projects being able to stand on their own feet, was attributed to two main causes. The first was the inability of governments to step in and take them over. The second was the lack of regular sources of local finance to replace the injection of foreign funds.

The report argues that in some circumstances there may be a continuing role for NGOs in projects which are not self-sustaining either financially or institutionally, especially in the near-term. Yet, it suggests that this should happen by deliberate decision of the funder, and not by default.

#### **4.8.5 Environmental impact**

Among the 29 Finnish projects examined, the theme of environment does not arise very often. In large measure this is because Finnish NGOs have not been very involved in productive activities: their focus on health, educational, humanitarian and service activities has meant that they have had few and only minor environmental impacts. Similarly, the relatively small scale nature of many NGO activities means that their net environmental impact – whether positive or negative – is not great.

In those few projects where there are potentially significant environmental impacts, while NGOs may refer to these in their project documents, in practice their attention to environmental impact assessment is limited. Indeed, it is felt by some that Finnish NGOs are not particularly strong – at least in technical and evaluative terms – when it comes to environmental issues. Few cases were encountered where NGOs had prepared serious environmental assessments. In one project, adverse environmental influences were damaging the project, and these had not been addressed when the project was being formulated.

#### **4.8.6 Monitoring and evaluation**

The British studies reveal that while steps have been taken over the past 10 or so years by British NGOs to improve their monitoring and management of projects, continued difficulties still persist. In many cases, effective management systems are not in place, and only rarely is a systematic distinction made in the types and levels of monitoring and evaluation information that different stakeholders require. At least until relatively recently, very little emphasis seems to have been paid by NGOs on rigorously examining the impact of their projects and drawing out the lessons

to be learnt: usually the focus has merely been on whether the project's immediate goals have been achieved, and not the project's overall impact. The result is commonly that lessons are not learnt, similar mistakes are made in similar subsequent projects, and lessons learnt are only irregularly fed into the design of future projects.

The Finnish case study evidence suggests that Finnish NGOs have often not been good learners. Most of them have not had systems in place to foster learning, and there has been little systematic documentation and dissemination of experience to other agencies. Indeed in all four countries, the evaluations of the projects visited were often hampered by the absence of, or inaccessibility to, information about the project performance, particularly information of past performance, even if there were notable exceptions.

### **4.8.7 Innovativeness, flexibility and replicability**

It is claimed that one of the important characteristics of NGOs lies in their innovativeness. In common with a number of other studies of the impact of particular NGO projects, the four Finnish country case studies found insufficient grounds to support such a widespread generalisation. Overall, little evidence was found to suggest much innovation in project design and strategy. Nonetheless, several of the country studies did show signs of innovations in Finnish NGO projects which could be relevant – if made available – to other NGOs and bilateral projects.

In regard to replicability, the British ODA study suggests that most projects have a rather narrow perspective: objectives of replicating or scaling up activities are largely absent from the project's design.

### **4.8.8 Concluding comment**

The British and Finnish evaluations are just two of a number of donor-sponsored assessments of development impact undertaken by an increasing number of donors. Canada, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, the United States and Australia are six OECD bilateral donors which, to the authors' knowledge, have conducted or are conducting similar evaluations. The European Union has conducted impact studies over a ten year period, and there are certainly others which have been undertaken or are planned.

In the last 20 years, OECD donors have increasingly funded the development activities of NGOs based in their own countries. More recently, they have focused on the funding of the development activities of local NGOs, especially in the countries in which they have a significant bilateral presence. This process, itself fuelled by recognition of the development role and work of NGOs, has tended to lead to a breaking down of some of the barriers which have sometimes existed between NGOs on the one hand and official donors and agencies on the other. As

donors have moved in to support the work of NGOs in development, an increasing number of NGOs, especially the larger ones, have become less insistent exclusively on defending their "own" approach to development, and more open to using their talents and expertise to cooperate with official donors to address the problems of poverty. It is partly for this reason that donors and some northern NGOs are now more open to addressing the question of where their respective comparative advantage lies.

It is the impression of the ODI team that this sort of movement now being observed in some places internationally has not progressed as far in Sweden as it has in a number of other donor countries. It appears to the outsider that influential parts of SIDA continue to feel uncomfortable suggesting that SIDA would want in any way to influence what NGOs do and how they use the funds provided. For their part, it appears to the outsider that some Swedish NGOs and framework organisations believe, in rather a complementary fashion, that they have a right to the funds provided, that it is solely their choice how the funds should be spent, and that external ideas influencing this choice need to be defensively filtered, if not resisted. When such attitudes are mixed together, little thought is given to mutual learning, still less to understanding better the contribution the other can make to different facets of the development process. It is not being argued that all these generalisations apply equally to all such organisations. It should also be stated that the evaluation team was exposed to a number of Swedish NGOs and framework organisations who are clearly fully abreast of international debate about the comparative advantage of international NGOs and their changing role in development.

# RECOMMENDATIONS TO SIDA

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE STAGE, DRAWING THE PARAMETERS

The purpose of this final chapter is to put forward a series of recommendations based largely on the evidence gathered and the analysis made. Before the specific recommendations are made, it is important to place these in context and to state the various assumptions upon which the recommendations are built.

### 5.1.1 Recommendations are made to SIDA

Ultimately, it is the NGOs themselves, and not SIDA, which have both the more direct responsibility for the projects and programmes whose development impact was assessed, and the means to alter what they do, and how they do it in order to enhance development impact. As these NGOs will wish to improve the development impact of the projects they execute or promote, it is hoped that many of the points raised in **Chapter 4** and in the four country *Supplements* will be pondered on, discussed, and found useful by the relevant NGOs.

The focus of the recommendations is SIDA, who commissioned the evaluation. They are targeted, more specifically, at a range of proposals to assist SIDA in its role as bridge between the Swedish Parliament, which provides the funds used by the Swedish NGOs, and the NGOs which utilise these funds. At its broadest, SIDA's role is to ensure, as far as possible, that Swedish taxpayers' money is being used as effectively and efficiently as possible, and in the manner for which it was intended.

One of the main purposes of the evaluation has been to assess the development impact of projects funded by SIDA's NGO Division. However, the evaluation was not commissioned by the Division, and it has become increasingly apparent during the course of the evaluation that there is a range of quite sharply differing views within SIDA about the development funds which SIDA provides to Swedish NGOs, and the types of action which SIDA should, or should not take, to ensure that the funds are used efficiently and effectively.

Discussions with staff suggest that opinion of many within the NGO Division tends to be closest to those who believe that SIDA should take as minimalist a role as possible, seeking to interfere as little as possible in choosing or influencing NGO

projects. In contrast, there are others, in SIDA and outside, who believe that NGOs are far too free and that present policies and practices need to be re-assessed. Even before the first recommendation is made, it would appear that it is not going to be possible fully to accommodate both these opposing viewpoints.

The approach taken here is to view SIDA's links with Swedish NGOs through the prism of development and development impact. Thus, the recommendations given are made with a view to trying to ensure that development impact is maximised.

The recommendations will therefore seem of most relevance to those within SIDA, and outside, to whom the development impact of NGO projects funded by SIDA is of greatest concern and interest. They are likely to be questioned (or challenged) most by the following groups or individuals:

- those in SIDA, and outside, who believe that the record of development impact should play no part in influencing what NGOs are permitted to do with state funds;
- those NGOs receiving state funds who believe that what they do with the funds are 'their own business' and should not be discussed with those outside their organisation, not even other NGOs; and
- those who believe that action should not (ever) be taken to reduce the number of cases where development impact of either (or both) SIDA and NGO initiatives are reduced because of mutual ignorance and failure to wish to learn from each other's experiences.

### **5.1.2 Recommendations relate only to development impact and focus predominantly on only one particular SIDA funding window**

Thus, this is a **development impact** evaluation: it is concerned with assessing the development impact of funds allocated by SIDA for development purposes. This is both a strength and a weakness. It is a strength because it should assist SIDA and the Swedish Parliament to answer as best they can the question: what is the development impact of funds channelled to Swedish NGOs? It is a weakness because SIDA, and others, **do** have additional criteria by which to fund different initiatives. But these have not been addressed here.

One obvious implication is that it is the job of others to weigh the results, conclusions and recommendations made here in this *Report* against those other criteria for supporting the work of Swedish NGOs. It may be that in the view of some, development criteria should take second place to solidarity issues, or should take second place to the notion that Swedish organisations have a right to state funds which over-rides considerations of the development impact of the funds used. Though these views are clearly important, they go beyond the TOR provided for this evaluation and so are not addressed further in this *Report*.



Another point to stress is that the primary focus of this evaluation has been the development initiatives of Swedish NGOs funded through SIDA's NGO Division in Stockholm. By implication, the primary focus of the evaluation has **not** been, and the recommendations contained in this chapter are **not** focused on, the following areas or questions – important though they undoubtedly are to SIDA:

- whether the present approach to NGO funding of development initiatives is both the most rational and most effective, and thus whether changes in the mode of funding NGO initiatives should be made.
- Whether the current balance is optimal between those funds which are channelled to and through Swedish NGOs over and against those channelled directly to, and through, local NGOs, and thus whether a different balance is likely to be the most efficient and effective way of achieving SIDA's broad development objectives.
- Whether changes should be made to the functioning and operation of the NGO Division, including its links to the rest of SIDA. In practice, especially when looking at development impact in its widest sense (see Section 5.3, below), it is inevitable that issues related to the role of the NGO Division have had to be raised. In the attempt to respect the wishes of the NGO Division,<sup>60</sup> wherever possible, when comments about the NGO Division are made, they have attempted to focus on its role **in policy terms**, and not in terms of personnel and bureaucratic efficiency and effectiveness. One direct consequence is that, inevitably, the comments which are made relating to the role of the NGO Division will necessarily be partial.

### **5.1.3 Working from the core assumption that it is the Swedish NGOs' own initiatives which are being funded**

A core principle upon which development funds from the NGO Division are allocated to Swedish NGOs is that these funds are provided for development interventions of, or proposed by, the Swedish NGOs themselves.

In other words, the recommendations made here are based on the maintenance of the principle that it is the NGOs' own development initiatives which are to be funded, and that it is on this basis that funds should be provided by Parliament and administered, as at present, by SIDA.

The reason for basing the recommendations on this principle is not that they formed part of the TOR for this evaluation: the TOR are silent on this particular issue. Rather, it is judged that this is the only context and framework within which debate about policy alternatives and proposals can in practice proceed at the present time.

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<sup>60</sup> Indeed in discussions, the Head of the NGO Division explicitly stated that these questions should not form part of the evaluation and recommendations.

Immediately a question will be raised: how is it possible, at one and the same time, to continue to allocate development funds from the NGO Division on the principles that it is the projects and programmes put forward by the NGOs **themselves** which are being funded, and, at the same time, suggest that other criteria – the context in which these projects and programmes are located – are to be applied as well?

To anticipate slightly, it is argued that the two principles can be held in tension, or balance, if they are utilised in two related ways. Firstly, it is suggested that it is the main Swedish NGOs working in particular key countries which should play a major role, with others including their local partners, in analysing and drawing implications of the country context for outlining the broad areas in which future Swedish NGO development initiatives should be focused. Secondly, and relatedly, it is suggested that SIDA should use these data and analysis to favour the funding of Swedish NGO projects and programmes in particular countries which fall within these narrower (but agreed) parameters.

Thus, even these most “extreme” recommendations are made on the basis of the principle (highlighted above) that it is Swedish NGO projects and programmes (rather than SIDA-defined projects for NGOs) which will be funded through the NGO Division funding window. What makes the discussion in this section different from current practice is that it is proposed, in certain clearly specified circumstances, that the selection of some potential projects and programmes be narrowed. The definition of these narrower and more specific parameters would be formed in large measure by Swedish NGOs and their local partners, and by those in particular countries with the relevant knowledge and expertise about NGOs, aiming to focus on how best international, including Swedish, NGOs can make the best development impact.

All this sounds unduly complex. Why it is thought necessary to make these sorts of changes – or any changes? Part of the answer lies in comments drawn from the Kenyan country case-study (*Supplement, III*). This study makes the point that to the extent that Swedish taxpayers’ money is not being put to its best use, it is ultimately the poor people in developing countries who are the losers. The recommendations given here are made with the express purpose of trying to ensure that these state funds, channelled through Swedish NGOs, are used to the maximum advantage of the poor. A major thrust of **Chapter 4** was to argue that there exists a gap between project objectives/intentions and project outcome. It is the view of the evaluators that it is possible to narrow at least some of this gap, the result of which will be to raise the efficiency and effectiveness of the state funds allocated to Swedish NGOs. To the extent that efforts are not made to enhance efficiency, it is not the Swedish NGOs which will suffer, it will be the poor themselves – because fewer poor people will be reached with state firms, or because the degree and extent of their poverty will not alleviated to the extent possible.

## 5.2 ENHANCING DEVELOPMENT IMPACT AT THE LEVEL OF DISCRETE PROJECTS/PROGRAMMES FUNDED

### 5.2.1 The need to consider new ways of enhancing development impact

One of the main, and consistent, conclusions made across the four country studies is that a gap exists between the development objectives of NGO projects funded by the NGO Division and the development impact achieved.

Experience indicates that in the often difficult world in which NGO projects are located it is never going to be likely that the gap between objective and achievement will be bridged: development projects are always likely to fall well short of what is hoped for. Yet within this context, it is the judgement of the evaluation team that the gap between intention and achievement is both sufficiently wide that efforts should be made to narrow this gap and that at least some of the gap can be narrowed. To the extent that this gap-narrowing effort is successful, the efficiency and effectiveness of state funds will be enhanced.<sup>61</sup> Following from this conclusion, it is the first recommendation of this *Report* that

1. new measures/initiatives should be taken by SIDA, in conjunction with representatives of Swedish NGOs, which are aimed at improving the development impact of funds provided by the NGO Division to support the development initiatives of Swedish NGOs.

This raises the (next) question of precisely **how** the intended improvement in development impact (as viewed more broadly) can be brought about. The rest of this section discusses this both at the general level and in relation to more specific criteria.

There are two different, though complementary, approaches which could be adopted in order to try to enhance development impact. These could be termed the formal, and more informal, approaches. As noted earlier, the most effective way of enhancing development impact is for the Swedish NGOs themselves to examine what they do and work out themselves different methods and approaches in order to try to narrow these gaps themselves. In many ways, this is the best approach because it is likely to have the largest impact. Though it is not the role of this evaluation *Report* to make recommendations to Swedish NGOs, it is certainly hoped that the *Report* will provide these NGOs with data and information to help them to do this.

However, even this approach has its limitations because, for the majority of

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<sup>61</sup> It is important to bring this value judgement into the open, not only because a series of recommendations flow directly from it, but because it is possible to acknowledge the development impact gap but to conclude that no effort should be made to alter current practice. For instance, it could be argued either that the existence of this gap is "just one of those things", or that the costs of trying to alter current arrangements (perhaps in terms of bad will, or complexity) are simply not worth the effort. If SIDA were to accept this viewpoint (judgement), it would be distancing itself further from a growing consensus among other leading OECD donors that efforts should be made to enhance NGO development impact.

projects examined during the course of this evaluation, it was not Swedish NGOs which were implementing the projects assessed, but different types of local organisations. Thus, it is not only SIDA which faces the task of promoting development by proxy. Promoting development by proxy is a characteristic (limitation) of most 'Swedish' NGO projects funded with state funds and managed by SIDA's NGO Division.

### *Informal approaches: redoubling efforts*

What role should SIDA play, informally, in encouraging Swedish NGOs to focus on ways in which **they** should work to improve the effectiveness of their 'own' projects and programmes?<sup>62</sup> It is submitted that SIDA has an informal role to play, notably by facilitating and encouraging Swedish NGOs to undertake reviews and to expose themselves further to debates within and beyond Sweden about improving development impact.

But what is new in this? It is well known both that SIDA does already play this role, and that it has expanded activities in this area in recent years, as well as funding others. Yet, the evidence from across the case-studies indicates that whatever initiatives are being undertaken, there is clearly much work which **still** needs to be done. More specifically, it appears that there are particular gaps in the practices of (some) Swedish NGOs which the work SIDA does could promote in two more specific areas:

- awareness raising among, and encouragement of, Swedish NGOs about how to assess development impact and how to utilise the information gained to feed into current practice and decisions about the nature and patterns of future projects and programmes; and
- exposing Swedish NGOs to the processes of assessment and feedback being utilised by NGOs of other countries, in order to learn from them practical ways in which development impact can be improved.

In common with probably all other donor agencies, SIDA's links with NGOs receiving funds from the state has focused predominantly on the financing of the projects funded and methods of accounting for those funds. This has clearly been successful: the evidence gathered in this evaluation suggests that very few Swedish NGO projects have funded southern NGOs or projects in developing countries where money has "gone astray". What is required is not a loosening of current demands made in relation to accounting for the funds provided, but action to boost the status of development impact questions.

But here lies the heart of the difficulty. Whereas SIDA needs to convince the government's accountant, Riksrevisionsverket (RRV), that state funds have not gone astray, these accountants are not mandated to assess the far less tangible issue

<sup>62</sup> As just noted, in many instances, it is not their 'own' projects, but those of organisations located in recipient countries.

of development impact, even though they may well be interested in the issue. Indeed the ultimate aim is for the NGOs themselves to raise the status and priority of development impact within the rhythm of their own organisation. What SIDA needs to do is to work on ways of inculcating in those NGOs which still appear to lack it a sense that, in many ways, equal value should be placed on assessing the development impact of the work undertaken.

### *Formal ways of enhancing impact*

There are three distinct, though linked, contact points through which SIDA connects with Swedish NGOs in relation to their development projects and programmes to be funded by the state.<sup>63</sup>

These three contact points are the following:

1. When the initial decision is made either to accept or reject projects for funding by the state.
2. When monitoring, including financial monitoring, reports are submitted to SIDA, usually linked to the further draw-down of funds.
3. When final reports are submitted.

It is the view of the evaluators that the work informally of trying to improve impact could be complemented by a variety of initiatives focused explicitly on improving the SIDA-Swedish NGO interaction at each these three contact points.

In particular it is submitted that:<sup>64</sup>

1. in a number of respects, the current published *Guidelines* for Swedish NGOs are inadequate as a **guide** for NGOs in relation to pointing the criteria by which the state will fund their development projects. In many ways, they are imprecise and unclear and, in some places, they contradict other official documents. With improvement, they could play a stronger role in enhancing the development impact of NGO projects and programmes.<sup>65</sup>
2. As should be apparent from the previous discussion of informal approaches and the discussion in **Chapter 4**, there are major gaps and fundamental weaknesses in the manner in which monitoring and evaluation is carried out and the results fed back to the NGO sector. Further work is needed to improve monitoring and evaluation techniques and processes and to incorporate these better into the rhythm of NGO life.
3. The reporting requirements for Swedish NGOs in receipt of state funds for development are in many ways insufficient to inform parliament and the

<sup>63</sup> It is acknowledged that for many especially smaller NGOs, this contact is by proxy, through the respective framework organisation.

<sup>64</sup> The three points made here concern ways of improving impact of particular projects; broader issues of enhancing the overall efficiency and effectiveness of funds channelled to Swedish NGOs in a particular country are discussed in the next section of the chapter (5.3.).

<sup>65</sup> This point is discussed in greater depth in **Chapter 3**, above.

wider public about the impact of projects using these funds. There is scope for NGOs to provide the Swedish public with more information and data on the development impact of the projects and programmes they execute or promote with state funds.

It is the view of the evaluators that work in each of these areas should help to narrow the gap between development intention and development performance.

### **5.2.2 Changing procedures and guidelines to enhance development impact**

It is likely that one of the causes of the shortfall in wider development impact observed in the country case studies lies in ambiguity in the criteria under which Swedish NGOs receive funds for non-emergency projects from the NGO Division. The basic document in which (it could be expected that Swedish NGOs would find clearly laid out) the development criteria for accepting and rejecting project proposals is the one entitled *Guidelines for SIDA's support to the development programmes of Swedish NGOs*.

From the viewpoint of providing guidance to Swedish NGOs in order to enhance the development impact of the projects funded, it would appear that this document suffers from a number of deficiencies. In particular the *Guidelines* state that "SIDA's grants are given to support the development assistance or information programmes run by the organisations. *The responsibility for the programmes rests with the organisations*". However, the document notably fails to spell out the specific criteria upon which NGO Division funds can be given out, or to point which criteria are mandatory for NGOs and which are not.

More specifically,

- No mention is made in the *Guidelines* of any poverty criterion even though this is the fundamental basis upon which funds for this vote are allocated by parliament.
- The *Guidelines* draw attention to the goals of Swedish aid. Yet they do not indicate the importance and relevance of, or try to make a link between, these goals and specific project proposals. It is apparent from other official documents that some, though by no means all, these criteria are considered mandatory.
- The *Guidelines* implicitly refer to the question of project sustainability but only with reference to the less than precise comment that development projects funded are "expected to lead to permanent change for the people in the target group or for the activity supported by the project". This provides little to no specific guidance to project applicants, while other official documents state, quite explicitly, that all NGO projects funded by the state need be sustainable (see Section 3.4).

- The *Guidelines* try, in the confines of one, short, document, to address three different issues: technical issues related to development (which, as indicated, are scanty and superficial and do not provide much guidance); procedural issues about how to apply for funds; and both technical and procedural issues for NGOs applying for information grants.<sup>66</sup> In terms of column inches, far more is said about the nature of the Swedish NGO which qualifies for receiving funds than about the nature of the proposal which qualifies for funding.
- In a number of respects, the *Guidelines* give an inaccurate, or contradictory picture, or less than clear 'guidance' about the nature of the funding relationship. For instance, they lay down (on page 6) that funds should be channelled to a partner organisation in a developing country which should be a "local non profit-making NGO". But they then go on to state that funds need not be channelled to such an organisation "where it is considered more appropriate" to channel funds differently. Such comments provide little concrete guidance to NGO applicants of when one set of criteria are to apply and when others are to be applied.
- Confusion is compounded because, as discussed in **Chapter 3** (Section 3.3), a number of other documents and publications of SIDA, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and from parliament either state explicitly, or imply strongly, that criteria other than those specifically highlighted in the *Guidelines* should apply to Swedish NGOs in receipt of official aid funds used for development purposes.

It is because of these sorts of problems that this *Report's* second recommendation is made, namely that

2. **As a matter of some urgency, SIDA should initiate work aimed at producing clearer, in some instances more comprehensive, and, overall, more logically consistent *Guidelines* for Swedish NGOs wishing to apply to the NGO Division to support their own development initiatives. *Inter alia*, and minimally, any new *Guidelines* should specify clearly the status of different criteria, which funding applications will be assessed,<sup>67</sup> distinguishing between those which are mandatory and those which are not.**

It is submitted that any new *NGO Development Guidelines* should have the following characteristics:

<sup>66</sup> Development and information work are not, of course, entirely separate. However, it is submitted here that confusion will persist unless the distinct reasons for providing funds for development and for information work are spelt out, the outcome is likely to be confusing.

<sup>67</sup> The TOR for this evaluation does not require the evaluators to comment on the relative roles of the framework organisations and SIDA's NGO Division in processing applications and accepting/rejecting proposals for funding. However it is probably not out of place to note, in passing, that the evaluation did not uncover any reference to any significant problems in relation to the demarcation of responsibilities between SIDA and the different framework organisations.

- they should specify clearly what is required of Swedish NGOs wishing to receive state funds from this window in relation to principles and reporting requirements.
- They should clearly state the mandatory criteria upon which funds will or will not be granted, distinguishing these from other criteria. They should make clear the ways in which development projects and programmes funded by the NGO Division need to conform to the important stated principles of Swedish development cooperation.
- They should be relatively short and simple to understand, with the thought that the different parts of the current *Guidelines*, such as those focusing on criteria related to development projects and those focusing on criteria for informational grants, might be placed in different (shorter and more sharply focused) documents.

The following paragraphs discuss some of the main factors which, from the evidence accumulated during the evaluation, suggest should influence the substance of these new *NGO Development Guidelines*.

### ***Raising the profile of the poverty focus***

What are the core criteria upon which SIDA should provide funds to Swedish NGOs for their development projects? The current *Guidelines* do not guide the applicant in helping to answer this question. The core development criteria upon which funds are given to Swedish NGOs have been laid out by Parliament. Unless and until they change, those presently agreed are encapsulated thus:

the projects and programmes funded should **have the aim of improving the standards of living of the poor, and that improvement should in some senses be permanent.**

Thus, the new *NGO Development Guidelines* need to make explicit that this is the core criterion upon which development funds from the NGO Division will be provided. At present they make little to no explicit mention of the poverty criterion.

In what way does this emphasis on poverty and permanence constitute any change in current practice? As far as the evaluators can ascertain, the way that the *Guidelines* have been interpreted (and used) up to now indicates that assessment of applications in relation to the way they are intended enhance the lives of the poor, and in the attempt to make a permanent difference have not been a priority. Indeed, SIDA's guidelines are so general "that they are usually not regarded as a restriction by the organisations". This has been confirmed by evidence from the case studies which revealed the following: cases of projects assisting groups who were clearly far from poor; projects which had little to no intention of being sustainable; and, more generally, quite a larger group of projects where little attempt had been made either to ascertain the poverty status of the people being



assisted or the causes of their poverty. These points appeared to be confirmed by analyses being undertaken across at least some framework organisations. For instance, a recent report by BIFO notes that<sup>68</sup>

There is a need to identify and prioritise projects which are focused on improving the living standards of the poor in developing countries, through overseas development assistance.

The thrust of this particular recommendation would be to suggest that Swedish NGOs would need to justify their receipt of funds in terms of this mandatory poverty criterion. It is likely that such a focus would include a requirement for NGOs to specify which groups are to be assisted, and if it is not clear that these are poor at least they should be required to provide grounds for why they should be particularly deserving of Swedish development funds. It is additionally hoped that by focusing more explicitly on the poverty criterion those NGOs which currently have a rather one-dimensional project-specific perspective would be encouraged to begin looking beyond the narrow confines of the isolated project to its broader context – a point addressed directly in the discussion of Recommendations 6 and 7, below.

More practically, this suggestion implies that Swedish NGOs applying for funds will not only be required to state the specific objectives of the project/programme in question (as they are required to do at present), but they would need to satisfy the framework organisation, and through it SIDA, that they have made an effort seriously to confront the core poverty/permanence criterion required for receipt of **all** Swedish development cooperation funds.<sup>69</sup>

### *Specifying other core criteria*

The current *Guidelines* state that “(t)he overall goals of SIDA’s grants to the development programmes of NGOs are the same as for all Swedish development cooperation: economic growth; economic and social equality; democratic development; economic and political independence; sustainable use of natural resources and protection of the environment.” Relatedly, various SIDA/Swedish

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<sup>68</sup> See BIFO “A Checklist for Measuring The Performance of Development Projects: A Method Adopted by BIFO to Promote an Evaluation System”, September 1994 (mimeo), page 1.

<sup>69</sup> It might be argued that the poverty/permanence issue is squarely addressed in the five-page application form which Swedish NGOs have to fill in for each project they wish SIDA to fund. For instance, Question 4 “Target Group” requires NGOs to specify the people or groups which will be affected by the project, and how weak/poor people will be affected. And Question 10 “Plan For Local Takeover” requires NGOs to describe how the phasing out of the project will take place. For the vast majority of projects, the evaluators did not review these completed forms – one drawback was that the evaluators are not fluent in Swedish.

However, the project-based evidence gathered in this evaluation suggests that for a high proportion of the projects reviewed: these questions were not sufficiently answered by the NGOs in question; they were answered correctly but disregarded when the applications were processed; or, they were answered correctly but largely ignored on execution of the projects.

Whatever the reason, the evaluation evidence suggests that the poverty/permanence criterion is not adequately addressed at present. It is submitted that the poverty/permanence criterion will be more adequately addressed by implementing the proposal to draw up more detailed project guidelines.

Government publications have drawn attention to specific criteria with which, it is intimated, **all** NGOs in receipt of SIDA development-focused funds need to comply. The main ones relate to gender, the environment, democracy (and human rights), and sustainability.

What is not clear from the present *Guidelines* is the status and practical importance to be attached to these different criteria. In precisely what manner should the various specified goals of Swedish development cooperation influence and shape the types of development projects and programmes which SIDA is willing to fund through the NGO Division?

The first part of an answer is that the *NGO Development Guidelines* need to make a clear distinction between general goals and norms and more specific criteria which, like the poverty/permanence criterion discussed above, are clearly meant to be more binding in their application.

It is submitted that the complete list of "overall goals" currently reproduced in the *Guidelines* are **not** to be grouped among the mandatory criteria upon which the granting of funds stand or fall. The point being made here is not that these goals are unimportant – they clearly are important to the overall thrust and orientation of Swedish development cooperation. Rather, it is argued that it is not a requirement for any individual project to conform to any particular one of these goals. This point is not one being made here 'out of the blue'. It is made here to because this would appear to reflect current official thinking. Thus in the publication *Evaluation Manual for SIDA* it is stated that (1994: 45) "*Each individual development assistance input does not have to fulfil all five goals...*". If such a liberal view is taken for official development projects, it ought to apply with even grater force to projects funded outside the official aid programme. The implication for Swedish NGO projects funded by SIDA is that these goals should be treated in the proposed *NGO Development Guidelines* more in the form of things "to note" rather than as binding criteria which require specific action, or a specific response. The *Guidelines* need to make this distinction clear: at present they do not.

On the other hand, it appears from reading a range of SIDA and other official documents that the thrust of current Swedish aid policy treats the issues of gender, the environment, democracy (including civil society) and sustainability quite explicitly as core, or all-embracing, factors against which **all** project and programmes submitted for funding by Swedish NGOs should be assessed. Thus, unless, and until policymakers change the rules, it would appear that each of **these** four areas do need to be considered by SIDA (and through it by the framework organisations) when processing applications for development funds.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>70</sup> The reader may note an apparent contradiction here because a number of the goals of Swedish aid, such as the focus on the environment, which, it has just been argued, are not to be considered mandatory, are also included in the mandatory list. The answer would appear to lie in treating as mandatory only those criteria which have specifically been singled out as mandatory. To the extent that there is overlap between this list and the list of goals, then those specific goals should indeed be treated as mandatory.

There are two issues which need to be addressed here. The first is whether **all** NGO projects ought to contain gender, environmental, and democracy and human rights components and be sustainable. The second is precisely how each project can be assessed against each of these four criteria.

In relation to the first issue, the point being made here is **not** that all projects ought to contain these four characteristics. But that all projects need to be assessed against these four characteristics. The main practical implication is that if an NGO project is submitted for funding which, say, does not contain an explicit gender or environmental component then it **would be a requirement for the NGO to explain why such a component is considered, in these particular circumstances, to be irrelevant.**

In theory, this sounds quite easy to implement. In practice, however, it is likely to be more difficult. This is because the project evidence showed that there is often a gulf between agreeing that, say, gender or the environment are important, and thinking through ways in which gender bias or environmental degradation might be corrected. Indeed, the evidence from the projects examined showed that a very high proportion of projects either failed to grasp the importance of gender and the environment or treated the issues extremely superficially.

What this suggests is that what is needed in the *NGO Guidelines* is a procedure which at the same time alerts NGOs to the **requirement** to focus on each of these different core issues, helps deepen awareness of the sorts of factors which need to be incorporated in a gender, environmental and democracy and human rights assessment, but which, by the same token, does not attempt to mould projects within an (unworkable and unnecessary) straight-jacket.

One way in which this tension might be resolved would be for the new *NGO Development Guidelines* to stipulate that each NGO has to address each of these issue by requiring them to answer a specific question on each item in the application form, explaining either how it will address the issue in question or why it is not considered relevant. Such a requirement would both raise the status of these core issues, and address the need for NGOs to explain how their particular project intends to tackle each in turn. They might also be asked (in time) to address how potential tension between how working to achieve these individual objectives might be recognised, and, hopefully, resolved.

Additionally, it is recommended that the *NGO Development Guidelines* include new, specific, sections devoted to each of these core items. These sections would begin to spell out the sorts of questions which need to be addressed in relation to these different issues, providing, in effect a check-list of questions for NGOs to review. This would serve a dual purpose of providing some context and focus to new questions on the project application form, and alerting NGOs to the core underlying issues which help to explain why they are considered so important. If NGOs are convinced that in their particular case, the issues of, say, the environment, has no practical relevance to the project and programme they intend to promote or execute, then they would have the space to explain their views.

This leads on to the next question: how should the new *NGO Development Guidelines* be drawn up from this check-list of questions? The project assessments for this evaluation provided considerable evidence to suggest that there is a fairly shallow/superficial understanding of the importance, influence, impact and implications of especially gender and environmental assessments across a number of NGOs and within a high proportion of NGO projects funded by the NGO Division – as well as some wide-ranging problems in relation to sustainability. In some cases, outcomes which were anticipated did not occur, in others unexpected outcomes were occurring, sometimes reinforcing adverse effects on gender or the environment. Even if these issues did not have the high profile which SIDA and the Swedish Parliament have given them, such evidence suggests quite forcefully that action should be taken to ensure, minimally, that the worst effects do not continually recur.

A particular problem arises in relation to the issue of sustainability – one of the cluster of four factors which, it is argued, against which **all** NGO projects and programmes presented to SIDA for funding need to be assessed. The problem here is not about the importance of sustainability but about precisely how projects should be judged in relation to sustainability.

Both the evidence from this evaluation and from other donor impact assessments, raise serious questions about the way that the notion of sustainability is currently applied to NGOs and NGO projects. As a result, the discussion of sustainability at the end of **Chapter 3** tentatively put forward a **new** definition of sustainability for SIDA's NGO work – more, it should be added, as a basis for further debate and discussion than as anything like the “final word” on the matter.

This attempted to hold in tension at least two key ideas.<sup>71</sup> The first is to require all NGO projects to focus explicitly on the issue of sustainability. The second, in particular and clearly specified circumstances, is to permit projects to be accepted for funding which are not likely to be financially sustainable. In other words, a distinction should be allowed between requiring all NGOs to address the issue of sustainability, and requiring **all** NGO projects to be financially sustainable within a given period of time. This distinction is being made because of evidence which indicates that there is (often) likely to be a tension between meeting the needs of the poor, by providing a service of a quality high enough to ensure that the particular need will continue to be met, and being able to achieve financial sustainability through requiring the poor to pay the full financial cost of maintaining that service. In such circumstances, it is argued, meeting the core human need should take precedence over working to achieve financial sustainability.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> The discussion in these paragraphs is focused mostly on financial sustainability. Yet, as noted in **Chapter 3**, issues related to institutional and environmental sustainability also need to be incorporated into any comprehensive attempt to review projects in relation to their sustainability.

<sup>72</sup> Of course, this does not mean that donors should not try to work out different (and perhaps different) ways in which continued subsidies might be financed.

While this evaluation **Report** has been able to pinpoint the problems of the projects assessed in relation to these core issues, it has not had time (nor has it been specifically asked) to work out precisely the specific questions and issues related to how each of these core issues should be presented in the new *NGO Development Guidelines* – even if the discussion on sustainability and the working definitions given should assist the process.

As a result it is recommended that

3. Consistent with broader Swedish aid policies, the four issues of gender, the environment, democracy and sustainability should be listed in the *NGO Development Guidelines* as core criteria against which all development projects and programme applications submitted to the NGO Division are to be assessed.

As a result, it is proposed that the application forms which all Swedish NGOs have to complete to apply for funds for non-emergency projects should require all NGOs to address each of these issues, notably by stating either how the issue will be addressed, or why it is not considered relevant.

Relatedly, it is proposed that the *NGO Development Guidelines* be expanded to contain specific sections which provide a check-list of the underlying issues to be addressed in relation to each of these criteria, or, alternatively, that these check-lists be prepared as separate supplements to the *Guidelines*.

It is recognised that these four check-lists need to be drawn up and finalised by the NGO Division. However, it is proposed that the substantive work in drawing them up be undertaken with the full cooperation of representatives of Swedish NGOs, including those with specialised knowledge in each of these areas, and, if deemed desirable by them, with non-Swedish NGOs. It is proposed that this input is pooled with the expertise of the relevant specialised divisions in SIDA, and other relevant expertise.

**Though it is to be hoped that at least the first draft of these check-lists would soon be available, delays in their production should not preclude NGOs from being required to answer questions about these four core criteria on the application forms they have to fill in to apply for development grants.**

### ***Other issues of relevance to project/programme impact***

The individual project assessments highlighted a range of other issues beyond these core and fundamental criteria which directly or indirectly effect development impact, many of which relate to other questions posed in the TOR for this evaluation. *Inter alia*, these include: the time-frame for NGO projects and programmes; the beginning and end of a project; the link between discrete projects, other initiatives of the local organisation being funded/assisted, and the role of other donors; the role of Swedish technical assistance; and the monitoring and evaluation of Swedish NGO projects and programmes.

What follows here is a brief summary of some of the points raised in the evaluation which SIDA and the NGOs together need to ponder, precisely because they touch on issues of development effectiveness.

**PROJECT/PROGRAMME TIME FRAME** On the one hand, NGO Division funds for development are usually provided for a maximum period of three years, with funds drawn down on an annual basis on submission/acceptance of previous years' accounts. On the other hand, the NGO Division and the NGOs know full well that projects can and do last for longer than this. The result is that in practice the time-period requirement is far more flexible in practice than it would appear to be in theory.

The evaluation suggests that SIDA needs to encourage NGOs to hold in tension two attitudes to projects and programmes. On the one hand, NGOs need to be encouraged to focus on the issue of sustainability right from the outset. On the other, they need to be assured that (alternative) funds could be made available both for quite long periods, where there is a good chance that financial sustainability can be achieved, and "semi-permanently" when basic goods to the poor are being provided and the cessation of funds would halt or severely disrupt the provision of these services. What this suggests is that SIDA and the NGOs should seek continually to deepen the debate of project time-periods to address these core issues, perhaps by considering eliminating the current, and widely ignored, three year time-frame.

**BENEFICIARY PARTICIPATION** One of the earliest insights into the strengths of NGO development interventions was that the development impact of a wide variety of interventions is enhanced through the direct involvement of the beneficiaries in the project at different stages of the project cycle: from the earliest planning stages, to ensure that what was being proposed was in line with the priorities of the target group, right through to project completion, to ensure continuity and sustainability. Indeed so important have been these particular insights that it has become increasingly common for official aid agencies to propose various form of beneficiary participation in a wide range of official aid projects.<sup>73</sup>

The evidence from the case study countries tended to confirm a positive link between project impact and participation.

In general, however, the Swedish projects examined here did not appear to be

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<sup>73</sup> Thus, as argued in Riddell, R.C. and Bebbington, A.J. (1995) *Developing Country NGOs and Donor Governments: Report to the Overseas Development Administration*, London, London: ODA:

*The participation of people in the development process and the strengthening of poor groups in civil society are no longer seen as extras, or as add-ons, to official donors' agendas. Through the 1980s, World Bank project completion reports have highlighted the nature of institutions and beneficiary participation as critical factors which profoundly influence impact and sustainability of donor programmes, while into the 1990s more and more donors have accepted the need for civil society to be nurtured as a necessary component of their aid programmes. Increasingly, official aid programmes are including the objectives of strengthening the poor and expanding their participation as constituent parts of the process of development as well as ends to be achieved.*

particularly strong in regard to involvement of the beneficiaries. One of the most common forms of participation was manual labour, the least common form was involvement in decision-making and activities to enhance the feeling of project ownership. But all too often, projects tended to consist of external organisations doing things: commonly providing services for people in a very top-down manner. The 37 Swedish NGO projects examined did also include a few where the primary stakeholders have participated and been significantly empowered by the projects.

SIDA and the NGOs need to focus on this area and discuss implications for current procedures. This *Report* can at least pose a question. One specific question which could be addressed would be the merit (and problem) of raising the issue of beneficiary participation to be specifically included in the check-list of factors which NGOs ought to be required to address. As with the issue of environment, however, it is not being suggested that the NGO development projects funded by the NGO Division should be required to include a participatory component to their projects. Rather, it is suggested that they might be asked how this issue will be addressed in their particular project, and if it is not being addressed to explain why.

**PART-FUNDING OF LARGER PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES** The evidence gathered during this evaluation indicated that in a number of cases SIDA was funding only part of a particular programme, and/or was funding a local organisation which was also receiving funds from other sources, usually from other donors. Some of these donors are themselves NGOs, some are agents of official donors, and some forms of funding are a complex mixture of different funding sources.

The current application form requires Swedish NGOs applying for funds to specify "other funding". However, it would appear that this is not commonly understood to embrace other non-Swedish funders of the same or other projects, still less other funders of the local organisation which is implementing the particular project funded, and there is very little space on the application form into which to insert all the relevant information.

It is proposed that SIDA and the NGOs discuss these linked issues of other funders in light of the findings of this evaluation. Minimally, it is suggested that NGOs should be required to provide information on other donor funds going to the same project, and other donor funds going to the same organisation. Without this information, it is very difficult for either SIDA or the Swedish NGOs to ensure that double funding of projects and local NGOs does not take place.

**SWEDISH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE** This evaluation looked at Swedish technical assistance as only one of nine broader issues against which it assessed development impact. As it was not possible to devote much time to these matters, the first point to be stressed here is that while the evaluation may have provided some evidence to raise some questions about volunteers and technical assistance there is certainly insufficient information with which to derive firm policy guidelines.

The case studies pay tribute to the talents and contributions made by the Swedish volunteers met: the vast majority are doing excellent work and are appreciated by the communities with whom they work. However, in terms of development impact the following four points were made. These need to be the subject of further study and/or discussion between SIDA and the relevant Swedish NGOs/framework organisations:

- some Swedes appear to have stayed “too long”. Their presence seems to have affected adversely the goal of local NGO/local project sustainability.
- In some cases, Swedes were requested not so much because they provided a unique talent which was unavailable in the country, but for a mix of other motives. These included cheap labour and the desire to strengthen ties with Sweden in order to help guarantee the future of flow of project funds.
- Assessment of technical assistance requirements usually failed to examine the broader context and especially alternative modes of assisting. It is often important to ask whether Swedish technical assistance could be used more effectively, for instance in a government-linked programme.
- The evidence suggests that more efficient placements will be made if the sending organisation has an in-country presence. Placement at a distance runs a high risk of encouraging a more costly placement.

### 5.2.3 Monitoring and evaluation

The comment was made above (Section 5.2.1.) that further work was needed to improve monitoring and evaluation techniques and processes on an informal basis, and to incorporate these better into the rhythm of NGO life. This issue is addressed more explicitly here.

The TOR for this evaluation give as one reason for carrying out this exercise the fact that no comprehensive development assessment of NGO projects funded by SIDA has been carried out for some 10 years. A potential danger arising from this particular evaluation is that it could be seen as **all** that is necessary for a **further** 10 years.

Very few Swedish NGOs appear to have developed, and internalised, comprehensive evaluation and monitoring systems. It is thus the strong view of the evaluation team that this particular evaluation should be considered more as something for SIDA and the NGOs to build upon, and not as a substitute for monitoring and evaluation as an everyday practice.

Before changes in current practice are discussed, it is of significance to note that SIDA already makes funds available to NGOs for pre-project assessment, monitoring and evaluation work. This practice puts SIDA ahead of many other official donors. However, the evaluation evidence pinpointed a range of quite widespread weaknesses in the area of monitoring and evaluation, though, it should be stressed,



these weaknesses do not apply equally to all Swedish NGOs and framework organisations. Thus

- while the monitoring of projects is becoming an increasingly prominent activity, it is not yet universal. In addition, it appears often that monitoring takes place more because of the urgings of SIDA than because of an internally-motivated desire continually to assess development performance and progress. Relatedly, it often tends to be focused more on financial than development analysis. Only rarely does monitoring feed back to decision-making processes within different NGOs and framework organisations, and make a difference to the next cycle of projects processed and put up for funding.
- Pre-project reviews and assessments are growing in number. However, they are far from universal, and often appear to be rather narrowly focused. Also, as pointed out in **Chapter 4**, beneficiary participation was usually notable by its absence.
- Evaluations are increasing in numbers and in their depth of analysis. Like monitoring experience, however, there is less evidence of the lessons and insights of evaluation filtering through to NGOs and being incorporated into future project decisions and understanding of development. Evaluations by people outside the immediate staff or membership of the NGO in question is still a rarity.

The core challenge is to work on creating an awareness among NGOs of the importance of the whole package of monitoring and evaluation for **themselves**, and to feed this back into their work in order to enhance development impact. There are clearly limits to what SIDA can do in this regard: though it can fund initiatives, it can only help by proxy.

The authors of this *Report* have not had sufficient time to be able to make firm and explicit recommendations. What they can do is to make a few suggestions, based largely on examples from other donor countries, of initiatives and ideas which appear to have proved helpful in pursuing what has been termed here the "core challenge". They include the following points, which could form the basis of further discussion between SIDA and Swedish NGOs.

- Donors trying to assist monitoring and evaluation among NGOs need consciously to have before them two inter-related goals, and seek to work out methods and approaches to address each of them. On the one hand, they should continue to encourage individual NGOs to increase their own capacity to undertake pre-project assessments, monitoring and evaluation exercises: by providing funds for such purposes etc. On the other hand, they should promote an internalisation of these processes within and across the NGO world, in order to enhance the development impact of their own projects and programmes.

- It is recognised internationally that there are still major gaps in knowledge of both how NGOs should undertake monitoring and evaluation and how they could put the data and information to use to enhance development impact. To make further advances in this field, SIDA might consider promoting two approaches to “best practice”. One would be to continue funding the broadcasting of ideas within Sweden – by providing resources for those Swedish NGOs with most expertise to explain and share their approaches to other Swedish NGOs. The other would be for SIDA to allocate additional funds and resources for international networking among especially northern NGOs in order for Swedish NGOs to be kept abreast of developments and insights in other donor countries. This might entail Swedish NGOs travelling to other donor countries and learning what other northern NGOs are doing in this field, or it might involve extending invitations to international NGOs to visit Sweden to explain their own procedures. The entry of Sweden into the European Union (EU) will provide additional opportunities for Swedish NGOs to interact with other EU NGOs on these issues.<sup>74</sup>
- Some donors, like the British ODA, have undertaken a series of joint evaluations by NGO personnel and staff of the official aid agencies. SIDA should obtain feedback from other official aid agencies of these joint evaluations to help assess whether it might be useful to mount similar exercises of SIDA-funded Swedish NGO development projects. Relatedly, it might consider setting up a joint SIDA/NGO evaluation working group which, *inter alia*, might identify gaps, assist the expansion of ideas and monitor international developments.

#### **5.2.4 Enhancing transparency and public accountability**

Here we consider the third type of initiative aimed at enhancing the development impact of what NGOs do, namely encouraging transparency and public accountability.

The recommendation which follows is based on the following points/observations.

- In the financial year 1994/95, Parliament voted some SEK 1 bn to NGOs, most of which goes to Swedish NGOs to fund their development projects. In the 1994/95 budget, this constituted seven percent of total development assistance, 16 percent of bilateral aid through SIDA, and two and a half times the funds allocated to SAREC. Yet, the only formal way in which the general public is informed about the use to which these funds are put is through

<sup>74</sup> In the first quarter of 1995, the British ODA were in discussion with British NGOs to draw up a study to provide them with guidance about how best to undertake cost-benefit analysis of NGO projects, bearing in mind, especially, the particular nature of many NGO projects which make traditional cost-benefit analyses an inappropriate technique to use.

reading just over two pages of SIDA's annual report, most of which does not discuss development impact.<sup>75</sup> There is effectively no way that the public can obtain information about the development impact of the funds allocated beyond that provided in the normal course of events by the NGOs themselves.

- It is usual for Swedish NGOs to produce annual reports of their activities. These, however, are directed at their membership, and the content of such reports goes well beyond the projects and programmes funded by Parliament. Because, these are the annual reports of the different voluntary associations, the Government cannot determine the content of such reports, nor would it wish to do so. There appears to be no platform, besides the SIDA annual report, for the different NGOs to inform the **wider (voting) public** of the use to which the funds the Government provides is put.

### *Extending and deepening public knowledge of NGO development work*<sup>76</sup>

I would appear that at some stage it should be deemed appropriate for the public to receive more information than it receives at present about the use to which these funds have been put and are being put. Such a suggestion is supported by recent public opinion surveys which indicate that Swedish people increasingly want to know how effective is the aid provided.<sup>77</sup> Discussion with some NGOs and framework organisations confirmed not only that there was a gap at present, but that there would be little resistance, indeed some support, for the idea that NGOs in receipt of state funds for development ought to provide data and information to the public about the performance of the activities funded in a more structured form than occurs at the present time.

In view of these considerations, it is recommended that

4. Consideration be given to the compilation and production of an *annual report* to the Swedish public (presented annually at the time of the parliamentary vote) which provides data, information and evidence of the development impact of projects and programmes of Swedish NGOs which have been in receipt of state funds. It is suggested that this annual report be compiled by representatives of those NGOs/framework organisations in receipt of such funds, and that this report be funded by the annual budget to NGOs.

<sup>75</sup> SIDA Årsredovisning 1993/94 "Bistånd genom enskilda organisationer", pages 123 to 125. In the second half of 1994, SIDA produced a publication *From Kiruna to Kitale: SIDA's development assistance via Swedish popular movements and non-governmental organisations*. This covered a wide number of issues concerning support to Swedish NGOs, and only minimally addressed the issue of development impact of three or four framework organisations.

<sup>76</sup> The TOR did not require this Report to focus on information work of NGOs. The points made here consider the role of information, and the feedback received from the information, as a tool to help to enhance development impact.

<sup>77</sup> See SIDA *Attitudes to Swedish Development Cooperation*, Stockholm: SIDA Information Secretariat, 1994.

The purpose of this annual report would not be so much to provide complex details on a case-by-case basis of all the different (2,000) projects and programmes funded. Rather, its purpose would be to provide Parliament, and through Parliament, the general public, with a broader assessment of the types of work which are being funded, and the impact and effect they are having. However, it would be expected that such an annual report would illustrate general trends with specific examples.

At this stage, it would be premature to specify in greater detail what the content of such an annual report/publication would be, or its length. In time, it is anticipated that the response (from parliamentarians and from the general public) to each annual report, as it is produced, would play a critical role in influencing the sorts of issues which would be addressed in forthcoming reports, and the sorts of questions to which the public would wish to seek answers.<sup>78</sup>

There are two ideas underlying this particular recommendation. The first is to encourage the spread of information and to increase understanding across the wider public. Additionally, however, it is hoped that the provision of such data and information might itself act as a means of deepening debate still further about the role of NGOs in enhancing development.

Enhancing development impact and the level of funds SIDA allocates to Swedish NGOs: the size of the budget

In the world of NGO projects, as elsewhere, there is a widespread assumption that more funds provided will lead to greater, or at least more extensive development impact. This assumption has probably been a major force driving the expansion of public funds provided to Swedish NGOs for development (see **Chapter 2**).

The purpose of this section is not so much to draw firm conclusions about what the level of funds should be, but more to contribute to that important wider debate with some ideas that come directly from this particular evaluation.

In general, if funds are freely available to Swedish NGOs to finance their different development initiatives, and if few projects are turned down, it is more likely that there will be a lower level of quality control than if funds were tighter, and SIDA and the framework organisation were able to be more discriminating and selective in terms of which projects and programme to fund and which to turn down.

It would appear that in practice this general proposition does have some basis in the Swedish context. For instance, the analysis in **Chapter 2** indicates that over the past five years, Parliament has voted consistently more funds to Swedish NGOs

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<sup>78</sup> As mentioned already in this Report, the specific focus of the recommendations is to enhance development impact. If this recommendation is taken up, it may well be that such an annual report might be used to inform the general voting public about other aspects of Swedish NGO work funded by the state.

than have been disbursed.<sup>79</sup> Relatedly, a number of SIDA officials and almost all staff of the framework organisations with whom this question was raised said that they believed that SIDA was currently giving too much money to Swedish NGO initiatives funded through the NGO Division. This comment would appear to be based mainly on the capacity of the different organisations involved to handle the expanded throughput of funds. When large quantities of money are available, and few potential projects are turned down, there is evidently less pressure to discern the quality of projects put forward for funding, and to select the better projects.

There is a link between this quality point and the evidence gathered in some of the projects visited during the course of the evaluation. In not a few cases, the evaluators were told that the issue of sustainability would only be addressed seriously by the NGOs executing the projects when they genuinely thought that SIDA and the Swedish NGOs were going to stop sending funds to support them.

The purpose of making these comments is not to conclude that the funds SIDA makes available to Swedish NGOs should be cut. Such conclusions would require far more data and information than has been available to those writing this particular *Report*. The main point is that it can often be too simplistic to assume automatically that giving NGOs more money will **in itself, directly and necessarily** lead to an improvement in the lives of the poor.

### 5.3 ENHANCING DEVELOPMENT IMPACT:

#### *Strategic Thinking about the Broader Role of Swedish NGOs*

The country case-studies in each case enabled the evaluation teams to locate the individual projects examined within the context of broader development issues, within the context of the wider role of the NGO development effort, and, where applicable, of broader Swedish aid initiatives.

One of the prime characteristics of the way in which SIDA's NGO Division relates to Swedish NGOs in funding their development initiatives is its **passivity**. The proposals and recommendations made in the previous section would leave the basic procedures largely untouched: SIDA would still remain predominantly a passive partner, whose role would continue to lie in merely accepting or rejecting projects submitted to it for funding.

The country case studies drew attention to a range of ways in which this system, at best, limits the potential development impact of the funds it has at its disposal for development work, and, at worst, creates or exacerbates inefficiencies which in practice reduce actual development impact.

<sup>79</sup> One needs to be cautious in assuming that this implies that all Swedish NGO development projects put forward for funding are automatically provided with state funds. This is incorrect. In the case of BIFO, for instance, about 350 separate applications are received each year from NGOs for projects valued at around SEK 350 mn. However the BIFO funding window only receives about SEK 100 mn each year. See BIFO "A Checklist for Measuring The Performance of Development Projects: A Method Adopted by BIFO to Promote an Evaluation System", September 1994 (mimeo).

### 5.3.1 Enhancing information-exchange

A major cause of reduced development impact, to which all four country case studies draw attention, is inefficiency in the spending of state funds caused by a lack of information exchanged within SIDA, and between SIDA and the NGOs, on the development initiatives funded by the NGO Division and other development initiatives funded by SIDA.

There is no attempt systematically to exchange information between Swedish NGO initiatives funded by the NGO Division in Stockholm and initiatives funded through other windows, whether they form part of the bilateral aid programme or whether the funds are used more directly to strengthen the local NGO sector. In many instances, that there is a high degree of mutual ignorance within SIDA of what different parts of SIDA are doing in the projects and programmes they individually fund relating to NGOs. Likewise there is, in many instances, a high degree of mutual ignorance among Swedish NGOs of what initiatives SIDA is funding.

It is argued both explicitly and implicitly in the country case-studies, that the present lack of systematic information-exchange within SIDA, and between SIDA and the different NGOs with which SIDA interacts, can and does have an adverse effect on the development impact of state funds. While sometimes, this can involve double-funding, if not of specific projects then of local organisations, the more over-arching concern is that, repeatedly, opportunities of mutual learning and more efficient project delivery are lost. Thus

- The DCO offices in-country are often not aware of the range and extent of projects funded in-country by the NGO Division. Likewise, the NGO Division is often not aware of the array of different NGO projects funded by other parts of SIDA.
- The evaluators were told of instances where DCO offices had reviewed and turned down projects of local NGOs only to find later that the local NGO had gone to a Swedish NGO and succeeded in funding the same project through a Swedish NGO.
- It has been discovered on occasions that one part of SIDA sometimes funds one NGO and that another part of SIDA funds the same NGO without either part of SIDA knowing about the project funded by the other. In some cases, SAREC has constituted a third funding source to the same local NGO.
- The NGO Division sometimes funds projects in sectors or areas in which, in particular countries, the bilateral programme is actively involved. Failure to know about these activities and share experience means that it is highly likely that what is known and learnt about development in one area is not transferred to the other, to the potential development loss of both initiatives. As a result of these real and potential losses, it is recommended that

5. SIDA should place high priority on introducing a procedure for exchanging information within SIDA and between SIDA and the relevant Swedish NGOs about all aid it provides to particular countries.

As noted earlier in the chapter, this evaluation has not been asked to address, and resolve, questions of how the SIDA bureaucracy should function. Nonetheless, it is apparent that if this particular recommendation is followed through it will have implications for current practice. The country case-study evidence would suggest that the following points should be considered in working out precisely how information exchange should take place, and what should happen in those, hopefully rare, cases where double funding of the same initiative is discovered.

- Information exchange within SIDA at the country level ought to include all NGO activities funded by SIDA. In countries where SIDA staff are resident it would appear rational for the person responsible for aid coordination in terms of the official country programme to have her/his responsibility extended to include reviewing all information related to all NGO activities funded by SIDA.
- The tasks involved should minimally include reviewing all projects and programmes forwarded to SIDA by the different framework organisations, and to alert SIDA to the possibility of either double funding or duplication of other initiatives funded by SIDA.
- In those specific cases where proposals from a Swedish NGO would clearly lead to the double funding of a project which SIDA, or another donor, is also financing, the in-country representative would pass this information to the NGO Division. In its turn, the NGO Division would have the power to refuse funds for such Swedish NGO projects.
- More generally, it is proposed that the role of information-exchange would include the exchange of information between different parts of SIDA and different Swedish NGOs about projects and programmes in areas or sectors where both SIDA and Swedish NGOs have a direct involvement. The immediate purpose would be to ensure that the development experience of each can be mutually shared. In time, it would be anticipated that this might lead more tangibly to more substantive forms of cooperation on the ground.
- The country studies also revealed that there is often considerable ignorance of the work of those involved in NGO activities and those involved in official aid projects. As a result, it seems that information exchange could be extended to encouraging personal interaction across this divide within different developing countries. The country case-study evidence indicates that there are often real professional gains to be made by formalising this interaction.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> These sorts of ideas are likely to require additional human resources to implement them. As noted above, the team was asked specifically not to address and discuss these bureaucratic issues.

### 5.3.2 Reaping additional benefits from Swedish NGOs

A fundamental principle in allocating development funds through the NGO Division is that they are provided by initiatives proposed by the Swedish NGOs themselves. There are other windows through which SIDA provides funds for NGOs to cooperate and work with projects originating in SIDA's and not the NGO's agenda. This section of the *Report* is also framed on the assumption that this basic method of proceeding will remain intact.

Within this context, the discussion here focuses on the notion of SIDA extending its current role, in particular circumstances, beyond merely an information-exchange function, to stimulating Swedish NGOs to play a more active role in influencing (and narrowing) the type of initiative to which SIDA funds should be channelled. The purpose is aimed at enhancing further the development impact of the funds SIDA provides to Swedish NGOs.

At present, funds channelled to and through Swedish NGOs are used to fund discrete initiatives on a project-by-project basis. Thus the funds are not only NGO-driven, they are also project-driven.

Until recently, the funds allocated were relatively small. However increasingly over the past few years, they have grown and are now large in absolute terms as well as being a significant share of the total Swedish development cooperation budget. For particular countries, the share of SIDA funds going to Swedish NGOs for development projects and programmes can amount to 10 to 15 percent or more. Indeed, in aggregate in not a few countries, the total funds channelled to NGOs are now often larger than the funds SIDA provides for specific sectoral programmes.

In spite of these large amounts of money provided by the state, it appears extremely common for the development impact of state funds channelled to NGOs to be downgraded, and, not infrequently, totally ignored, when assessments are made of the impact of Swedish development assistance. For instance, a 1994 evaluation report on Swedish development cooperation in Namibia made no mention of the impact of projects and programmes of Swedish NGOs, though they amounted to SEK 10.4 mn, nearly eight percent of total SIDA aid in 1992/93. Likewise, a 1994 evaluation report of "Swedish development cooperation in Tanzania" notes that some SEK 42 mn worth of SIDA funds has gone to NGOs, over eight percent of total SIDA funds, yet no attempt is made to assess the development impact of these funds. A third example would be the 1994 evaluation report of "Swedish development cooperation with Nicaragua". This notes that between 1979 and 1993, SEK 172 mn (at 1985 prices) has gone to NGO work but in the chapters which examine "the most important projects and programs funded by Swedish



aid", no mention is made of NGOs, even though smaller programmes are the subject of separate assessment.<sup>81</sup>

The broad development impact of the funds SIDA provides through and to NGOs is likely to be enhanced **considerably** not merely by exchanging information about the different parts of SIDA funding operations (discussed above), but by placing these different initiatives within a particular focus, based on the development needs and potential of the particular country in which SIDA funds are channelled.

But perhaps the most worrying aspect of the current approach to funding Swedish NGO initiatives lies **in its failure to assess the merits of NGOs and NGO development initiatives in any strategic way, most notably beyond the discrete projects funded.** Thus, there is no requirement either to understand the process which causes NGOs to put up projects for funding, or to step back and ask whether increasing amounts of money being funnelled to a particular country on the basis of frequently small and usually unlinked projects is the best way for the Swedish Government to help the contribution which the NGO movement in a particular country can make to development.

**Chapter 4** highlighted the growing importance, status and influence of structural adjustment programmes in all four of the case-study countries. It noted that one effect of these SAPs has been for governments to lean more and more heavily on NGOs. A direct result of these pressures has been for governments to ask NGOs either to take over the running of schools and hospitals they might previously have handed over to the state, or to take on the running, administration and financing of completely new delivery services. The result is that individual NGOs are now being approached with greater frequency, most often on a single project-by-project basis, most especially to take over the running and funding of a range of basic services.

From the point of view of the poor who need to be helped, there are sound reasons why NGOs **should** take on such projects, and thus sound reasons why SIDA should fund Swedish NGOs wishing to support local NGOs who have been asked to meet such local needs. This is not in dispute.

Over time, however, one can easily foresee a situation developing where more

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<sup>81</sup> C. Adam et al *Evaluation of Swedish Development Cooperation with Tanzania: a Report for the Secretariat for Analysis of Swedish Development Assistance*, Stockholm: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Secretariat for Analysis of Swedish Development Assistance (SASDA), DS 1994: 113, August 1994; B. Odén et al *Namibia and External Resources: The Case of Swedish Development Assistance*, Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Research Report No. 96, 1994; J. Behar and M. Lundahl *Now's The Time: An Evaluation of Swedish Development Cooperation with Nicaragua*, Stockholm: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, SASDA, DS 1994: 112, September 1994.

The exception was the report by P. Svedberg et al. *Evaluation of Swedish Development Cooperation with Guinea-Bissau*, Stockholm: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, SASDA, DS 1994: 77, June 1994. This particular study devotes two pages to NGO work in Guinea-Bissau, though it fails to draw any conclusions beyond the specifics of individual projects.

and more funds are being sucked in to a particular country merely to fill gaps. Indeed, it would be quite possible to conceive of SIDA being able quite easily to spend its **whole** budget on supporting such activities in only a few countries in the developing world. But eventually, someone needs to step in and raise development impact questions beyond the narrow project-by-project focus, asking simply:

Is this the best way for the Swedish Government to fund NGO efforts? Might it not be more efficient to look at the funds being channelled to NGOs more holistically? At least, one should take a look at the issue from both ends – from the viewpoint of the project, and from the viewpoint of national development and the comparative advantage of NGOs.

The weakness of the Swedish NGO support programme funded by the NGO Division is that it is still wholly driven by assessing funding applications which are usually made with next to no consideration of factors beyond the discrete project funded. Even fairly straight forward questions about broader impact are not raised, or do not have to be raised.

How can SIDA begin to take a broader perspective while at the same time funding Swedish NGOs on the basis of the principle that it is Swedish NGOs' **own initiatives** which should continue to be funded? In broad terms, the answer lies in the following recommendation.

6. In those countries in which the level of funds given to Swedish NGOs is now so large that it is likely to have a significant broader impact, it is recommended that the NGO Division funds be divided into two separate funding windows. The first window should be available for Swedish NGO projects and programmes and processed in the same way that occurs at present.

However, a new second window should be opened up. Like the first window, this would also be available exclusively for Swedish NGOs wanting to execute their own development initiatives in the country in question. Yet, this particular window would be available only for funding proposals put forward by Swedish NGOs which fall within given country-specific parameters drawn up by the leading Swedish NGOs working in the country in question (in consultation with others). These would indicate particular areas of activity or sectors of the economy which have been designated as "most favoured", because of an analysis of the country's development needs and the comparative advantage which Swedish NGOs bring to helping to meet these needs.

It is proposed that this double window funding approach be tried first on a small-scale, in just one country, and thus that the second window be small in comparison with the first. But it is anticipated that if it succeeds in meeting its objectives, and finds favour with Swedish NGOs, then it should be expanded, both in terms of its total share of all NGO Division funds available for a particular country, and in terms of the countries to which it

would be applied. A first idea would be that the second window would eventually be used and available in those countries in which either the NGO Division is funding Swedish NGO development projects amounting to over SEK 20 mn, and/or when the funds provided by SIDA to Swedish NGOs amount to 15 percent or more of the bilateral aid programme.

It is proposed that the major input into drawing up these parameters should come from those Swedish NGOs who are most heavily involved in the country in question (perhaps the three or four largest framework organisations), with an added input from some of their major partner organisations. It is also anticipated that they would tap the knowledge and expertise of other international and local NGOs.

Surprising as it may sound initially, the main purpose of drawing up these country-specific parameters is not so much to **restrict** the activities of Swedish NGOs. Rather, it is to encourage the focusing and expansion of Swedish NGO activity precisely in those areas where it is most likely to have its greatest impact. More specifically, the purpose would be to reflect on and pinpoint the particular comparative advantage which Swedish NGOs have and could bring to the country in question.

The intention would be for a period of study and reflection to lead to the production a Swedish NGO country paper which would analyse the problems and pinpoint the areas in which it is assessed Swedish NGOs could most usefully make a significant NGO-focused development contribution. The sorts of things which such a document might contain would be likely to include the following:

- a discussion of the NGO movement in the country and its overall role in development and, in particular its importance in contributing to an alleviation of poverty;
- a discussion of the relative role of national and international NGOs, locating the relative and absolute importance of Swedish NGO activities and SIDA funding to and for NGOs;
- a discussion of the weaknesses of NGOs and NGO activities in the country;
- a discussion of the potential for NGOs in development and an outline of the comparative advantage of external bilateral donors and northern (international NGOs) in addressing how the NGO movement should/could be boosted; and finally, in this context
- a discussion of the ways in which Swedish NGOs might make a greater contribution to helping to resolve the problems of poverty in the country in question, and strengthen the local NGO movement, leading to the drawing up of priority areas or guidelines for major elements of Swedish NGO work.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Note that this recommendation only applies to the proposed "window 2": it would still allow funding to take place as at present under the proposed "window 1".

The recommendation made here is intended specifically to address the development problem caused by the current narrow project by project focus of Swedish NGO initiatives put forward for funding from the NGO Division.<sup>83</sup> A further advantage is that such a mechanism would provide SIDA with an analysis of local NGO problems and potential.

Clearly, this recommendation cannot be enacted in a hurry. It needs further discussion, especially by different Swedish NGOs to see whether it should be started, in a pilot fashion, or whether a different approach might better address the concerns which this recommendation is trying to resolve. Thus it is further recommended that

7. As a matter of some urgency, SIDA should initiate a process of discussion both internally and with representatives of Swedish NGOs to work out in more detail how a pilot scheme as recommended could begin to operate as quickly as possible, including the choice of the pilot country, or alternatively, put forward an alternative practical way of addressing these concerns.

To some, this proposal may be seen as suggesting a method of allocating state funds which sets in motion a process radically at variance with prevailing practice. In response three points can be made.

The process of narrowing areas of potential funding in the second window is one in which the relevant Swedish NGOs are given pride of place. Thus, in many respects, the proposal made here is more akin to that of paying more attention to steering the current ship than of either changing direction or switching the mode of transport used.

Secondly, a precedent has already been set for this steering process. Thus, when Swedish NGOs apply for state funds to promote their development activities in Central and Eastern Europe, SIDA's *Guidelines* specify that in addition to the general norms applicable in the general guidelines, Swedish NGOs have to comply with its particular, and additional, goals for providing aid to Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>84</sup>

Thirdly, and within these parameters, the proposals made here are a departure, but one whose **sole** objective is to enhance the development impact of Swedish NGO initiatives funded by the state with state funds.

The evaluators believe they provide a workable compromise between the need

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<sup>83</sup> For some time, SIDA's NGO Division has sought to encourage Swedish NGOs to focus more on initiatives beyond specific projects to development processes and broader institutional issues.

<sup>84</sup> Thus, the *Guidelines* state (*Guidelines for SIDA's support to the development programmes of Swedish NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe*, Stockholm, SIDA, 1994, page 1):

The overall goals of SIDA's grants to development programmes of NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe are to:

- support the restoration and consolidation of the institutions of democracy and the rule of law;
- support the re-introduction of a functioning market economy; and
- support measures designed to improve the environment, especially in the Baltic Seas.

for the state to ensure its funds are used as effectively and efficiently as possible in the manner intended, and the desire which so many Swedish NGOs have to choose themselves how to use the funds the state provides to further their own development activities. Discussion with a number of framework organisations in early 1995 provides initial indications that this sort of proposal was already being received favourably by some Swedish NGOs.

## 5.4 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This *Report* has gone out of its way to highlight biases and to draw particular attention to instances when value judgements are being made. There has been a particular reason for this. To the outsider, it seems that there has been a reluctance in some quarters in Sweden to focus directly on the question of the development impact of activities promoted and executed by Swedish NGOs, and to assess it rigorously.

One does find critics of NGOs and the work they do: some argue that they are naive, others that they do not understand development, others, again, that they are more interested in promoting their own beliefs and ideas than in aiding and improving the lot of the poor. Such sweeping generalisations, the basis for such beliefs is frequently built more on prejudice than on evidence. Much can clearly be challenged by examining some of the fine and impressive work which Swedish NGOs undertake or help to promote.

Nonetheless, there also appears to be quite wide support for the equally all-embracing and sweeping generalisations that all NGOs know how to undertake and promote development, that they reach the poor, that their help is effective, and that assertions made do not need independent verification. Indeed, such views are so strongly felt in some quarters, that they sometimes appear to produce hostility. To the outsider, again, it seems strange that the NGO development vote should have accelerated so rapidly in recent years, amounting now to well over 20 percent of Sweden's total aid budget without any systematic attempt, up to now, to examine the impact of such funds.

Another bias of the *Report* and its main authors, to which attention needs to be drawn, is that the main analysis and recommendations have been made by people who are not Swedish and do not speak Swedish. Because such a high proportion of documents related to NGO work, and to NGO-SIDA linkages, are written in Swedish, one can be reasonably certain in concluding that this will have denied the evaluators access to some documents which are important and which, if they had been available, may have altered their perceptions and assessments.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> The evaluators were given every chance to have translated any documents which they thought would be helpful to their analysis and investigation, and were most grateful for the assistance provided them. They were, however, inevitably caught up in a "Catch-22" syndrome: it is not possible to know which documents will be important to one's work and analysis unless one can first read them through in order to make such a judgement.

SIDA, and through it Sweden, has earned an international reputation as being one of a small band of what the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD calls the "front runners" in terms of its high levels of aid volume. SIDA has also earned an international reputation for its openness and transparency in trying to address problems and failures in aid delivery, and as being perhaps the front runner when it comes to flexibility in funding and trying out new ideas.

This *Report* may well be judged as being harsh on Swedish NGOs: it has certainly pointed to gaps in development between intention and outcome. Yet it has also been at pains to point out that, internationally and in many respects, Swedish performance has been far from unusual, and that in a number of areas Swedish NGO projects have performed well against particular criteria—gender, innovation, replicability, etc. The deepest hope of the authors is that the spirit of enquiry and the attempt to improve development performance will be carried through into future debates about Swedish NGOs and their role in development.

As noted at the end of the last Chapter, some Swedish NGOs have already been in the forefront of international debate about development and the role of NGOs in development. But this constitutes only a minority of Swedish organisations. Thus, it is the additional hope of the authors that entry to the EU will provide an added stimulus for a wider section of Swedish NGOs to discuss and expose themselves to the international debate about the future role of northern NGOs in development.

## *Appendix A:*

# **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **Terms of Reference for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Swedish support through NGOs**

#### **I. Background**

A considerable part of Swedish development assistance is since 1980 channelled through Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Disbursements to NGOs for development projects during fiscal year 1992/93 was around SEK 830 mn or 12% of total SIDA disbursements. At present the NGO Division in SIDA contributes funds for approximately 500 organisations for their projects in 90 to 100 countries.

An important part of the SIDA assisted NGO activities is the technical assistance. It is estimated that approximately 25% of the total disbursements, or around SEK 200 mn is allocated for development assistance personnel. The Swedish Government continues to show trust in the work of the Swedish NGOs and their participation in the total Swedish international development aid. Further increase in the proportion of funds via NGOs is expected for next year.

Government grants to NGOs for development projects is handled by SIDA and its Division for NGO cooperation. The initiative always comes from an NGO, which applies for a grant to a specified project. In order to streamline the handling of the large amounts of applications SIDA has introduced a system with frame agreements with fourteen larger organisations. The agreements lay down procedures, certain principles and criteria based on special Conditions and Guidelines for SIDA's NGO support. Amounts for such block grants are agreed annually as part of the frame agreements.

Swedish support to NGO development activities was last assessed in a comprehensive study 1985. "Review of NGO Capability for Development Assistance". A number of smaller studies have been carried out during the last ten years, but no overall evaluation of effectiveness of the NGO projects has been undertaken.

In order to document the effects of the increasing Government funding of NGO projects SIDA undertook a study 1991, "Solidarity with State Aid" looking especially into the organisational changes and development of the NGOs as a result of project grants including administrative and other types of capacity strengthening support. The study recommended evaluations as a vital part of the collaboration between SIDA and the NGOs.

SIDA grants can cover up to 80% of the total project costs. The NGO bears the full responsibility of the projects. See "Guidelines and General Conditions for Grants to Swedish Organisations from SIDA's Development Cooperation Appropriations, 1993".

NGOs receiving grants from SIDA routinely report on the utilization of the money. The NGOs give SIDA periodical reports, mainly financial, and final reports with narrative parts on the results and experiences drawn from the work on the projects. SIDA from time to time

engages independent consultants for financial auditing. SIDA has also run courses for the staff of NGOs on how to monitor, follow-up and evaluate projects.

An important instrument for the monitoring of SIDA's NGO support are the so-called Capacity Assessment Studies. With the start 1986 eleven such studies have been carried out in close cooperation between SIDA and the NGO by an independent consultant jointly selected. A recent summary of the findings of all the capacity studies show the Swedish NGOs have a high level of competence especially on the practical implementation of projects. General weakness regarding the setting of measurable objectives and goals for the assistance was found to be registered by most studies. Evaluations are seldom carried out.

The growing support to NGO projects is found among most donor countries, and several countries, e.g. Norway and Finland, have also carried out evaluations of NGO support or are in the process of doing so.

## **2. Reasons for the evaluation**

The government supported NGO projects are assumed to comply with the five overall objectives of Swedish development assistance. It is generally also assumed that NGO projects are more cost effective due to low operating costs, and effective since the projects are carried out in direct contact with the target groups. Other assumptions are that support through NGOs is more flexible, innovative and reaches the poorest groups.

The generally assumed effectiveness and efficiency of NGO-supported development projects is seldom corroborated by systematic monitoring and evaluation. It is felt that an overall assessment is needed both in order to have a firmer ground for future decisions on NGO support and to learn from experiences on handling and running NGO projects, both for SIDA and the Swedish government, for the NGOs receiving grants, and for the organisations and governments in recipient countries.

The sevenfold increase of NGO-funds during the last years also necessitates a broad evaluation. An evaluation by SIDA of the support through NGOs is also in compliance with the proposals in the above study "Solidarity with State Aid".

A considerable part of NGO-funds is directed to Technical Assistance and motivates a closer study on the effectiveness of this support. A study of SIDA's system for the granting of support for costs of volunteers on the NGOs was performed during 1993.

## **3. Objectives for the evaluation**

To provide SIDA with an independent and comprehensive review and analysis of the Swedish development support through Swedish NGOs and to assess the effectiveness of Swedish NGO support. The general purpose of the evaluation is not to judge individual organisations or projects, but to use project data (from country studies) to validate general conclusions.

To provide an assessment of key lessons learned concerning NGO support as an aid form, its strengths and weaknesses.

To provide conclusions and recommendations for the future role of the support in the framework of the overall objectives and policies of the Swedish development cooperation.

## **4. Scope and focus of the evaluation**

The evaluation shall comprise but not necessarily be limited to the following aspects:



#### **4.1 Rationale**

- Are the NGOs effective as a form for development assistance cooperation in the framework of the development objectives of Sweden and of the cooperating countries?
- Are the NGOs effective in relation to its development impact in the cooperating country?

#### **4.2 Achievement of objectives**

- To what extent do the projects achieve their overall objectives?
- What are the key factors that determine the extent to which the projects are able to achieve their specific objectives?
- What are the other major basic impacts and effects, intended and unintended, in terms of technical, economic, socio-cultural, institutional and environmental factors resulting from the activity?

#### **4.3 Efficiency**

- Have the projects been executed efficiently?
- Have overall costs been appropriate to the range, level and distribution of benefits?

#### **4.4 Effectiveness**

- To what extent are NGOs effective in the planning, implementation and evaluation of environmentally sound and sustainable development activities, in emphasizing especially the needs of women, the poverty problem, local capacity-building regarding equality, and in building democracy and regard for human rights?
- How effective are Swedish NGOs in strengthening collaboration, equal partnership and local participation by NGOs in the developing countries?

#### **4.5 Sustainability**

The generalised concept of sustainability in the NGO context shall be analyzed and defined.

- What role does the technical assistance play for the sustainability of projects? Which is the role of volunteers in projects?
- Have the Swedish organisations supported capacity development (management and/or other) within cooperating organisations?
- Have the Swedish organisations emphasised core funding or project funding in the cooperating organisations?
- Are projects planned and implemented in coordination with other donors/NGOs?
- Are the project supported institutions likely to continue beyond the project completion?
- Are resources available to fund the activities after external funding has ended?
- Do the projects have the necessary support from the beneficiaries, e.g. in the form of active participation operation of facilities and use of services?
- Have the institutional arrangements for project implementations strengthened or hampered the possibilities of sustained project activities?

- What indications of multiplier effects or projects' replicability exist?
- Do the projects generally stimulate community participation and respond to community requests?
- Does the long term participation of women receive special attention?
- Do the projects support local mobilisation of resources?
- Have new institutions been planned to fit in to the government or existing institutional set-up of the cooperating countries?
- Have assessments of risks and consequences been made before implementation of the projects?

## **5. Methodology of the evaluation**

### **5.1 Methodology and reporting**

During 1993 and early 1994 a number of pre-studies have been carried through to be used as background material for the evaluation together with other relevant NGO-material.

The evaluation will be carried out in three phases and will be based on (1) interviews and documents at SIDA, desk studies and interviews with NGOs (3), case studies in four countries where Swedish NGOs are working.

#### *1. Pre-study Phase*

The first phase will comprise four parts: (1) planning of Main Study Phase, (2) data-collection on Swedish NGOs and from SIDA, (3) preparatory country study visits and (4) writing of Inception Report and final Work Plan. The preparatory country visits includes also identification of local consultants and

The Pre-study Phase will be resulting in the following documents:

- Inception Report and final Work Plan for the Main Study. The Inception Report will present further comments to the ToR, Methodology and timing for subsequent phases.

#### *2. Main Study Phase*

Four Country Studies will be carried through in Kenya, Zimbabwe, India and Bolivia.

The Main Study Phase will be resulting in the following documents:

- Four Country Reports
- Summarizing Country Report
- Feed-back and discussion of the findings will follow with Swedish NGOs and SIDA.

#### *3. Synthesis Report Phase*

Final analysis of total exercise will result in

- Draft Synthesis Report
- Final Synthesis Report

### **5.2 Time Schedule and planning**

The evaluation will be carried out during May - December 1994 by a team of independent consultants according to following time schedule:

**Phase 1: Pre-study**

- Inception Report and final Work Plan for Main Study
- The document will be discussed with SIDA in Meeting in Stockholm

May 2nd - June 21st

June 16

June 21

**Phase 2: Main Study**

- Country Reports and Summarizing Report
- Feed-back to Swedish NGOs and SIDA (2 weeks)

July - October

Mid October

End October

**Phase 3: Synthesis Study**

- Final Analysis and Synthesis
- Draft Synthesis Report
- Final Synthesis Report

Oct - Nov

Oct - Nov

December 1

January 15

### 5.3 Team of consultants

The study will be carried out by a team of independent international consultants, experienced within the fields of evaluation and NGOs as well as in developing dynamics.

The team will include one Swedish consultant, familiar with the Swedish NGOs and having broad experience in development cooperation and third world countries.

The consultants must be independent from the Swedish NGO sphere.

For the country studies the Team shall be strengthened by a local consultant from each country being well experienced and independent from the local countries NGO sphere. The identification of local consultants will be made in collaboration with Swedish NGOs.



## *Appendix B:*

# PEOPLE CONSULTED

### SWEDEN

Leif Agnestrand	International Project Director, PMU Interlife Stockholm
Britta Åhman	Find Your Feet
Björn Andreasson	Executive Secretary, Swedish Volunteer Service
Ulla Andrén	SIDA, Southern Africa Regional Department
Samuel Asp	Filadelfia Pentecostal Church, Stockholm
Eva Asplund	Head, SIDA NGO Division NGO Division
Margareta Axell	Lärarförbundet (Swedish Teachers' Association), Stockholm
Lars Bellander	SIDA NGO Division
Birgitta Berggren	Secretary, Fonden för Mänskliga Rättigheter, Stockholm
Inger Björk	President, UBV, Stockholm
Anna Bratt	Desk Officer, UBV, Stockholm
Marie Louise Bruzelius	SIDA NGO Division
Magnus Carlqvist	SIDA NGO Division
Jan Castman	SHIA
Jan Cedergren	SIDA Deputy Director-General
Stefan Dahlgren	Head SIDA Evaluation Division
Sven Eckedal	SKM, Uppsala
Sven Enarsson	Regional Coordinator Africa, UG/SCC, Stockholm
Hans Engdal	Southern Africa Secretary, SKM, Uppsala
Håkan Falk	SIDA Public Administration and Management Division
Bo Forsberg	Director, DIAKONIA
Anders Forsse	Former Director-General, SIDA
Sten Furbo	Röda Korset, Stockholm
Lars Garg	Economist, DIAKONIA
Eidi Genfors	Managing Director, UG/SCC, Stockholm
Claudio Godani	Röda Korset, Stockholm
Birgitta Göransson	Svalorna (India/Bangladesh)
Kristina Gough	SIDA NGO Division
Roland Gustafsson	Bibeltrogn Vänner
Leif Håkansson	President, Swedish Agricultural Workers Union
Carolyn Hannan-Andersson	Head of Gender Office, Planning Secretariat, SIDA
Göran Hansen	SHIA, Stockholm
Mats Hårsmar	SMR, Stockholm
Thomas Hildebrand	International Programme Department, Rädda Barnen, Stockholm
Christer Holtsberg	SIDA, Natural Resources Division
Lars Hofgren	Director, Swedish Mission Council

Birthe Horn	SIDA NGO Division
Ulla Innala	Afrikagrupperna, Stockholm
Per Ivarsson	Swedish Red Cross, Latin America Desk Officer
Nils Jacobsson	Swedish National Union of State Employees
Ola Jämtin	SIDA NGO Division
Ingvar Johansson	Asia Desk, LO/TCO
Ulla Jonsdotter Hansson	India Desk, BIFO
Susanna Jonsson	Coordinator of Gender Programme, Latin America
Jan Hodann	Olof Palme International Center, Stockholm
Kjell Kageman	Swedish Mission Covenant Church
Gunilla Kalderen	Find Your Feed
Ingvar Karlsson	Church of Sweden Aid
Lena Karlsson	BIFO, Stockholm
Kerstin Kjellberg	Swedish National Association of the Deaf
Kenneth Larsson	BIFO
Karl-Erik Lundgren	Evaluation, SMR, Stockholm
Per Lilja	PMU, Bolivia Desk Officer
Barbara Lindell	Caritas
Per Lindström	Ambassador, Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Börje Ljungren	SIDA Deputy Director General
Rigmor Mjörnell	LO/TCO
Elizabeth Narrowe	SIDA Desk Officer, India
Leif Newman	PMU
Belisario Nieto	CAFOD
Erik Nilsson	Diakonia, Latin America Desk Officer
Lennart Nilsson	SHIA
Carin Norberg	SIDA, Assistant Director-General
Kerstin Nordström	Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired
Claes Norrhede	Swedish National Union of State Employees
Tor Nyberg	Vi Tree Planting
Bo Nylund	AGNI
Agneta Olsson	Future Forest
Marianne Ouma	SCC, Stockholm
Anders Ölund	SKM, Uppsala
Sonny Östberg	Evaluation, BIFO, Stockholm
Ing-Britt Östlund	SVS, Stockholm
Anders Östman	SIDA, Kenya Desk
Cecilia Palmer	Consultant, ISO Swedish Management Group, Stockholm
Gunvor Paulsson	Salvation Army, Mission Secretary
Sture Pettersson	Föreningen Badza, Stockholm
Lars-Erik Pettersson	Methodist Church, Stockholm
Alfhilo Petrén	Director, Rädda Barnen, Stockholm
Kristina Regnell	Deputy Head Emergency Relief Section, SIDA NGO Division
Jan Robberts	Advisor, Regional Department for Latin America (RELA) (Bolivia programmes)
Henrik Rosén	India Secretary, Swedish Church Mission
Nils Rönnbeck	Mission Secretary, Swedish Evangelical Mission
Anders Rudqvist	University of Stockholm
Marlene Schmidt	Caritas
Sven-Eric Söder	Olof Palme International Center, Stockholm
Tomas Söderman	Swedish Red Cross

Lotta Spykman	BIFO
Bertil Stadell	Technical Advisor, Swedish Mission Council
Lena Stiernström	Desk Officer, UBV, Stockholm
Lars Strandell	SKM, Uppsala
Birgitta Strömblad	India Desk, Olof Palme International Centre
Mats Svensson	SIDA NGO Division
Eva Tadell	Afrikagrupperna, Stockholm
Barbro Thorén	YWCA-YMCA
Sofia Tickell	Christian Aid
Christina Tillo	Svalorna
Jan Valdelin	ICS Interconsult Sweden AB
Lena Wall	Olof Palme International Centre
Solveig Wickman	Projects Director Eastern Europe and South Africa, LO/ TCO, Stockholm
Ulf Wilmenius	Director, BIFO, Stockholm
Berit Wiklund	Afrikagrupperna, Stockholm

## BOLIVIA

Maria B. Ardhuijs	Vice-Consul of Sweden, La Paz
Rosa Maria Balcazar	Director, General Directorate for NGOs, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
Hans Baartmans	SNV, Director and Coordinator of the Coordinating Body for International NGOs in Bolivia (CONGI)
Constance Bernhard	World Bank, Representative in Bolivia
Olivier Berthoud	Swiss Development Cooperation, Coordinator of NOGUB, the SDC programme of support to Bolivian NGOs
Jutta Blauert	New Economics Foundation, Organisational analyst of UNITAS
Luz Maria Calvo	Subsecretaria de Etnias, Sub-secretary
Victor H. Cardoso	PROSEMPA, Extension and NGO specialist
Yvonne Delgado	OXFAM-UK and Ireland, Project Officer
Jean Faguet	World Bank, Social Sector economist
Ampam Karakras	UNDP, Consultant to the Indigenous Fund (Fondo Indigena)
Moises Leyton	OXFAM-UK and Ireland, representative for Bolivia and Paraguay
Mabel Miranda	Comite Adhoc de ONG Evangelicas de Bolivia, member of Directorate
Nico von Niekerk	General Directorate for NGOs, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Advisor
Joshua Posner	Instituto Boliviano de Tecnologia Agropecuario, Head of University of Wisconsin Advisory Mission
Pilar Ramirez	SIDA, Consultant
Juan Risi	Instituto Boliviano de Tecnologia Agropecuario, Advisor
Anna Rochovski	Embassy of the Netherlands, First Secretary
Godofredo Sandoval	Sinergia, Director
Felix Santos	Executive Secretary, The Unitary Confederation of Peasant Workers Unions of Bolivia (CSUTCB)
Gonzalo Solares	Catholic Relief Services, Head of Rural Projects
Gonzalo Garcia	Secretaria de Participacion Popular, Sub-secretary for the Strengthening of OTBs

Eugene Arvidsson	Pilot for MSLB
Lennart Edén	MSLB pastor in Villa Montes
Rickard Nordgren,	Representative of DIAKONIA in Bolivia and Southern Cone
Gunilla Tovö	Coordinator for UBV in Bolivia
Maria Gustafsson	Volunteer for UBV with Centro de Reporteros Populares (El Alto) and journalist
Nancy Ventiades	Director
Teresa Balderrama	Administrator
Milton Soto	Educator
Janette Giné	Assistant
Arminda Ríos	leader
Malena Vaca	design and production
Roxana Algarañaz	
María Hilda Preda	
Mario Mendoza	educator
Agustín Ferrufino	educator
Eduardo Unzueta	educator
Giovani Flores	educator.
Antonio Diez	Priest for Parroquia Maria Auxiliadora
Leonardo Camani	Project coordinator
<i>School teaching staff</i>	
Félix Santos	Former Executive Secretary of the FSUTCP, currently Executive Secretary of CSUTCB
Paulo Méndez	CORACA, Manager
Policarpo Quiróz	CORACA, Head of Livestock Department
Viviana Barral	CORACA, Head of Artesania, counterpart to UBV health volunteer
Zenón Casas	CORACA, administrator
Medardo Carmiño Flores	FSUTCP, Executive Secretary and President of Board of CORACA Potosí
Karin Ringstad	UBV, volunteer with CORACA
Arne Ehn	UBV, volunteer with CORACA
Pedro Segure	Programa de Autodesarrollo Campesino-Cordepo, Co-Director,
Gunilla Tovö	UBV, Coordinator
Alvaro Bermejo	Representative of the International Red Cross Federation, Bolivia and Southern Cone
Hugo Palazzi	Bolivian Red Cross, President
Silvia Maldonado	Bolivian Red Cross, Head of Social Affairs
Vladimir Torrico	Bolivian Red Cross, Head of Social Medicine
Yvonne Uzquiano	Bolivian Red Cross, Treasurer to the Board
Grover Yopez C.	Bolivian Red Cross, Head of Volunteers and Youth Departments
Neyda Uzquiano	Bolivian Red Cross, Coordinator of Operations
Alberto Mansilla	Bolivian Red Cross, Secretary General
Reynaldo Villanueva	Bolivian Red Cross, Treasurer
Laura de Reque Teran	Bolivian Red Cross, President
Edgar Ortega	President of Potosí Branch
Etzer Arrancibia	President, Tarija Branch
Hilda Bakodic	Head of Social Affairs
Hilda de Cuenca	Member of Board



Jose Viscavaya	Head of First Aid
Fernando Sayas	Youth Programme
Health Centre	Doctor and nurse
Fernando Barrientos	Caritas-Tarija, Director
Roberto Ramos	Caritas-Tarija, Coordinator Coime Programme
Omidio Guererro	Caritas-Tarija, Director of Training Centre
Antenor Flores	Community of Almedros, Secretary General
Teogracio Vives	Community of Colon, President of Credit Committee and member of the Directorate of the InterCommunal Community of Almedros
Members	
Eliodoro Jurado	Federation of Campesino Workers unions of Tarija (FSUTCTT), President
Gabriel Baracatt	Union de Instituciones de Tarija (departmental NGO Network), Coordinator (also Director of PROMETA)
Fernando Arrandia	Accion Cultural Loyola (ACLO), Director
David Preston	University of Leeds, Lecturer (researcher on rural change in area of Caritas' project)
Miguel Costas	Centro de Estudios Regionales para el Desarrollo de Tarija
Margareta Arvidsson	MSLB, missionary
Gunnar Axelsson	MSLB, responsible for La Milka
Arturo Fernández,	College board, President
Guido Castro	Local Church Council, Calle Uruguay, pastor
Pablo Meneses	Local Church Council, Calle Uruguay, pastor
Antonieta Méndez	Buenas Nuevas, General Director
Delina Rojas	Buenas Nuevas, Director of Middle School
Yola de Nacho	Buenas Nuevas, administrator
Detry Patiño,	Buenas Nuevas, teacher
Juan Chacón	Buenas Nuevas, teacher
José Crespo	Buenas Nuevas, teacher
Marta de Buitrago	Buenas Nuevas, teacher
Norma de Villanueva	Buenas Nuevas, teacher
Elisabeth Revilla	Buenas Nuevas, teacher
Cándico Mansilla	School PTA, President
Mercedes vda. de Arauco	School PTA, Secretary
René Ledesma	Junta Vecinal Huayrakassa:President
Andrés Salinas	Junta Vecinal Huayrakassa:member
Edgar Miranda	Hospital Harry Williams, administrator
Alcira Pérez	Ricardo Prudencia school, teacher
Alfredo Mendoza	Sub-Alcaldia Alalay Norte
Blanca López	Sub-Alcaldia, Alalay Norte
Lennart Edén	MSLB, Pastor
Jose Lopez	Organizacion Capitania Grande del Pueblo Weenhayek, Capitan Grande
Humberto Sanchez	Capitan, Community of Creveaux Norte
Members	Community of Resistencia
Members	Community of Purissima
Members	Community of Creveaux Norte
Teachers	School, Creveaux Norte
Teachers	School, Creveaux Sur
Eduardo Flores	Núcleo Escolar Caprendita, Villa Montes, Director
Health promoters	Creveaux Norte

Juan Carlos Naller	Asociación de Ganaderos de la Primera Sección Municipal de la Provincia del Gran Chaco, President
Ismael Eid	Asociación de Ganaderos de la Primera Sección Municipal de la Provincia del Gran Chaco, ex-President
Luis Antizana	Asociación de Ganaderos de la Primera Sección Municipal de la Provincia del Gran Chaco, Member of Directorate
Rosendo Zúñiga	Federación de Ganaderos de Villa Montes, President
Arminda Saavedra	Federación de Ganaderos de Villa Montes, Member
Alfredo Quispe	Proyecto Agrícola Villa Montes-Sapachera (PROVISA), Head of human settlements and agriculture programme
Ken Ruddell	Fundación para el Desarrollo Integral de Bolivia, ex-Director
Guillermo Salazar	Mayor of Villa Montes
Julio Medina	Legal advisor to Mayor of Villa Montes
Weimar Zucco	Comité Cívico of Villa Montes, President
Brett Cresch	Peace Corps
Vicente Pessoa	Confederación Indígena del Oriente Chaco y Amazonía de Bolivia (CIDOB), President
Christian Autet	Centro de Estudios Regionales para el Desarrollo de Tarija
Henry Servoz	FAO, Principal Advisor, Forrage programme (Tarija and Chaco)
Luz Maria Calvo	Subsecretaria Nacional de Asuntos Etnicos, Genero y Generaciones, Subsecretary for Ethnic Affairs
Irene de Ambrosia	Centro PAS-Machacamarca, Director of Nursery
Mats Bertoft	Find your Feet, technical assistant to project
Luis Fuentes	PAS, Director
Elena de Mamani	Centro PAS-Caracollo, President
Solveig Ringstad	PAS, Nurse (UBV volunteer)
Emma Torres	PAS, Educationalist (volunteer of Bolivie-Gruppe)
Members	Centro PAS-Caracollo
Members	Centro PAS-Machacamarca
Jose E. Pinelo	Executive Director, UNITAS
Leonora Rauco	External Relations, UNITA
Jutta Blauert	New Economics Foundation, organisational analyst of UNITAS
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## Appendix C:

# LIST OF DOCUMENTS CITED AND OTHER REFERENCES

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### **INSTITUTION BUILDING AS A DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE METHOD**

A review of Literature and Ideas, by Mick Moore with Sheelagh Stewart and Ann Hudock

# *Promoting Development by Proxy*

## **AN EVALUATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORT TO SWEDISH NGOS**

**F**unds for development support through Swedish NGOs have increased considerably during the last 10 years. During these years a number of studies and follow-ups have been carried out by SIDA and by the NGOs. In 1993, SIDA decided to carry out a broad and comprehensive evaluation of the development impact of the Swedish support through Swedish NGOs.

Swedish NGOs can apply for funding of development projects through several alternative ways in SIDA, however this evaluation concentrates on the largest: Support through SIDA:s NGO division.

The evaluation is based on four country studies in Bolivia, Kenya and Zimbabwe, and summarized in a synthesis report.

The evaluation concludes that most NGO-projects succeed in fulfilling their immediate project goals. The evaluators discuss the projects against partnership and participation, innovativeness and replicability, capacity building, gender and environmental aspects and sustainability. The evaluators arrive at different and interesting conclusions.

The evaluators recommend a number of measures to increase the development impact of support through Swedish NGOs. One of these is to improve the Guidelines for NGO-application for SIDA funds to incorporate the broader development criterias. There are also recommendations to ensure better coordination and better mutual learning between NGOs in Sweden and in the field.

A copy of this Report can be ordered from SIDA, S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden.  
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