



A think-tank for a better world

Organisations fighting world poverty meet at Sida Civil Society Center.

Freedom from poverty

B EING POOR MEANS being without the basic necessities of life. But poverty is not only lack of material resources. Poverty is also being denied the right and opportunity to form and maintain control over your own life, to be able to improve your own living conditions.

This is why democracy, human rights and gender equality, as well as economic development, are important areas to address in the struggle to alleviate poverty and its underlying causes. It is essential that people in cooperating countries gain the opportunity to change their own life situations. Development cooperation is a vital support in this work of development.

Civil society

Hundreds of Swedish organisations work hard to decrease poverty in the world. Together with their affiliated organisations in cooperating countries, they promote the growth of a vital and sustainable civil society. Many Swedes support these development activities through their voluntary efforts and their financial contributions.

Swedish organisations are also essential cooperating partners for Sida. Every year, Sida allocates approximately 1.7 billion SEK via Swedish non-governmental organisations for development cooperation inputs and humanitarian cooperation.

Sida Civil Society Center

Sida Civil Society Center in Härnösand is a new resource for NGOs and popular movements. It focuses on the role of the civil society in development issues.

The Center is a meeting place for exchange of experience, examination of methods used in co-operation and joint learning. Through these meetings between theory and practice, between voluntary organisations, Sida and other actors within development cooperation, Sida intends that its Civil Society Center contribute to the development of new knowledge and relevant methods in this field. The Center will also form a resource within the areas of training and capacity development.

By sharing our various experience and knowledge, we will be able to develop tools and methods which will strengthen us in our common aim and, consequently, will be able to improve our contribution to the development of a strong civil society in the South and in Central and Eastern Europe.

Welcome to the Sida Civil Society Center in Härnösand.

Roland Stenlund

Head of Division, Sida Civil Society Center



This is Sida Civil Society Center

Sida Civil Society Center in Härnösand is Sida's new institute for concept and methodological development. The Center provides a meeting place for theory and practice where all types of people can learn from each other by exchanging knowledge and experience.

The Institute's primary target group is non-governmental organisations and popular movements working within Swedish development cooperation. The Institute also works together with other actors such as universities, folk high schools and research institutions.

Sida Civil Society Center in Härnösand contributes to the strengthening of the role of the civil society in development cooperation with the South and with Central and Eastern Europe.

Concept and methodological development

SCSC SUPPORTS concept and methodological development. In order to fulfil objectives on alleviation of poverty through economic, social and ecologically sustainable development, continuous learning and innovative insights are essential. Sometimes, new tools are necessary to meet new situations.



Meeting place

SCSC IS INTENDED as a meeting place for exchange of experience between actors within Swedish NGOs and popular movements. Course participants interested in international development cooperation travel here from the entire country. Some will soon be leaving for their first job abroad and need basic training. Others already possess considerable experience in this field. Together with national and international expertise, they discuss the most recent experience and information from development cooperation.

Capacity development

SCSC ANSWERS organisations' needs as concerns training and capacity development. The objective is to support NGO sustainability. Capacity is a concept which describes the knowledge and resources available within an organisation.



Civil society — a decisive force

SIDA WORKS FOR economic, social and ecologically sustainable development. Civil society plays an essential role in this development. Civil society is defined as the joint activities of the citizens of a country which have no direct connection to the state or to the market. The forms these networks take vary with tradition and background. Generally speaking, the civil society acts as the glue that stops society from falling apart and is an essential factor in the creation of peace and security.

Sida Civil Society Center supports the capacity development of Swedish popular movements and NGOs in their development cooperation with the civil societies of countries in the South and in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition to basic courses for field volunteers and headquarters staff, training in areas such as conflict management and peace creation measures, seminars aimed at exchange of experience and the promotion of various networks are also on offer. Sida Civil Society Center supports the development of new approaches, methods and work forms. The Institute aims at becoming a meeting place where theory can meet practice in fruitful interaction.

IF A JUST WORLD is to be possible, a world in which resources and responsibilities are distributed

more evenly and where relationships can become more equal, continuous examination and learning are necessary. By all parties concerned. The term development assistance has been replaced in the work towards common global development with the concept of development cooperation and partnership.

Sida Civil Society Center is a meeting place for NGOs to, in an open and frank manner, learn and share experience with colleagues from different ideological and professional areas. But it is also a place to gain insights from leading, world expertise.

Sida Civil Society Center works with the development of concepts and methods for Swedish development cooperation. The Institute aims at improving organisations' efficiency and sustainability in relationship to their undertakings and context.

Operations are run by Sida in cooperation with Swedish popular movements and NGO umbrella organisations.

POPULAR MOVEMENTS AND voluntary organisations work in Sweden with opinion building and the creation of a commitment to justice, solidarity and concerned participation with people in other parts of the world. These organisations work with ideologically based lobbying aimed at both Swe-

For financial year 2003, MSEK 940 has been allocated to development cooperation activities carried out by popular movements and NGOs in developing countries. The equivalent figure for activities in Central and Eastern Europe was MSEK 66.

The 14 NGO umbrella organisations are:

- Afrikagrupperna
- Diakonia
- SHIA (The Swedish Disability Organisations' International Aid Association)
- LO/TCOs Secretariat of International Trade Union Development Cooperation

- Swedish Churches via Church of Sweden Aid, Swedish Church Mission and Swedish Evangelical Mission
- PMU Interlife
- Save the Children
- Swedish Mission Council
- Olof Palme International Center

- Swedish Society for Nature Conservation
- Forum Syd
- Swedish Cooperative Centre
- UBV – Education for Aid Activities
- Red Cross



dish decision makers and international agencies.

Together with their affiliated organisations in poverty stricken, vulnerable countries, they fight for the creation of a sustainable civil society throughout the world. Sida cooperates with, and supports, NGOs in many different ways. Through partial financing of projects, through information grants and in various arenas and networks.

SIDA OPERATES A BROAD spectrum of cooperation with Swedish voluntary organisations. The major part of support is allocated to certain um-

brella organisations in so-called framework agreements. Through these organisations, financing is distributed to approximately 300 organisations working in more than 100 different countries.

By supporting NGOs' development cooperation activities, democratic, sustainable civil societies are promoted around the world. The Swedish organisations contribute to the improvement of knowledge levels in, and the competence development of, their local cooperating partners. Regulations stipulate that each organisation must contribute at least 20% of the total budget of any project or program.



Training for change

ON A SATURDAY morning in February, twenty people are taking part in a course at Sida Civil Society Center. The participants vary in age, gender, ethnic and social background. They normally work with information at their various NGOs. They are a part of the “Civil Society”.

Deep in their the role-play they are cutting and pasting. Divided into countries A, B, C.... they manufacture chains made of newspapers to sell on the “world market”. The world market – for this role-play personified by the trainer – dictates the conditions. The price increases and decreases. The participants experience what it is like to be a hostage to such conditions.

This role-play is part of a pilot course held by the Sida Civil Society Center together with NGO umbrella organisation Forum Syd. Today the part-

icipants are given no theories, the course is a steady flow of discussions and method exercises. For example one session is devoted to provide tools for highlighting and discussing different values in a constructive manner.

This is also experimental in that representatives of the Church, unions, the environmental movement, immigrant organisations and UN agencies get to meet and learn from/with each other. The smaller organisations generally lack the resources to organise further training under their own auspices.

“Our role is to support organisations in their information activities on site. We are a resource which can contribute knowledge,” says Bodil Strömberg, Programme Officer for Communications in Development at SCSC.

What does civil society mean?

a) To you?

b) For Swedish development cooperation?

PHOTO: MARE NÄRLID



Berit Wiklund, Coordinator of African Operations, Afrikagrupperna:

"...for me it means both large and small popular movements and similar organisations. In Sweden we have a rich tradition in this area which must be maintained, developed and renewed. I have myself been active in solidarity movements for many years but it is important for me, together with many other people

around the world, to work with issues concerning a just world....The civil society is extremely important within international cooperation. However it is also vital to examine total social development. Cooperation with both the civil society and the public sector can contribute to dialogue and coordination and generate the development effects which help people the most."

Göran Sturve, Secretary-General of the Swedish Mission Council:

"... as leader of one of the Christian umbrella organisations this concept means a broad, unique network, a deep connection and a continuous, voluntary, concept-driven commitment to me....It means that different associations and

organisations, individually or in cooperation with others, in a goal oriented manner, build relationships and reliance between people, become change actors based on experience and learn to protect the rights and dignity of vulnerable groups and individuals."



PHOTO: ANNA YNGVESSON

PHOTO: BENGT AF GELJERSTAM



Staffan Herrström, Head of Department for Central and Eastern Europe:

"...The civil society – that is all the people who become involved and organised for political, stakeholder or idealistic reasons – form the cornerstone of a functioning democracy. Without committed, participating citizens it will fade away... The Swedish civil society forms a vital force in the

imposing of demands on and for Swedish development cooperation. The civil society is also an important actor within Swedish development cooperation. Our common experience of participating in the construction of Swedish democracy creates the preconditions for supporting the civil society in other countries during their own democratisation process."



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the same time, the fact that the two groups of children were not matched for age, sex, or IQ, may have influenced the results.

It is important to note that the results of this study are not generalizable to all children with autism. The sample was small and the study was conducted in a single center. Further research is needed to confirm the findings of this study in a larger, more diverse sample.

In conclusion, this study suggests that the use of a structured teaching program may be effective in improving the social skills of children with autism. Further research is needed to confirm the findings of this study and to explore the long-term effects of the program.

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The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Sida Civil Society Center in Härnösand is located in pleasant parkland at Gådeåparken by Södra Sundet.

Close to the Center buildings is the Sida hostel Lönnebo which consists of 38 accommodation units, a kitchen and meeting rooms.



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