



IN BRIEF...

Human Rights

Respect for human rights means acknowledging that everyone is entitled to a dignified life. All rights are equally worthy and universal; they are closely related and inter-dependent. It is essential that all Swedish development cooperation is based on the perspective of rights and the needs of the poor. Promoting respect for human rights is one of Sida's priority missions.

Why does Sweden support human rights?

Human rights regulate the relationship between the individual and the state; the individual is to be protected against abuse and it is the government's duty to provide that protection.

Article One of the UN Declaration of Human Rights states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. It is this fundamental thesis that forms the basis of the entire system of rules and regulations that has been created for human rights.

Sida's development work is itself based on the international and regional conventions and declarations that have been accepted by an overwhelming majority of the international community.

There are two fundamental conventions that govern the following rights:

- Civil and political rights: the right to life, the right to freedom of expression, the right to vote, and the right to personal security and integrity.
- Economic, social and cultural rights: e.g. the right to education, a home, health and work.

There are also conventions that regulate the rights of underprivileged and vulnerable groups, such as women and children.

As all the more countries became democratised in the 1990s, respect for human rights increased; this is because, as it has long been known, democracies commit the fewest human rights violations of all. However, armed conflicts, which are often local and partly beyond government control, have given rise to new and serious crimes against humanity. There is therefore both progress and regression in this respect.

Those who have their human rights violated are almost always the underprivileged and vulnerable, such as people with undesirable opinions, children, disabled people or minorities. One example of a tender spot for democratisation is that the rights of women and children are often ignored when it comes to the distribution of resources.

Sweden's Policy for Global Development (PGU) demands that development cooperation operate fully in the spirit

of two perspectives, those of poverty and rights, which incorporate democracy and human rights. Sida has identified four guiding principles for its efforts in this respect:

- Non-discrimination, which is about the equal dignity and rights of all.
- Participation, which is about giving women, men, girls and boys the opportunity to take part in and affect the decision-making processes that concern them.
- Transparency, which is partly about the right to information—a precondition of the preceding principle.
- Responsibility, which is about allowing people to call their decision-makers to account.

How long has Sweden been supporting the promotion of human rights?

Development cooperation intended to strengthen human rights has always been part of Sida's aid programmes. Over the years, human rights has grown from being an effect to being a theme, and is now a perspective that permeates all Sida's development cooperation activities. The PGU has also helped to elevate and better define the importance of human rights.

What does Sweden do to promote human rights?

Support for human rights can take many different forms. For example, supporting a government in its efforts to improve its education, health or legal

systems, or perhaps supporting NGOs in their work providing people with legal aid or lobbying their government, or monitoring and recording how human rights are being respected.

Sida's work with human rights can be divided into two typical situations:

1. Sida works together with a country's government to support the development of its education, health or legal systems (e.g. the drafting of laws or the training of judges, lawyers and prosecutors) or the establishment of a monitoring instrument, such as an ombudsman's office. The civil society is often given support to help it record rights violations, provide legal aid, and raise the awareness of the public about their rights and of the government about its duties.
2. When Sida operates on an international level (which is to say in the work it does to promote democracy and respect for human rights through the UN or other such international bodies or to develop and strengthen a particular issue), the support is often channelled through Swedish and International NGOs. These organisations have drawn up their own mandates, and Sida's

support makes it possible for them to exert pressure and implement their own support activities. The work these NGOs do in areas such as documentation and information is also fundamental to the UN's efforts to promote human rights in their own particular countries.

It is sometimes difficult to measure the results and effects of human rights aid. Sida supports processes that may take a very long time to complete. Different projects are underway to produce quantification methods, including one at the embassy in Vietnam.

Examples of ongoing cooperation projects

1. Disabled people often form one of the most marginalised groups of a society. In Afghanistan, Sida supports the Rehabilitation of Afghans with Disabilities (RAD) programme through the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SAK). The SAK employs about 400 people, who work as sign-language teachers for the deaf and who teach vision-impaired children to read Braille. They also give microcredit to the disabled to help them provide for themselves, and run information and education campaigns.

2. Sida supports the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (including the Human Rights Office), both its head office in Geneva and some of its field offices.

All countries that have signed the UN Convention on Human Rights are required to submit a report for review by a UN committee. The Human Rights Office helps with training as regards reporting procedures and implementing the recommendations of the committees. The Human Rights office also helps to create, develop and support national Human Rights ombudsmen. The Human Rights Office in Colombia is helping, for example, the government to draft new laws to provide better human rights protection. Through dialogue, education, seminars and information campaigns to civil servants and the civil society, the Human Rights Office is helping to improve the capacity to actively seek better protection for the individual. It is also the responsibility of the Human Rights Office to protest against and investigate abuse, and to report annually to the UN about how the government is living up to its human rights obligations.

HUMAN RIGHTS

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Thus opens the UN Declaration of Human Rights from 1948. The rights that this declaration covers include:

- basic rights of expression, religious practice, etc.
- rights to protection against abuse (e.g. arbitrary arrest and torture)
- rights to basic need fulfilment (e.g. health and education).

Human rights are universal. They apply the world over, regardless of country, culture or context. They apply to all people without discrimination. Over the years, these rights have been established and developed through a number of international agreements:

1. The UN General Declaration on Human Rights, 1948
2. The Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 1965
3. The Convention on Civil and Political Rights, 1966
4. The Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966
5. The Convention on the Elimination of the Discrimination of Women, 1979
6. The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984
7. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989

Source: Human Development Report 2005

THE 20 COUNTRIES THAT RECEIVED THE GREATEST SUPPORT FROM SIDA IN 2005 AND THE CONVENTIONS THAT THEY HAVE/HAVE NOT SIGNED

Country	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
Tanzania	x	x	x	x	x	–	x
Mozambique	x	x	x	–	x	x	x
Sri Lanka	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ethiopia	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Uganda	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Russia	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Bosnia&Herzegovina	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Afghanistan	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sudan	x	x	x	x	–	**	x
Kenya	–	x	x	x	x	x	x
Vietnam	x	x	x	x	x	–	x
Nicaragua	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Westbank/Gaza*							
Zambia	–	x	x	x	x	x	x
Serbia&Montenegro	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Bangladesh	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Rwanda	x	x	x	x	x	–	x
South Africa	x	x	x	**	x	x	x
Congo, dem. rep.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Mali	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

* Information not available

** Has signed but not ratified the agreement (as of 1 May 2005).

Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development.

Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.



SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

SE-105 25 Stockholm Sweden
Visiting address: Sveavägen 20
Telephone: +46-(0)8-698 50 00
Telefax: +46-(0)8-20 88 64
www.sida.se, sida@sida.se