



# Democracy and Human Rights

Democracy and human rights are essential for providing people living in poverty and under oppression with power, voice and choice to improve their living conditions. Sida's support to the thematic area of democracy and human rights amounted to SEK 5.6 billion in 2016. This makes democracy and human rights Sida's largest thematic area, equivalent to approximately 30 % of Sida's total disbursement 2016.



## MAIN AREAS OF SUPPORT

Democracy, human rights and the principles of the rule of law is one of the priorities thematic areas in Swedish development cooperation. A rights perspective (Human Rights Based Approach) and poor people's perspective on development are the point of departure and shall be integrated into all Swedish development cooperation. Support to democracy and human rights plays a fundamental role in combatting oppression, building democracies and reducing poverty in all its dimensions. The work is guided by the principles that human rights are universal, interdependent and indivisible.

The Agenda 2030 declaration is strong in expressing respect for human rights (primarily in § 8), and all Sustainable Development Goals relate to a number of human rights. Democracy on the other hand is only mentioned in § 9 of the declaration, and not in the Goals themselves. Goal 16 is ambitious and has a broad agenda. It includes promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice for all and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Examples of targets particularly relevant to the work of Sida within the thematic area of democracy and human rights are:

- 16.6 *Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels*
- 16.7 *Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels*
- 16.10 *Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements*

Goal 10 targets promotion of social, economic and political inclusion and reducing inequalities in opportunities and outcomes. Special focus on combating inequalities is highlighted in Goal 10.2 and 10.3:

- 10.2 *By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status*
- 10.3 *Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.*

The rights of persons with disabilities are highlighted under Goal 4.5 and 8.5. The right of the child is visible under a number of Goals such as Goal 3, 4, 5 and especially;

- 16.2 *End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.*

The focus of Sida's work within the area of democracy and human rights is reflected in the volume of the support. Democratic participation and civil society is the largest subarea (SEK 2 billion or 35 % of disbursements within the area of democracy and human rights), and human rights the second largest (SEK 1,2 billion or 21 %). In terms of regional distribution, most funds are allocated for development cooperation with countries in Africa (32 %) and Asia (24 %). Support to global initiatives, for example international NGOs and global UN programmes, constitutes 25 % of the total support within the thematic area. →

## THE GLOBAL GOALS

The Global Goals for Sustainable Development include everyone – and we can all contribute. The goals are interdependent and therefore indivisible. Sida's main contribution is to implement development cooperation, thereby reducing poverty and saving lives. Together we can build a better future where no one is left behind.



## Results

### DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORLD

From a global perspective, respect for human rights and democracy has made great advances over the last 26 years. However, serious threats and violations against civil and political rights, in particular freedom of expression, assembly and association, occur in 109 countries, including Russia and China, which means that six out of seven individuals live in countries where their freedoms are violated.

The space for exercising ones civil and political rights is shrinking for civil society actors, environmental and human rights defenders, not least women, anti-corruption activists, as well as journalists and opposition political parties. Sida's partners in many regions continue to face oppression from different actors in the form of violence, threats and increased regulations (related to registration, financing, advocacy etc.) of civil society organisations, media actors as well as increased control of internet access and freedom.

Civil society actors work hard to strengthen their capacity to adapt to these challenges, but the situation has continuously worsened over the last years in an increasing number of countries. Despite this negative trend regarding democracy, in many countries where Sweden is engaged in development cooperation, there are positive results at programme and project levels through Sida's partners' ability to act flexible and adjust to changing political landscapes and complex, unpredictable developments.

### SWEDISH SUPPORT

Sida's democracy and human rights portfolio covers many sub-areas, as reflected in tables 1 and 2. Examples of results from 2016 include:

- Support through a regional media programme in the Middle East and North Africa to 40 media organisations has contributed to independent newspapers, including online media, and radio stations being able to reach a broad audience who got improved access to independent information.
- Support to public administration reform in Africa has resulted in improved service delivery at county level in Liberia, increased tax revenue in Mozambique through support to the tax authority, and improved capacity of the national audit institutions in Zambia and Mozambique with positive effects on anti-corruption efforts.

Corruption constitutes a concrete barrier to escaping poverty and oppression. Research shows that the problem is more extensive and serious, and its consequences

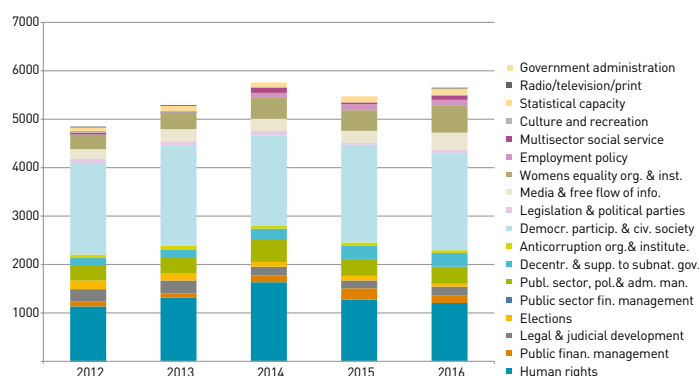
more far-reaching, than has previously been known. Where corruption is widespread, virtually all sectors and functions of society are affected. Corruption undermines the rule of law and reduces trust in and legitimacy of governance and public institutions.

Sida's support to anti-corruption organisations and institutions amounted to SEK 46 million in 2016. However, this is only a small portion of Sida's support to combating corruption in our partner countries. Other contributions include those to improved public financial management (SEK 149 million), public sector policy and administrative management (SEK 342 million), media support and access to information (SEK 347 million).

Every year since 2005, the numbers of countries that are moving towards democracy are fewer than the number of countries where oppression is increasing. In 2016, only 36 countries were moving in a democratic direction while oppression increased in 67 countries. The number of countries showing a decline in freedom was the largest since the 11-year slide began.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Freedom House "Freedom in the world 2017"

**TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION PER SUBSECTOR WITHIN DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS, MILLION SEK**



**TABLE 2: GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION, %**

