

Sidas's Library Support to Central America

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**Department for Democracy
and Social Development**

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Sida Evaluation 06/34

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and Social Development**

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List of Acronyms

A.C.	Central America
Asdi	Agencia Sueca de Cooperación Internacional (The Spanish acronym for Sida)
B.P.	Spanish acronym for Public libraries
B.P.M.	Municipal Public Library (Biblioteca Pública Municipal)
C.A.	Central America
CONCULTURA	National Council for Culture and Art (Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y el Arte)
Dpto.	Department (Departamento)
FUNDIT	Fundación para el Desarrollo Integral de El Tejar
INC	Nicaraguan Institute of Culture (Instituto Nicaragüense de Cultura)
KB	Royal Library of Sweden
L.	Lempira monetary unit in Honduras
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
MECD	Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports in Nicaragua (Ministerio de Educación Cultura y Deportes)
PROBIGUA	Guatemalan Library Project (Proyecto de Bibliotecas de Guatemala)
Q	Quetzal, monetary unit in Guatemala
SAREC	The Department for Research Co-operation (Sida)
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

Executive Summary

Swedish co-operation in Library support to Central America has a long history and dates back to the 70s. A unique form of co-operation had developed where Swedish people engaged in library activities have interacted with people in Central America. This is an important Swedish resource base.

The present Programme was developed in 2001 and is a continuation of previous activities supported by Sida. The various partners have repeatedly expressed pride over the Logical Frame Work (LFA) used in the planning of the Swedish Library Support to Central America. This approach has been an important step forward, not least that the Programme was developed in Central America.

The concept Programme is somewhat misleading. Basically there are four bi-lateral programmes involving Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador and some joint activities entrusted to a Technical Commission. Still, the evaluation Team decided to analyze the various activities as a Programme and not as a number of bi-lateral programmes.

There are however a number of deficiencies in the planning approach. No base line data have been provided. Only some verifiable indicators have been developed but in general they have not been used.

Given the small budget the Programme has too ambitious objectives. The Programme lacks focus and has been engaged in various activities without any clear idea of what the over-all objective was. This reflects a lack of an in-depth discussion of what the problem(s) really was and what the Programme was to attain

The creation of a Technical Commission for the region was definitely an important step forward towards transferring the implementation to Central America. However, all of the people involved are working on a voluntary basis and are fully employed elsewhere. The members simply have not had the time for all the tasks which had to be undertaken. Moreover, the Technical Commission has no executive authority. And not least, no executive secretariat was established. In each of the four countries there are co-ordinators for the public libraries and they are meeting regularly.

This lack of a clear management structure of the Programme has resulted in that the Royal Library in Stockholm has played a key role. But it is next to impossible to co-ordinate such a complex Programme from Sweden. Unfortunately, the management issues were never fully addressed during the planning phase and there has been a lack of management competence in the Programme.

Investments have primarily been in physical infrastructure and too little investments in human capital. This has been particularly critical in the case of introduction of Personal Computers (PC) and information technology (IT).

Sida's general policy is to require externally audited accounts. This would be particularly important in Central America where corruption is rampant. With the exception of Honduras, no external auditing has been performed. This partly explains why it has not been possible to record how much money has actually been spent in relation to budgets.

This evaluation has faced serious difficulties in obtaining reliable statistical information. In spite of hard work in Central America, with Sida and the Royal Library in Stockholm basic statistical information has not been generated. For example, the number of visitors to public libraries has not been possible to obtain for all of the four countries visited.

For this reason the conclusions of the evaluation are difficult to substantiate. Nevertheless, the Team has visited several libraries in all the countries and feel comfortable about the conclusions. The Swedish support to public libraries in Central America, primarily in Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras and

El Salvador, has made a contribution to the development of public libraries in the region or at least maintaining them. The various training programmes have enabled people to interact and have been much appreciated. The important link to poverty eradication has not been fully appreciated by the Programme.

The Terms of Reference also raise a number of important specific issues and most of these could be addressed. In addition, the Team has discussed a series of other issues with a bearing on the Programme.

In the evaluative conclusions it is noted that public libraries face a difficult environment exacerbated by the lack of competent librarians. The commitment of the people is recognized but it is also noticed that this is not enough for the development of libraries.

One of lessons learned is that the inadequate planning of an intervention creates subsequent problems. Another one is that the establishment of an adequate management structure is a prerequisite for the success of a co-operation programme.

In the view of the Team, Sida faces *two strategic options*. One would be to face out the present Programme.

The other one, recommended by the Team, would be to make the ongoing Programme a truly Regional Programme, and with a stronger focus on poverty eradication. Because of Sida's long term involvement in the development of libraries in Central America, it is recommended that Sida should become the lead agency.

In this context, the proposed new regional Programme should focus more on reaching the rural populations where the impact on poverty eradication should be significant. This would be fully in line with the over-arching Swedish policy of poverty eradication. There is also scope for public-private partnerships.

To this end the combined experiences of Sida, involving NATUR (in the case of rural poverty eradication) and SAREC (university training and research in the area of library development) should be important. Some detailed recommendations on the next steps are also given. Unless there is a substantial increase in the budget, the Team would recommend the termination of the ongoing programme.

A number of *immediate recommendations* to Sida are provided, covering areas such as reporting procedures, a revision of the Programme objectives, the need for a more pro-active approach vis-à-vis the municipalities, addressing the incentive problem, criteria for the allocation of resources, addressing the needs of schoolchildren, linking the Programme more to poverty eradication and finally a general recommendation, for the time being, not to continue to introduce PC and IT technology, until a general policy has been established.

Resumen Ejecutivo

La cooperación sueca en apoyo a las Bibliotecas en Centro América tiene una larga trayectoria que llega hasta los setentas. Una forma única de cooperación se desarrolló donde los suecos se incorporaron a actividades de la biblioteca y han interactuado con personas de Centro América. Esto es importante para la base de recursos suecos.

El presente Programa fue desarrollado en 2001 y es la continuación de actividades previas apoyadas por Asdi. Los diferentes socios han expresado en varias ocasiones orgullo sobre trabajo con el Marco Lógico (LFA) usado en la planeación del apoyo sueco a las bibliotecas para Centroamérica.

Este acercamiento ha sido un importante paso hacia delante, no menos que el Programa fue desarrollado en Centro América.

El concepto Programa es un tanto engañoso. Básicamente existen cuatro programas bilaterales que incluyen Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala y El Salvador y algunas actividades comunes confiadas a una Comisión Técnica. No obstante, el equipo evaluador decidió analizar varias actividades como un Programa y no como un número de programas bilaterales.

Existe, sin embargo, un número de deficiencias en el acercamiento de planeamiento. No se ha proporcionado ninguna línea de base datos. Solamente se han desarrollado algunos indicadores comprobables pero en general no se han utilizado.

El pequeño presupuesto del Programa tiene objetivos muy ambiciosos. El Programa carece de enfoque y se ha involucrado en varias actividades sin una idea clara de lo que era el objetivo total. Esto refleja una falta de una discusión a profundidad de lo el problema(s) realmente era y que es lo que el Programa debería lograr.

La creación de una Comisión Técnica para la región fue definitivamente un paso importante hacia adelante para la transferencia de la puesta en práctica a Centro América Sin embargo, toda la gente involucrada está trabajando sobre una base voluntaria y está empleada en otra parte. Los miembros simplemente no han tenido tiempo para todas las tareas que deben ser emprendidas. Por otra parte, la Comisión Técnica no tiene autoridad ejecutiva. Y mucho menos, se estableció una secretaría ejecutiva. En cada uno de los cuatro países, existen coordinadores para las bibliotecas públicas y se reúnen regularmente.

La falta de una estructura de gerencia clara del Programa ha dado como resultado que la Biblioteca Real en Estocolmo tenga un rol clave. Pero es casi imposible coordinar un Programa tan complejo desde Suecia. Desafortunadamente, los problemas gerenciales nunca han sido tratados completamente durante la fase de planeamiento y ha existido una falta de competencia gerencial en el Programa.

Las inversiones han sido, primariamente, en infraestructura física y muy poca inversión en capital humano. Esto ha sido particularmente crítico en el caso de la introducción de computadoras personales (PC) y tecnología de la información (IT).

La política general de Asdi es requerir cuentas externamente auditadas. Esto seria particularmente importante en Centro América donde la corrupción esta desenfrenada. Con la excepción de Honduras, no se ha realizada ninguna auditoria externa. Esto explica de manera parcial porque no ha sido posible registrar cuanto dinero ha sido gastado con relación a los presupuestos.

Esta evaluación ha encontrado serias dificultades en obtener información estadística confiable. A pesar de todo el trabajo en Centro América, con Asdi y la Biblioteca Real en Estocolmo, no se ha generado información estadística básica. Por ejemplo, no ha sido posible obtener el número de visitantes a las bibliotecas públicas para los cuatro países visitados.

Por esta razón, las conclusiones de la evaluación son difíciles de verificar. Sin embargo, el equipo ha visitado diferentes bibliotecas en todos los países y se siente cómodo con las conclusiones. El apoyo Sueco a las bibliotecas públicas de Centroamérica, primordialmente en Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras y El Salvador, ha realizado una contribución en el desarrollo de las bibliotecas públicas de la región o al menos mantenerlas. Los diferentes programas de entrenamiento han permitido a las personas interactuar y ha sido muy apreciado. El enlace importante con la erradicación de la pobreza no ha sido apreciado totalmente en el Programa.

Los Términos de Referencia también plantean un número de cuestionamientos específicos importantes y la mayoría de estos podrían ser tratados. Además, el equipo ha discutido una serie de situaciones concernientes al Programa.

En las conclusiones evaluativas, se observa que las bibliotecas públicas hacen frente a un ambiente difícil, exacerbado por la falta de bibliotecarios profesionales. El compromiso de las personas se reconoce pero también se nota que no es suficiente para el desarrollo de las bibliotecas.

Una de las lecciones aprendidas es que el planeamiento inadecuado de una intervención crea problemas subsecuentes. Otra es que el establecimiento de una estructura gerencial es un prerequisite para el éxito de un programa de cooperación.

En la opinión del equipo, Asdi enfrenta dos opciones estratégicas. Una sería salir del presente Programa.

La otra, recomendada por este equipo, sería hacer del Programa en curso un programa verdaderamente regional, y con un fuerte enfoque en la erradicación de la pobreza. Debido al compromiso a largo plazo de Asdi con el desarrollo de las bibliotecas en Centro América, se recomienda que Asdi se convierta en la agencia líder (lead agency).

En este contexto, el Nuevo Programa regional propuesto debería enfocarse en alcanzar las poblaciones rurales donde el impacto en la erradicación de la pobreza sería significativo. Esto estaría totalmente en línea con la política sueca de erradicación de la pobreza. Existe también alcance para las sociedades público – privadas (private public partnerships).

Para este fin, las experiencias combinadas de Asdi, incluyendo NATUR (en el caso de la erradicación de la pobreza rural) y SAREC (entrenamiento e investigación universitaria en el área del desarrollo de las bibliotecas) deberían ser importantes. Algunas recomendaciones detalladas sobre los próximos pasos también son incluidas. A menos que exista un incremento sustancial en el presupuesto, el equipo recomienda la terminación del programa actual.

Un número de recomendaciones inmediatas para Asdi son incluidas, cubriendo tales áreas como procedimientos de reporte, revisión de los objetivos del problema, la necesidad de un acercamiento mas proactivo con las municipalidades, tratamiento del problema de incentivos, criterios para la asignación de recursos, tratamiento de las necesidades de los alumnos, enlazando mas el Programa con la erradicación de la pobreza y, finalmente, una recomendación general, por el momento, de no continuar la introducción de PC y tecnología IT, hasta que no se tenga una política al respecto.

Introduction

This evaluation commenced in February 2006 and a visit to Panama was made by the Team leader Dr. Tom Alberts on 12 February to have discussions with Guadalupe de Rivera attached to the National Library in Panama. She is a member of the Technical Commission and plays a key role in the Programme.

On 15 February Helen Guardado, former head of the National Library in El Salvador, joined the Team in Nicaragua where the methodology was further developed. Then followed visits to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. In all countries the National Libraries, the Model Libraries, Public libraries with and without Swedish support were visited.

The field visits were concluded with several meetings with the Technical Commission in El Salvador on 3 March. The major conclusions were also presented to the national co-ordinators of the Programme as well as to the participants of a training programme the same day.

Meetings were also held with senior Government officials in the various countries visited as well as with Swedish embassy personnel in Nicaragua, Guatemala and in Honduras.

The support to libraries in Central America has a long history. The Team only had a few days in each country and given the task it was necessary to quickly arrive at results. For this reason, sometimes our result oriented approach collided with normal courtesy. For this we apologize.

Sida has clearly decided that the present system with several bi-lateral agreements would not be continued. Only a truly regional programme would be considered. For this reason, at an early stage, the Team dwelled on the issue of a future regional programme in the light of the experiences of the ongoing Programme. In some instances this was interpreted as the Team was mainly a planning rather than an evaluation Team. We also apologize for any confusion we have caused in this respect. In no circumstances have we promised any future Sida support. We still believe that we have made a contribution in outlining next steps in the Recommendations.

This evaluation has encountered serious methodological constraints as is discussed in this Report. It is even possible to question whether the Programme can be evaluated at all. However, based on the great number of visits to libraries in the various countries, the Team is of the opinion that the major conclusions and recommendations remain valid.

We have met with many people who all have made significant contributions to this study. The commitment and dedication of the people met to the development of libraries in Central America made us work very hard. Hopefully, this Report can be useful for a future Programme. In any case, your contributions are highly appreciated.

This Report largely follows the Sida manual for evaluations. Since most of the documentation is in Spanish we have opted to insert our translation while also providing the original Spanish text.

The Evaluated Intervention

Swedish support to public libraries in Central America has a long history and commenced at the beginning of the 80s in Nicaragua.¹ Subsequently Honduras (1993), Guatemala (1996) and El Salvador (1997) were included.

The four countries have a combined population of more than thirty million people and differ in many respects. As can be seen from the table below there is a close relationship between per capita income and the Human Development Index (HDI), with the exception of Guatemala. Guatemala has a relatively high per capita income but has the lowest HDI. The reason is that the income and wealth distribution is more unequal in this country.

Country	Ranking Human Development Index	Per Capita Income USD	Population Million
Honduras	115	2 600	6.9
Nicaragua	118	2 500	5.3
Guatemala	121	4 100	12.0
El Salvador	103	4 900	6.6
Total			30.8

Honduras and Nicaragua are the poorest countries and form part of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. This means that their foreign debts have been significantly reduced and that there are Poverty Eradication Programmes. This issue will be discussed further, because there is an important link between poverty eradication and library support.

The Programme was developed in 2001 in the region and a Logical Framework Approach (LFA) was used. The group which prepared the programme consisted of representatives from Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. They later became the Technical Commission.

The Objectives of the Programme

Two over-all objectives were formulated and they were:

- *Development objective:* Strengthening of the capacity of the users of the National and Public Libraries so that they in the long run will actively participate in society. (*Fortalecimiento de las capacidades del usuario de la Biblioteca Nacional y Bibliotecas Públicas y a largo plazo participa activamente en la sociedad.*)
- *Programme objective:* That the users of National and Public libraries will have access to quality services. More and better books, trained employees, library open to different cultural activities, better equipped libraries and that the user considers having ownership to both the National Library and Public Libraries. (*Los usuarios de la Bibliotecas Nacionales y Bibliotecas Públicas acceden a servicios de calidad; Más y mejores libros, personal capacitado, biblioteca abierta a diferentes manifestaciones culturales, bibliotecas equipadas y el usuario reconoce a Biblioteca Nacional y a las Bibliotecas Públicas como un recurso propio.*)

These over-all objectives have been broken down into 6 results (intermediary objectives):

1. The user should have access to a better equipped library. (*Usuario de la Biblioteca accede a una biblioteca mejor equipada.*)
2. Promotion of reading in the Public Libraries with priority assigned to children. (*Promoción de la lectura en las Bibliotecas Públicas, con énfasis en la niñez.*)

¹ See for example Gärdemalm 2005, and a series of articles in DN by Ritva Jonsson in 1983. See also *Utveckling av det Regionala Bibliotekssamarbetet i Centralamerika 1990 till 2001* by Britt-Mari Pelling.

3. That the Public Libraries will be viewed as local focal points of information and cultural promotion. *Las Bibliotecas Públicas se proyectan como centros locales de información y promoción cultural.)*
4. That the National Library will improve its function of conserving the national heritage, and in the quality of its services, with improved stocks of books, adequately trained staff serving the users. *(La Biblioteca Nacional mejorada en su función de conservación del patrimonio, en la calidad del servicio, con bibliografía mejorada, personal capacitado en atención al usuario y equipo básico.)*
5. The system of Public Libraries will be strengthened. *(El sistema de Bibliotecas Públicas es fortalecido.)*
6. That regional capacity will be strengthened. *(Capacidades fortalecidas a nivel regional.)*

For reasons of organisation we have preferred to discuss the objectives here rather than in the section on findings.

There is a lack of a discussion of what the problem(s) the Programme should address and the links between what the Programme could realistically attain with very limited resources (USD 1.5 million over a period of 4 years) are weak.

In their comments on the Draft Report the Royal Library has pointed out that the development of the Programme should be viewed as a learning process. The evaluation Team has no problems with this approach. But if this were the case the learning aspects should have been included among the objectives of the Programme.

There is also a confusion regarding the objectives of the public libraries at large and those of the Swedish support. The Swedish support was planned for 4 years with a limited budget. The role of the libraries at large and that of the Swedish support have not been adequately addressed. What should the Swedish support have accomplished in four years was never addressed.

One can also raise the question whether the objectives of the Programme are relevant with respect to Swedish development objectives. Poverty eradication has increasingly become important in international development co-operation. One of the major contributions of the Programme has been in providing access to school texts of students. This problem is never recognized in the objectives. Moreover, the problems of the rural areas have not been addressed.

No baseline study was made so there is a lack of systematic information regarding the situation in 2001, prior to the starting of the Programme.

There is also a lack of verifiable indicators. So when in 2002 Sida decided to provide financing there was not really more than a first outline of a Programme.

In order to overcome this deficiency In January 2003 a *Complemento* was prepared for the 6 results. The number of indicators proposed was very high.

Result	No. of indicators
1	25
2	19
3	? ²
4	24
5	8

For each country there are then country specific indicators.

² No information provided in the report for result number 3.

Working with such a large number of indicators is neither practical nor useful. The focus should have been on a smaller number of indicators with easily obtainable statistical information. There is no discussion on the sources of the information. Moreover, the issue of who is responsible for collecting and processing the information is lacking.

It was becoming increasingly evident that it was necessary to be able to assess the impact of the Programme. A first Draft was prepared in 2004 which was subsequently modified towards the end of 2005 *Estimación de impacto al finalizar el proyecto*. It represents a further improvement but many verifiable indicators are still missing. During the visits in Central America it became evident that this methodology for impact assessment was not being used.

Methodology

There is a lot of unsystematic information available. In order to be able to have some idea of the impact a limited series of very basic questions were elaborated and was forwarded on 12 February 2006³. In addition the Team visited several public libraries in all of the countries. To this end a questionnaire was developed, See Appendix 5. Semi structured interviews were conducted. Moreover, systematic information on expenditures was requested.

Although there is much statistical information available, very little has been processed. Moreover, the quality can be questioned. The available processed statistical information was very limited. Even basic data on such as the number of visitors to the public libraries were lacking. For this reason the Team decided to set aside some time in Guatemala and Honduras to attempt to bring the raw data into tables. In the end the Team decided to abandon the attempts to quantify the impact of Swedish support and primarily base the conclusions on the various interviews held. Moreover, the visits to public libraries in the various countries provided sufficient insight to provide some evaluative conclusions.

As can be seen from the Table below there are 380 public libraries in the four Central American countries of which 70, or 18% have been supported by Sida.

Public libraries in four countries in Central America

Country	Number of Public libraries	Model library	Sida supported libraries
Nicaragua	142	1	15
Guatemala	117	1	20
Honduras	106	1	17
El Salvador	15	1	14
Total	380	4	66

³ The following questions were discussed with Mrs. Maria Holmqvist, consultant in planning and monitoring for the Programme. She agreed that the questions were relevant and that the Library Support Programme should be able to provide the information. Still, during the course of work, some modifications were made. Moreover, most of the information requested could not be delivered.

- Número de bibliotecas en el año 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005. Por país y región.
- Número de libros adquiridos por biblioteca y año, 2002, 2003, 2004 y 2005. Libros existentes en el año 2001.
- Número de personas que prestan libros 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005. Por género y edad. (Note. This question was subsequently reformulated since many libraries do not lend books. Instead the number of visitors was used as an indicator.)
- Número de bibliotecarios por género y año, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 y 2005.
- Perfil de formación, por género y edad
- Número de libros prestados por año, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 y 2005. (Many of the libraries do not lend books so this indicator was dropped.)
- Cuantos días de formación recibieron los bibliotecarios (un día 8 horas de trabajo) en 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005
- Horario de abertura <10 horas por semana, 10–30 horas y 30>, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 y 2005. (This indicator was subsequently transformed into opening schedule during a week.)

It was not possible to obtain systematic statistical information on the growth of public libraries in the four countries since 2001.

In Guatemala there are 117 libraries. The Team attempted to obtain statistical information on the 21 public libraries supported by Sida for the period 2001–2005. Consistent statistical information could only be compiled for 2 libraries.

In Honduras, 18 libraries have received support and consistent statistical information could only be obtained for 7.

Findings

The methodology used was discussed earlier.

The total budget for the Programme is in the order of USD 1.5 million for the period 2002–2005. Of the budget 30% was set aside for the support to the National Libraries.

Budget 2002–2005			Population		
(000 USD)			(million)		
Bi-lateral programme					
Honduras	331.6	27%	6.9	22%	
Nicaragua	320.0	26%	5.3	17%	
Guatemala	333.5	27%	12.0	39%	
El Salvador	242.1	20%	6.6	21%	
Sub-Total	1 227.2		83%	30.8	100%
Regional Programme					
	259.6		17%		
Total	1 486.8		100%		

It should be kept in mind that Sida has disbursed the funds through the Royal Library (KB) in Sweden. KB has in turn forwarded funds to the four participating countries and also to the Regional Programme. In many cases KB has made expenditures directly.

The Technical Commission has provided some information. Out of a total budget for 2002–2005 of USD 1.5 million, about 1.0 was budgeted to be spent in 2005. Out of this USD 700 thousand were actually spent. This means that there were about USD 300 thousand of unspent money, roughly SEK 2.4 million.. The Word files provided by the Royal Library in Stockholm suggest that there was SEK 1.3 million of unspent money.

Given the time constraint, it has not been possible to probe deeper into the flow of funds. What appears clear is that a significant part of the resources available has not been used. The administrative costs of KB seem to be reasonable, and appear to be in the order of 10%.

The total population of the four countries is about 31 million. The budget allocations seem to be more of a result of the history of Swedish Development rather than based on criteria such as population and/or human development indicators.

Food for thought

Corruption Perception Index

Country	Ranking	Score
El Salvador	51	4.2
Honduras	109	2.6
Nicaragua	111	2.6
Guatemala	120	2.5

Source: Transparency International, Annual Report 2006, pp. 29

Good governance and transparency are key factors in international development. A score of 10 represents an ideal situation. The least corrupt countries are Iceland (9.7), Finland (9.6) and New Zealand (9.6). Sweden has a score of 9.2. The total number of countries analysed is 159. A score below 5 is considered as "rampant corruption".

According to the budget figures Guatemala has 12% of the population and its budget share is 39%. At the same time it is the most corrupt country of the four. At the other end is El Salvador, the least corrupt country and with a budget share which corresponds roughly to its share in the population.

Sida has a general policy to carry out external auditing of its support. Given the fact that corruption is a serious problem in Central America it is surprising that only one external auditing has been carried out (Honduras).

BI-Lateral Co-Operation

The figures below were collected during the visit to Nicaragua. The conclusions from Nicaragua are generally valid for the other countries as well, though substantive statistical information is lacking. At this stage the Team had not studied in detail the collection and processing of the statistical information.

The case study of Nicaragua with some additional information

142 Public libraries

Nicaragua has an interesting development of its public libraries. During the Sandinista period there were 33 public libraries and by the year 1997 it had increased to 47 and by 2001 this number had increased to 132. The existing number, 142 was attained in 2003. It is not expected that this number will increase within the foreseeable future. According to the people interviewed this positive result could not have been attained without Swedish support.

The detailed statistics can be found in Appendix ??

Number of visitors to public libraries in Nicaragua (000)	
2005	1 128
2001	409
Growth	176%

As can be seen from the table above there has been a spectacular growth in the number of visitors between 2001 and 2005.

In the case of El Salvador the development of visitors to the public libraries has been quite different as can be seen from the table below.

El Salvador – visitors to public libraries 2001–2005

Year	Men	Women	Women	Total	Report ⁴
2001	97 358	79 462	44,9%	176 820	190 672
2002	95 732	81 944	46,1%	177 676	177 726
2003	313 021	182 817	36,9%	495 838	471 094
2004	116 886	118 462	50,3%	235 348	277 057
2005	76 381	62 674	45,1%	139 055	112 287

Food for thought

Solna is a small town outside Stockholm and has about 60 000 inhabitants. It has two public libraries and the major one is located in Solna Centrum. The number of visitors is roughly 500 000 and virtual visitors are in the order of 200 000.

Of the adult visitors, 57% were women.

The opening hours are 10–19 during weekdays and 11–16 on Saturdays and 12–16 during Sundays. The chief librarian is responsible for her budget being in the order of USD 2.8 million. More than 50% of the staff, in total 32, has university training. For employment a B.A. degree and a “Magister” degree, 1–2 years are required. 94% of the employed are female.

The library has about 230 000 of media publications of which the major part is books.

Librarian education takes place at the Universities of Uppsala, Umeå, Borås and Lund. In Sweden there are about 10 PhD students and there are about 5 full professors.

The gender dimension presents some interesting results as can be seen in the table below.

Gender dimension

Year	Females	Males
2005	72%	28%
2001	73%	27%

While females attend schools less than males, in the case of visiting public libraries women dominate with more than seventy per cent both in 2001 and 2005.

These figures from Nicaragua are rather surprising. In the libraries in Guatemala receiving Swedish support 49% were women⁴. The data from Honduras do not provide any information on gender. In the case of the National Library in El Salvador more than 50% of the visitors were women. In the case of public libraries in El Salvador less than 50% were women.

In 2005 the 142 public libraries employed 180 persons and of these 148 are women, or 79%. The lack of professional librarians is evidenced by the fact that only 17 are librarians. The situation in the other countries is similar. In libraries receiving Swedish support in for example Honduras, out of a total of 82 employees, 68 are females (83%). In El Salvador, out of a total of 38 librarians 31 were females (82%). Only 8 had university training.

The environment and sustainable use of natural resources are important Swedish development objectives. The Box below gives an example of a good way of approaching the issue.

⁴ The data are based on the period July–December 2005.

Food for thought

When visiting one of the libraries a municipality group dealing with environmental issues used the library premises. We decided to talk to them and asked the group what role the library could perform in improving the environment.

The female official representing the municipality informed us about the various contacts they had with the library, not least in forwarding the municipal plans for environmental protection.

16 public libraries receiving Swedish support

When reviewing the results of the Swedish support it should be remembered that the total budget for library support for the 4 year period was in the order of USD 320 thousand. Of these roughly half has been spent, i.e. USD 160 thousand and of these 70% has been allocated to the 16 public libraries component, or roughly USD 110 000 or USD 28 000 per library which means roughly 7 000 per library and year. This includes for example costs for training programmes.

Number of visitors to Swedish supported Public libraries in Nicaragua

	Number (000)
Year	
2005	565
2001	408
Growth	39%

There has been a significant growth in the number of visitors, 39%, between 2001 and 2005. What is puzzling is that the growth among the 16 libraries supported by Sweden has been much lower than for all the 142 public libraries. (39% versus 176%). The issue was raised in Nicaragua but no explanation could be obtained.

With respect to gender the Swedish supported libraries have the same relationship as for all public libraries which can be seen from the table below.

Gender dimension

Swedish supported libraries

Year	Females	Males
2005	72%	28%
2001	73%	27%

There has been an important growth in the number of books lent, 49%, as can be seen from the table below.

Books lent in libraries with Swedish support

(000)	
2005	905
2001	609
Growth	49%

Other issues

The great majority of visitors are schoolchildren but no statistical information was provided. The same situation could be observed in all the countries visited. Schoolbooks are scarce and not even the primary school students receive the needed books. The books are not available in the market so it is not possible to buy them. The Ministry of Education is not providing schoolbooks to the libraries and it is not possible for the programme to acquire them in the market.

This situation is very disturbing. During the visits to public libraries the Team could note that several children were using one schoolbook. And many books were out of date. It is a well-known fact the reading skills are pre-requisites for development. Unless the school children have access to schoolbooks poverty eradication programmes will fail in a longer perspective. Sweden is supporting the SWAp in education and is also supporting the development of libraries.

Many heads of public libraries are teachers and employed by the Ministry of education. They work only five hours per day. Others are employed by the Ministry of Culture and work 8 hours per day. In many cases this means that the libraries are closed when people are not working. (After 17 hours and during Saturdays and Sundays.)

The HIPC initiative and the subsequent poverty eradication programmes with their PRSs have not benefited the public libraries, performing a strategic role in the education of the Nicaraguan children. Synergetic effects by linking for example the agricultural research and extension system's (INTA) initiatives with schools have not been explored. Introducing new agricultural technology is a prerequisite for future development. Here the public libraries have an important role to play.

The public libraries are mainly reaching the main urban areas and poverty is mainly concentrated to the rural areas. Moreover, the opening hours are not related to the needs of the people.

Food for thought

In Estelí where a new library was inaugurated recently, the library has an agreement with a University which means that the library can be kept open after 17:00 hours and also on Saturdays.

New innovative solutions are needed. For example, the Swedish postal services have closed down most of their establishments and are now relying on various stores throughout the country. The public libraries could reach agreements with shops in the countryside to lend books. Most of these shops have transport.

World wide there is a process of decentralisation. The Team has noted that many alcaldías (municipalities) are now receiving funding directly from the central government. This has important implications for the development of public libraries. Given the scarcity of public resources for library development, only libraries which receive support from the local governments should be supported.

National Libraries and some other Issues

Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador have a common independence: September 15, 1821 and their National Libraries were established in the post-independence era, which means that they are libraries of more than 100 years of existence. During all those years they have suffered different changes: some have functioned as university libraries and others as public libraries.

At the present, the National Libraries of these four countries have been changing gradually towards a library that organizes and promotes the national bibliography, even though it maintains always an obliged role of public-scholar library because there are no sufficient well-organized public and school libraries in each country to satisfy the information needs of the students and the public in general. In most cases, the Public Libraries have developed with the help of the National Libraries and receive technical advice and training from the National Library.

This assessment team visited each one of these countries and had the opportunity of being at the National Library, the Model Library, a public library that receives support of Sida funds and another one that does not receive Sida support.

In these visits we investigated the professional education of the persons that work in the libraries and it was proved that Guatemala and Honduras do not have professional personnel (with university degree) graduated in library science. Honduras has never had a library science school, but in the case of Guatemala there exists the Bachelor of Arts in Library Science in the University of San Carlos and however none of these professionals work at the National Library, due to low salary. El Salvador and Nicaragua do have professional personnel. This is why training has been very important and this is where the Swedish funds have supported this flaw.

Due to this situation, we propose that Sweden may continue with training and support, with a special project: the professional education of the people who work at the National and Public Libraries; which can be done on a regional level so that the National and Public Libraries may have professional librarians that allow a better development of the services that are offered to the community so that these services may reach the rural sector to support the reduction of poverty.

As to the received training, most of it has been done in the Central American region. The workshops or meetings have met the necessities expressed by each library. Some courses have been on a national level and others on a Central American level. In the visit realized to these countries, only two countries indicated the courses received and the amount of hours for each one of them.

Regarding the support received by the National Libraries it can be mentioned that the training of personnel, acquisition of furniture and equipment, books and educational toys have been of great benefit. The meetings of the Directors of the National Libraries in Central America and some meetings of ABINIA (National Libraries of Latin America and the Caribbean Association) have also been financed, as well as support for the participation in IFLA conference.

Regarding impact, the National Libraries and the Public Libraries have had a strategic impact on the societies of each one of the countries because the libraries have improved their staff, collections, furniture and equipment, even though there is still mucho to. The libraries need to continue their development in order to have more presence in the rural sector.

Swedish support to Central American libraries is very relevant. Because of this support, the libraries have improved in the training of personnel, the books and other materials collections, the furniture, the equipment (especially the one for children), but this is not enough. That is why we propose that the program continue on a regional basis and on a more coordinated fashion, with policies for the acquisition of new technologies, personnel training, and normalization of the statistics, continuation of the Central American bibliography compilation and with a cooperative Central American cataloging project.

In conclusion, the program should be one package for the Central American region, one in which each country provides inputs to the different projects. Also, the existing resources in the region should be exploited, like the case of the National Library of Panamá and the training of personnel that takes place in Costa Rica.

The National libraries in the four countries are facing serious difficulties. The experiences of Panama can serve as an interesting approach. In 1997, it was managed as a public entity and there were 42 employees and the number of visitors per month was in the order of 2 000.

Subsequently a foundation was created and the management of the library was sub-contracted by the Government of Panama to the foundation. The Board members are highly respected and represent major parts of society, including the private sector.

In 2005, the library staff had been reduced to 40 employees while the number of visitors per month had risen from about 2 000 to 18 000. Because of this outsourcing and improved management the library has received significant support from Taiwan and Japan. Private companies in Panama have also become sponsors.

In the case of El Salvador the number of visitors (Usuarios Atendidos) has decreased and the difficulties faced by the National Libraries clearly comes out. In the year 2 000 there were 134 thousand visitors and by the year 2 005 this figure had dropped to 70 thousand. Similarly, the number of bibliography consultations (Consultas Bibliográficas) they had dropped from 174 to 89 thousand during the same period.

In the development discourse some concepts are frequently used. One is the notion of *public goods*. Library services most likely belong to this category. In summary, relying on the private markets would result in too little of library services. This is the rationale for public intervention.

Having said this, a government does not necessarily have to provide the service. It can be *outsourced*, implemented by a non government organization.

Finally, the idea is that the private sector has much to offer. In this context the notion of *public private partnership* has been developed.

It is in this context the Panamanian experiences are so interesting.

Specific Evaluation Questions

- *To what extent has the programme achieved the objectives? If not, which are the reasons? Are there unexpected positive or negative effects of the programme?*

The Programme objectives are vague. Moreover, there are no baseline data and hardly any verifiable indicators have been used. It can be argued that the Programme cannot be evaluated.

Moreover, there is a certain confusion regarding the objectives of libraries in Central America on one hand and the objectives of the Swedish Programme during the period 2002–2005. Still, the Team's visits to public libraries and the national libraries in Central America suggest that over-all objectives have been attained but to a much lower extent than proposed in the objectives. This can be explained by the fact the resources available have been quite limited in relation to over ambitious objectives.

- *Is the programme relevant from the perspective of the poor and from a right's perspective?*

Is the programme relevant to and effective in relation to the Sida policies on poverty reduction and cultural support?

The Programme has had an impact in poverty reduction. This has primarily been achieved by providing access to schoolbooks and reading space to students. This in turn has enabled students to learn to read and write. This has been one of the most important accomplishments of the Programme. However, this accomplishment was never introduced as a specific objective and can be considered as a very positive side effect of the Programme.

- *How is the issue of gender dealt with?*

The gender issue has not been explicitly dealt with by the Programme. There is a serious imbalance since females predominate among the employees of the Programme. Regarding the users of the public libraries the statistical evidence is inconclusive.

- *Has environmental issues been relevant to the programme?*

Environmental issues have been important and have been addressed in some instances.

- *How are the libraries used and by who?*

The public libraries are mainly used by students. The Programme has not adequately met the needs

of the students. In theory this responsibility lies with the Ministries of Education. In practice the public libraries here perform an important role

- *Has the programme been designed and implemented in a way that enhances national partnership and ownership? Has the LFA method had any impact on this issue?*

The national ownership has been enhanced by the Programme. The LFA method has only been partially implemented. Too much focus has been on short term activities and results. Many verifiable indicators have been identified but very little has been attained in practice.

- *Has the idea with a model Public Library been carried out and if so in what way has it served as a model for other libraries?*

In all the countries, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, model libraries have been implemented. In this respect the objectives of the Programme have been attained. However, in the view of the Team, these libraries have been very expensive and cannot serve as model for other public libraries. Too many resources have been invested in physical infrastructure and too little in human resources.

- *Are the bilateral support and the regional programme integrated and supportive of each other?*

The Regional Programme has permitted the establishment of training programmes which appear to have yielded significant benefits. The interaction of actors has resulted in apparently significantly benefits. However, the bilateral programmes have to a large extent been operating independently of each other.

- *Has the support to the NGOs Probigua (Guatemala) and Compartir (Honduras) added value to the programme and if so in what ways?*

The roles of NGOs in the development processes are complicated. There are other NGOs involved in library support in the region.

Probigua is basically a family company and it appears to be doing a good job in a cost-efficient way. Compartir is basically working in the slums and the library support is but one component in its social services programme.

As far as can be judged from available information both organisations are cost-effective. The role of NGOs in the development of library services would warrant a special study.

- *Has the Swedish partner – Royal Library, National Library of Sweden – managed the programme regarding implementing, follow-up, technical assistance, administration etc? And has Sida complied with its responsibilities in relation to the Central American and Swedish partners?*

The Royal Library has performed important supporting functions. Its limited management capacities have hampered the development of the Programme. More of the executive functions should have been transferred to Central America, thus reducing the cumbersome bureaucratic processes. It might have also been more cost-effective.

Sida has delegated most of the implementation to the Royal Library. The issue of transferring more of the implementation responsibility to the Central American partners has not been sufficiently addressed.

- *Has the libraries' position and standing in society been enhanced by the programme in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua? How has the National Libraries' relation to the Ministries of Culture in those countries evolved during the programme?*

The libraries of Central America have developed with Swedish support. In every country visited it is the only type of international cooperation they receive in order to continue improving the services they offer to the community. If this support were discontinued, the libraries would have a much smaller growth in for example the number of visitors. Swedish support has been fundamental for the improvement of the libraries' services, but the amount assigned is not enough. More resources

are needed to prepare a new programme that includes the training of personnel on a college-level, and other projects of common benefit like a policy of acquisition of new technologies that include the training of personnel for its use, the management and marketing of libraries, among others. Also, it is important to work on a project that guarantees the non-rotation of key personnel in the libraries, principally if work is going to be done on a project of training of personnel for the public and national libraries.

- *Is there any value added in supporting regional programmes?*

Regional programmes have several advantages. One of the more important aspects is that there are economies of scale in providing training. The cost per student is lower than it would be to provide training within a country.

In addition, the interaction between key stakeholders has provided positive synergetic effects, not least with respect to learning.

- *How is the support linked to the goals and priorities in the present strategy for Central America?*

The present Strategy covers the period 2001–2005 and has become out of date. A new Strategy is being developed. Though, it is not expected that it will change its focus on “support for regional programmes and regional sharing of experiences.”

Other Issues

The Introduction of PCs and IT

The scale varies regarding the introduction of PCs between the Central American countries but the problems are similar.

In some cases public libraries have received PCs from other sources than Sida. In one public library there were four different PCs and four different monitors. To service these will be very difficult.

In most cases the libraries have received the latest technology. Very fast PCs have been acquired and the libraries will never be able to use more than a fraction of the capacity. Instead the libraries should have purchased slightly older models and in this way obtain a significantly lower price. In most cases Microsoft Office Professional were delivered with the PCs which implies much higher costs. There is free software 100% compatible with Microsoft Office. However, on the positive side, in one country the Ministry's license was used for the public libraries.

In most cases Windows XP Professional was installed and that can be considered as a good choice. In many libraries former operating systems have been upgraded to XP. However, this requires more RAM memory, at least 512 MB. None of the upgraded computers reviewed had more than 256 MB of RAM. Most of the newly purchased PCs had less than 512 MB of RAM. RAM memory is very cheap and would yield significant benefits.

The maintenance of the PCs is deficient and many PCs had hard disks which were very much fragmented. As a result the PCs operated at a slower rate than possible and the effective life time of the hard disk will be lowered.

Many of the visited libraries had received TVs and DVD players. Hardly anybody seemed to be aware of the fact that TV cards can be incorporated into the PCs and DVD players can also be incorporated into PCs at a relatively low cost.

None of the libraries visited had one large flat screen which could be used for projecting movies, photos etc.

In no country was there an IT programme or strategy. Hardly any training has been provided.

This lack of training has resulted in a very low utilization of the PCs. For example, the registration of users is done manually and Excel is not used for preparing statistics. As a result the statistical information is often incomplete and often erroneous.

In no place visited was Excel or any other software used for processing statistical information. Statistical information between co-operating countries has not been standardised. No common software for accounting for the Programme is being used. The accounting system appears to be deficient (See for example the auditing report on Honduras from 2004 and the follow-up).

In one country the Team was told that the Royal Library in Sweden had requested that statistical information should be provided in Word. The Team could verify that the Royal Library was using Word in providing information on Budgets. Moreover, the summation was wrong.

In several cases IT technology has been introduced and in most cases the staff did not have adequate training to provide services as for example using the Google search engine. In no country had alternative solutions for providing access to the Internet been considered. For example, in most cases there are Internet cafes available in the vicinity of the public libraries. The cost for one hour of Internet is lower than a bottle of beer. Discussions with the Internet cafes suggested that significant discounts could be obtained.

Nobody has given serious thoughts on maintenance. Sufficient attention to problems regarding viruses and spam has not been given. Improper use of the Internet has not been considered. In one library a sign was posted that users were not allowed to view pornography. It will not be possible to control the use of the Internet and other solutions will be needed.

In most libraries there was a charge for the use of the Internet. How the money generated will be accounted for is a difficult problem. Moreover, in some cases the public libraries were competing with Internet cafes by offering a lower price. This is unfair competition.

The introduction of PC technology exhibits practically all errors that are possible to commit. Internet is being prematurely introduced.⁵

In recommendations some suggestions on how to improve the present chaotic situation will be provided.

Opening Hours

In practically all public libraries visited the opening hours were related to the working schedules of public entities. This means that a major part of the adult population won't have access to the public libraries. Although the situation varies from country to country, there is plenty of scope to make the public libraries more accessible to the population at large.

Poverty Reduction and Decentralization

Where the HIPC (Highly Indebted Poor Countries) initiative is being implemented, Nicaragua and Honduras, there are Poverty Reduction Strategies. In this context the Programme has been next to ineffective in securing financing for some of its activities, particularly related to schoolchildren having access to text books. In neither Nicaragua nor in Honduras had senior Government staff related to poverty eradication been approached. The idea of approaching donors to elicit support had not been considered.

Moreover, there is a process of decentralization by which an increasing share of available resources will be channelled through the municipalities. The public libraries are usually headed by a female teacher and they will need much support in defending the interests of the public libraries. In this context effective lobbying has become increasingly important. Planning processes at the municipal levels are often headed by males with a technical background. They often have a strong preference for physical

⁵ Tom Alberts has been responsible for the introduction of PC Technology both in Sweden (Plastal, CL Stålkonstruktioner, Appelqvists Fryshus in 1984–85 in Simrishamn) and in Ethiopia (SEAD 1985) and in Mozambique (Ifloa 1987).

infrastructure and support to libraries and cultural activities will in this context receive low priority. Still, there is scope for improvements as the following two examples will show.

Two examples

In one public library the roof was leaking so that the books had to be covered with plastic film. The library was receiving practically no support from the municipality. When a locally elected representative became aware of the situation she immediately promised to assist the library.

In another library, the Team had a discussion with the Mayor and the Head of the Municipality Administration regarding the constrained opening hours. The Mayor immediately thought of changing the working hours of the staff so as to enable adults access to the library.

Allocation of Resources

It has earlier been pointed out that there has been a lack of criteria in allocating resources. In addition in each country the resources have been allocated more or less equally to each library. This means that a library with 5 000 visitors per month would receive as much as a library with 500 visitors per month. Also, the support by the municipalities has been largely ignored. It would seem logical to concentrate support to municipalities where there is a commitment to support the public libraries.

Practically all resources have benefited the urban areas, primarily regional urban capitals. The rural areas have in general been deprived of the services of public libraries.

Sustainability

Swedish support has been important in sustaining the public libraries in the four Central American countries. Without Swedish support many of the libraries would rapidly deteriorate. For example, the number of relevant books would rapidly decrease. On the other hand, the training received by the people working would remain valid for many years. Nevertheless, in general it must be assumed that the Swedish support is not sustainable.

Reporting and Monitoring

There are different levels for reporting. Each country co-ordinator should have a monitoring/reporting system. The variables to be included need to be established. In this context the Technical Commission should have established some common methodology for reporting.

The number of visitors to the libraries would obviously be one key variable. Another aspect would be the frequency of reporting. In some cases the libraries report monthly in other cases bi-monthly and in other cases every six months. In some cases they do not report at all. And one international NGO simply refused to provide information on the number of visitors. The point of departure must be the verified needs for information at the country level.

The national co-ordinators would then have to prepare at least yearly reports for various stakeholders such as the line Ministry. There is a general tendency to go into too much detail and the result is that reports are never read and consequently not used.

Also, a reporting/monitoring system must take into account that there is often a limited administrative capacity. Moreover, officials usually have other tasks which they should attend to. Reporting requirements often infringe on the normal activities.

The reporting needs of the Royal Library and Sida are different. As it is now the official at the Royal Library has intimate knowledge of the Programme and the official at Sida has long experience of the support to libraries. But there is a need for institutional memory.

The different countries prepare their own reports, as well as the regional component. This means that there are 5 reports and they are then discussed and a Programme report is subsequently prepared. Because of the heterogeneity of the various country reports the Programme Report varies in its presentation. As a result it becomes difficult to know to what extent the Programme is on track and what has really been accomplished. Much of the information could also be annexed to the major Report.

Evaluative Conclusions

Public libraries in Central America have for many years faced a difficult situation. Budgetary allocations have been very limited. Though it is difficult to substantiate, the Programme has been important in at least maintaining the services provided by public libraries in the four Central American countries. It is probable that there has been some expansion.

There are few people with a professional training as librarians. And in many cases their training has become obsolete in view of the rapid development of library services. There is a need to revisit the role of public libraries in the socio-economic development in Central America. More of this is covered in the Recommendations.

The Programme has some monitoring features but they have been inadequate for this evaluation.

Most of the people met have had a strong commitment to the development of libraries, but this is not enough to secure an impact.

Lessons Learned

Any development programme should clearly identify the major problem(s) to be addressed.

The Programme has been engaged in a multitude of activities, instead of focussing on one or two major problems to be addressed. There has been a confusion between on the one hand the roles of public libraries and what the Programme should accomplish on the other hand.

There has been a general tendency to focus on monitoring yearly activities and results and less on the impact of the various activities. The lesson is that the donor agency has to secure that the impact of an intervention is properly monitored.

The Programme has lacked a clear management structure. As a result, the allocation of scarce resources has yielded too little benefits in relation to costs. In other words, during the design of a Programme the issue of management has to be seriously considered.

Recommendations

Strategic Recommendations

From a management point of view the present programme has serious deficiencies which have been discussed elsewhere. It is recommended that Sida support the establishment of a regional, Central American Library Programme (CALP). It is further recommended, because of the long co-operation in this field, Sida becomes the lead agency.

In order to establish CALP several steps have to be made. It is recommended to:

- First, to carry out a *regional survey* on the situation of libraries, not limited to public libraries, in Central America (diagnostics). Such a survey should focus on the possibilities of regional co-operation. This study could probably be done in 3 months' time. There will be a need to contract a senior person, co-ordinator, fluent in both English and Spanish. ToR have to be developed. In addition two assistants will be needed and office facilities. Sida and the Royal Library in Sweden would have to agree on the use of some of the unspent funds. The total cost of such a study would be in the order of USD 40 000;
- Agree on a *new Regional Programme*. When such a study has been prepared it will be necessary to agree on areas of intervention of the new programme. The co-ordinator of the survey could play an important role here. A new Regional Library Programme will have to be developed in close co-operation with major stakeholders in Central America, such as the library systems, end users, government officials, civic society and the private sector. The new Regional Programme could also be financed by other donors than Sida. It is recommended that focus should be on the rural sector at large;
- Explore *economies of scale*. There are economies of scale in regional co-operation. For example it should be possible to obtain significant discounts in the purchase of sets of books for the public libraries in Central America. It is recommended that this possibility is studied further;
- Establish a *Central American policy for PC and IT technology*. At present the introduction of Personal Computer (PC) technology and Information Technology (IT) is in general anarchic. For example, in one public library in Nicaragua there were four PCs of different brands and again four different brands of monitors. DVD players are being bought when most PCs have such drives incorporated. Software is expensive and there are cheap or even free software compatible with e.g. Microsoft Office. Digital movies can be directly seen on PCs. TV cards can be inserted into the PC or the monitor so there is really no need to purchase TV sets. There is an urgent need to establish a Central American Policy for the introduction of PCs and IT.
It could include the definition of a standard module for public libraries. Many problems will occur and lots of training will be needed. One avenue would be to reach an agreement with a private company on service. If a PC breaks down it is simply returned and a functioning replacement is forwarded to the library. Back-up procedures would have to be established and implemented;
- Promote *private public sector partnerships*. The private sector should play an important role in the development of library services. Some positive experiences have already been gained. It is recommended to set up a working group to explore the various options available.
- Explore possibilities of obtaining funding from *donors other than Sida*. In this context it is recommended that Sida becomes the lead agency; and not least
- Review the *needs for training* and to establish regional training programmes.

Immediate Recommendations

It is recommended that Sida support the development of an adequate reporting system, taking into account the different needs and levels of stakeholders. This would entail the establishment of a limited number of monitoring indicators, including expenditures.

Closely related to the previous recommendation, there might also be a need to revisit the over-all objectives (2) and the intermediary objectives-results (6). Sida could assist the Programme to sharper focus on what key problem(s) should be addressed.

The Programme has not sufficiently addressed the needs of schoolchildren who are the major users of the libraries. It is recommended that an increasing share of the budgets is allocated to their needs.

The municipalities play an increasing role in the development of libraries. It is recommended that Sida supports a dialogue with the municipalities with the objective of securing their support for the library development. In municipalities where no support is forthcoming, the Sida financing should cease.

There is a need to establish an incentive system so as to retain qualified personnel. There are various ways to accomplish this and there is a need to establish a policy. It is recommended that Sida analyses this issue further.

Within a given country and between countries, the resources should be allocated to activities which yield the greatest benefits. It is recommended that considers a more flexible funding approach.

Since the Programme has an important poverty eradication dimension, Sida might consider supporting a dialogue so that the Programme can be funded by the Poverty eradication programmes at least in Nicaragua and Honduras.

In general support to the introduction of PC and IT technology should cease until the matter has been studied further.

Appendix 1. Terms of Reference

1. Evaluation Purpose

The objective of this evaluation is to examine the results of the Swedish support to the library sector in Central America 2002–2005.

The present agreements on support to the library sector in Central America will expire during 2007. This evaluation is undertaken to facilitate a decision whether to continue with the support beyond 2007. The evaluation is expected to provide information on performance and lessons learned and serve as a basis for future decisions.

The evaluation should assess:

1. Whether the objectives have been achieved
2. The programme's relevance and effectiveness for poverty reduction, for Sida's policy on cultural co-operation, as well as for the priorities for the co-operating partners
3. Whether the programme has had any strategic impact on the library sector and the role of libraries in society
4. Whether achieved results are sustainable and
5. The programme's risk management

Furthermore, the evaluation should analyse whether the programme has been methodologically well managed and efficient regarding achievements and the use of resources. An assessment of the programme's monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be done as well as the division of responsibilities.

The evaluation should present recommendations to Sida, the Embassies, and to the Swedish and Central American national institutions on all aspects above.

2. Background

The Swedish support to the Library sector in Central America initially started with support to the National Library in Nicaragua in 1987. From the very beginning the Swedish Royal Library was involved. The support expanded during the 90's to include the National Libraries in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. The basis for the on-going support to the library sector is the project document "Proyecto Regional de Bibliotecas de America Central 2002–2006". This project document has been formulated exclusively by representatives of the library sector in Central America using the LFA-method. LFA seminars are held every year for writing financial and narrative reports and preparing annual plans for the coming year. A Swedish expert on LFA has been moderator for the seminars.

Already from the beginning the Director of the National Library in Nicaragua wanted to establish a network among all the Directors in Central America. To begin with Sida funded yearly meetings for the Directors of the National Libraries in the region (seven countries). For those who participated in those regional meetings it became obvious that there were many advantages with a close cooperation in the library sector and during the nineties the regional program expanded and became an established form of co-operation.

The present support to the library sector is divided into five parts; to the National Libraries and their Public Libraries in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua (Sweden has bilateral Specific

Agreements with those countries) and support to regional capacity building to all seven countries (Belize, Costa Rica, Panama, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua) in Central America. Sida has signed an agreement with the Royal Library, National Library (RL) of Sweden which covers all five parts of the programme. Together with the National Libraries the RL is responsible for planning, implementation, follow-up and reporting of the programme. RL's in relation to Sida is to inform Sida on the proceeding of programme activities and furnish Sida with financial and result analysis reports in connection with annual reviews. All the funds for the programme is paid by Sida to RL which in its turn transfers funds to Central America.

Under the four bilateral agreements the funds are transferred to respective Ministry of Culture.

The main objectives (as stated in the Specific Agreements) of the programme are to

- Contribute to democracy and poverty reduction by strenghtening the capacity of the library users and their participation in society
- Develop the ability of the National Library and the Public Libraries to offer the library users quality service in the form of more and better books, trained personnel, libraries that are open for different cultural manifestations and better equipment in the libraries
- To ensure that the users recognize the National and Public Libraries as their own resources.

The participants in the LFA-seminars for preparing the project document formulated six expected results and in short they read as follows:

- A model public library shall be set up in each of the four prioritised countries
- Activities to promote literature/reading shall increase – special emphasis on children
- Public Libraries have developed into cultural/information centres in some of the prioritised countries
- The National Libraries have strenghtened their roles as caretakers of the printed cultural heritage
- The system of Public Libraries have been strenghtened through special efforts by the National Libraries
- On a regional level the capacity of the National and Public Libraries have increased.

For the Library Programme in Central America an amount SEK 19,9 million has disbursed by Sida. This amount covers also costs for LFA seminars and RL's administration.

3. Evaluation Questions

- To what extent has the programme achieved the objectives? If not, which are the reasons? Are there unexpected positive or negative effects of the programme?
- Is the programme relevant from the perspective of the poor and from a right's perspective?
- Is the programme relevant to and effective in relation to the Sida policies on poverty reduction and cultural support?
- How is the issue of gender dealt with?
- Has environmental issues been relevant to the programme?
- How are the libraries used and by who?
- Has the programme been designed and implemented in a way that enhances national partnership

and ownership? Has the LFA method had any impact on this issue?

- Has the idea with a model Public Library been carried out and if so in what way has it served as a model for other libraries?
- Are the bilateral support and the regional programme integrated and supportive of each other?
- Has the support to the NGOs Probigua (Guatemala) and Compartir (Honduras) added value to the programme and if so in what ways?
- Has the Swedish partner – Royal Library, National Library of Sweden – managed the programme regarding implementing, follow-up, technical assistance, administration etc? And has Sida complied with its responsibilities in relation to the Central American and Swedish partners?
- Has the libraries' position and standing in society been enhanced by the programme in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua? How has the National Libraries' relation to the Ministries of Culture in those countries evolved during the programme?
- Is there any value added in supporting *regional* programmes?
- How is the support linked to the goals and priorities in the present strategy for Central America?

4. Recommendations and lessons learned

The evaluation should present recommendations in relation to the evaluation questions above. The recommendations will form the basis for the Division's for Culture & Media input in the process of elaborating a new co-operation strategy with Central America.

Sida may consider continued support to the library sector beyond 2006. Such programme would be regional and not include bilateral support to National Libraries. The evaluation should be analytical and present recommendations on such a continuation. Recommendations regarding the support's content and focus should be presented. The evaluation should also present suggestions for an administrative focal point in Central America.

5. Work Plan and Schedule

The evaluation should be done during maximum seven weeks, during the period January 30, 2006 and March 6, 2006.

The evaluation report should be written in English and should not exceed 35 pages, excluding annexes. The draft report should be submitted to Sida electronically and in paper no later than March 3, 2006 for comments from Sida. The evaluation report should follow Sida's evaluation manual. Sida should not later than March 10, 2006 submit their comments to the consultants. The final report is to be submitted to Sida no later than March 15, 2006 electronically and in two paper copies.

Sida will have the copyright to the final version of the evaluation report. The evaluation report must be presented in a way that enables publications without further editing.

It is proposed that the evaluation team visits Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

The evaluation team shall meet with Comision Tecnica as a whole or individually with those who are members of the Comision.

The evaluation team shall interview responsible staff of the Swedish Embassies in the region and the staff of the responsible ministries in the four countries where Sida has signed bilateral agreements.

6. Evaluation Team

The evaluation team should consist of two consultants (one of which is the team leader) with the following qualifications:

- one person with well documented previous experience of evaluating development cooperation projects and well acquainted with Latin America
- one person with well documented knowledge of libraries and library development in Central America
- fluency in Spanish and English
- knowledge of Swedish development co-operation policies
- knowledge of gender issues

Appendix 2. Persons Contacted

Listado de Personas Entrevistadas Proyecto Asdi al Sector de Bibliotecas en America Central 2002–2005

List of Persons contacted

Panama (13–15 de Febrero, 2006)

Guadalupe de Rivera	Centro de Comunicaciones del Proyecto Regional de Bibliotecas de C.A. Miembro de la Comisión Técnica	(507) 221 8360	grivera@binal.ac.pa
María Majela Brenes	Directora Administrativa Biblioteca Nacional	(507) 224 9466	memori@binal.ac.pa
Gina Paredes	Contabilista, Biblioteca nacional		

Nicaragua (15–20 de febrero, 2006)

Jimmy Alvarado	Director Biblioteca Nacional Miembro de la Comisión Técnica	(505) 222 2722	binanic@tmx.com.ni
Nora Zavala	Subdirectora Biblioteca Nacional Coordinadora de las Bibliotecas Públicas	(505) 228 3090	no_zavala@hotmail.com
Julio Valle Castillo	Director General Instituto Nicaragüense de Cultura		
Sandra Román Solano	Directora Ejecutiva INC		
José de la Cruz Hurtado	Dirección de Planificación INC	(505) 222 2444	delacruzjose2@yahoo.com.
Alejandro Rayo	Alcalde del Municipio de San Isidro, Departamento de Matagalpa		
María Esperanza Zuniga	Directora de Relaciones de la Comunidad, Departamento de Jinotepe		
Cándida Cordero	Concejal propietaria Alcaldía de Jinotepe		
Susana Janson Landin	Primera Secretaria, Cooperación Internacional, Asdi	(505) 255 8400	susana.janson.landin@sida.se
Sara Martínez Bergström	Coordinadora-Nicaragua, Departamento de América Latina, Asdi	46(0)8 698 40 27	
Felix Pedro Rodriguez	Director, Biblioteca modelo de Estelí		

Guatemala (20–24 de febrero, 2006)

Esther Martínez de Lima	Directora Biblioteca Nacional	(502) 2232 2443	esthermdelima@yahoo.com
Rosa Melida Villanueva	Coordinadora de B.P.	(502) 2232 2443	binaguar@yahoo.com
Margarito Marroquín	Contador	(502) 2232 2443	binaguar@yahoo.com
Victor Hugo Paz Juarez	Auxiliar de Informatica	(502) 2232 2443	vicopaz@hotmail.com
Rigoberto Zamora Charruc	Director de Red de B.P. PROBIGUA	(502) 7832 2998	probigua@conexion.com.gt
Francisco Guevara	Comisión Técnica	(502) 2435 9830	fguevara@hotmail.com
Daniel Guzmán	Ex Coordinador de las Biblioteca Públicas	(502) 5406 2945	fundevea@interlnett.com
Ulla Britt Hedvall	Asdi		
Sara Martinez	Asdi, Estocolmo		

Honduras (24 de febrero al 1 de marzo, 2006)

Rosa María Nieto	Directora de Programas COMPARTIR	(504) 239 2587	compartir@multidata.hn
Yadira Saucedo	Coordinadora de bibliotecas COMPARTIR	(504) 231 0155	yadirade2@yahoo.com
Gustavo Reyes	Contador proyecto COMPARTIR	(504) 239 3683	admoncompartir@multidata.hn
Ubelia Celis	Directora General del Libro y el Documento Secretaría de Cultura, Artes y Deportes	(504) 236 7922	ubeliac@yahoo.com compc@sdnhon.org.hn

José Antonio Funes	Director de la Biblioteca Nacional	(504) 220 1746 (504) 920 2541	poetafunes@yahoo.com
Héctor Luna	Ex Director de la Biblioteca Nacional	(504) 937 2231	hluna54@yahoo.com.mx
Ondina Valladares	Asistente de Bibliotecas públicas municipales	(504) 222 8577	
Ina Eriksson	Consejera, Sección para la cooperación con Honduras, Embajada de Suecia–Guatemala	(504) 221 3544	ina.eriksson@sida.se
María Bendel	Oficial de programas, Sección para la cooperación con Honduras, Embajada de Suecia–Guatemala	(504) 221 3544	maria.bendel@sida.se
Wilfredo Guevara	Alcalde del Municipio de San Pedro Tutule, Departamento La Paz	(754) 7215	alcaldiatutule@yahoo.cp,
Irma Dorys Vásquez	Biblioteca Publica Municipal de San Pedro Tutule, departamento de La Paz		
Ana Patricia Betancourt	Contadora de la Alcaldía del Municipio de Cane, Departamento de La Paz		
Danubia Cordón	Biblioteca Pública del municipio de La Paz, Departamento de La Paz		
Ada Luz Reyes	Biblioteca Pública Municipal, Cabecera de Comayagua, Departamento de Comayagua		

El Salvador (1–5 de marzo, 2006)

Manlio Argueta	Director Biblioteca Nacional	(503) 2281 8847	manlio_argueta@yahoo.com.mx
Araceli Avalos	Coordinadora de B.P.	(503) 2281 2383	aracelyavalos@hotmail.com
Douglas Reyes	Administrador Biblioteca Nacional Comisión Técnica	(503) 2281 2397	doreybran@yahoo.com
Pedro Miranda Molina	Alcalde de Santiago Texacuangos	(503) 2220 8443	
Fidelina Fernández de Miranda	Directora de la Biblioteca Pública Municipal	(503) 220 8228	fidelina@elsalvador.com
Griselda Polanco	B.P.M. de San Martín		
María del Carmen Molina	Directora B.P. Chapultepec	(503) 2222 9669	Mcmolina1993@yahoo.com
Ricardo Bracamonte	Director Nacional de Promoción y Difusión Cultural (CONCULTURA)	(503) 2221 4373	ricardobracamonte@concultura.gob.sv
José Manuel Bonilla	Director Nacional de Espacios de Desarrollo Cultural (CONCULTURA)	(503) 2510 5324	josemanuel.bonilla@concultura.gob.sv
Rigoberto Alfonso Ricán	Asistente de la D.N. de Espacios Culturales	(503) 2221 4364	rigobertorincan@latinmail.com
Manlio Argueta	Director de la Biblioteca Nacional	(503) 2281 8847	manlio_argueta@yahoo.com.mx
Aracely Avalos	Coordinadora de la Red de B. Públicas	(503) 2281 2383	aracelyavalos@hotmail.com
Douglas H. Reyes	Administrador de la Biblioteca Nacional Miembro de la Comisión Técnica	(503) 2281 2397	
Silvia Martínez	Ex miembro de la Comisión Técnica	503) 2271 3024	silvia.martinez@mined.gob.sv

Sweden

Britt Mari Pelling	Royal Library Sweden, Officer in charge of the library support	(46) 8 463 40 03	britt-mari.pelling@kb.se
Lillemor Lind	Senior Officer Sida, responsible for library support	(46) 8 698 52 53	lillemor.lind@sida.se
Karin Markensten	Formerly Sida officer who prepared the decision for library support	(46) 8 604 77 56	karin.markensten@gmail.com
Annika Magnusson	Head of Division for Culture and Media	(46) 8 698 50 00	annika.magnusson@sida.se
Maria Holmqvist	LFA consultant to the Royal Library	(46) 705 42 59 57	sebas@stockholm.mail.telia.com

Appendix 3. Document Consulted

Informe Regional de bibliotecas de America Central (2002–2004). March 2005.

Comisión Técnica Centroamericana

Proyecto Regional de Bibliotecas Centroamericanas (2002–2006). *Informe de Monitoreo*. Biblioteca Nacional de Guatemala. Guatemala, October 2005.

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Regional Strategy. Central America and the Caribbean. 1 January 2001– 31 December 2005. Regeringskansliet, UD, Stockholm, 2001.

Others

Héctor Roberto Luna Sánchez. Director of the National Library in Honduras. *Informe de avances y obstáculos de la biblioteca nacional 2002–2005*. Tegucigalpa, 31 January 2006.

Final Versión. *Seguimiento auditoria de finanzas y de compras y contrataciones en los proyectos desarrollados por Suecia en la Secretaría de Cultura de Honduras*. BDO Consulting Group, 8 August 2005.

Convenio entre Suecia y Honduras sobre la Cooperación Regional de Bibliotecas. Letter from Swedish Embassy in Guatemala dated 28 November 2002.

Gärdemalm, Jimmy. *Om BNRD/KB:s biblioteksprojekt i Nicaragua 1987–*. Luleå, maj 2005.

Wangel, Jennie. *Folkbibliotek som demokratifrämjare. Litteratur – en frizon bakom murarna*.

Various reports prepared in Central America.

Appendix 4. Questionnaire

Visitas a Bibliotecas

País _____ Fecha _____

Nombre de la Biblioteca

Recibe apoyo de Suecia?

Nombre del responsable (director, jefe)

Fecha de fundación

Personal

Formación del personal

Horario al público

Salario

Colecciones que posee

Cantidad de libros que posee la biblioteca

Cantidad de libros recibidos en el 2005 con
fondos suecos

Cantidad de libros escolares que posee

Cantidad de usuarios atendidos en el 2005

Cantidad de libros prestados en el 2005

Quien hace la selección de libros

Mobiliario que posee

Equipo que posee

Papel de la alcaldía respecto a las bibliotecas

Tiene club de amigos de la biblioteca?

Otros

Appendix 5. Libraries Visited

Directorio de Bibliotecas Visitadas Durante la Consultoría

Pais	Red de B.P.	Modelo	Priorizadas	No priorizadas
Nicaragua	142	1	15	126
Guatemala	117	1	20	96
Honduras	106	1	17	88
El Salvador	15	1	14	0
Total	380	4	66	310

Nicaragua (Red B.P. 142 = 1 modelo, 15 priorizadas y 126 no priorizadas)

Nombre	Apoyo Asdi	Ubicación	Responsable
Biblioteca Pública Modelo de Estelí "Dr. Samuel Meza	SI	Departamento de Estelí	Lic. Felix Pedro Flores
Biblioteca Pública de La Trinidad "Rubén Darío"	NO	Departamento de Estelí	
Biblioteca Pública Municipal de San Isidro	NO	Departamento de Matagalpa	
Nicaragua: Biblioteca Pública "Margarita Gómez	SI	Departamento de Carazo	Marta Rosa Narváez
Biblioteca Nacional de Nicaragua "Rubén Darío"	SI	Ciudad de Managua	Jimmy Alvarado

Guatemala (Red B.P.117 = 1 modelo, 20 priorizadas y 96 no priorizadas)

PROBIGUA – Biblioteca Móvil	SI	Municipio Parramos, Chimaltenango	
PROBIGUA – Modelo "Escuela Normal Pedro Molina"	SI	Departamento de Chimaltenango	Agustín Ordóñez
PROBIGUA – Biblioteca Municipal "Nancy Rittmaster de España"	NO	Municipio El Tejar, Chimaltenango	Sonia Raquel de Morales
		Panajachel	
		Patzún	
Biblioteca Nacional "Luis Cardoza y Aragón"	SI	Ciudad de Guatemala	Esther Martínez de Lima

Honduras (Red B.P. 106 = 1 modelo, 17 priorizadas y 88 no priorizadas)

COMPARTIR Biblioteca Móvil	SI	Comunidad Los Pinos, Tegucigalpa	Eddie Suazo
COMPARTIR Biblioteca Comunitaria	S	Comunidad Villanueva 3	Gloria Zulema Molina
Biblioteca Nacional	SI	Ciudad de Tegucigalpa	José Antonio Funes
B.P. San Pedro Tutule	NO	Municipio Tutule, Dpto. La Paz	Irma Dorys Vásquez
B.P.M. de Cane	NO	Municipio Cane, Dpto. La Paz	Brenda Rivera
Casa de la Cultura de La Paz	SI	La Paz, cabecera departamental	Danubia Cordón
B.P.M. Comayagua	SI	Cabecera departamental de Comayagua	Ada Luz Reyes
B.P.M. de Tegucigalpa (modelo)	SI	Ciudad de Tegucigalpa	Juana Rosa Aguilar

El Salvador Red B.P. 15 = 1 modelo y 14 priorizadas

Biblioteca Pública Modelo "Chapultepec"	SI	San Salvador	Carmen Molina
Biblioteca Nacional "Francisco Gaviria"	SI	San Salvador	Manlio Argueta
Biblioteca Pública Municipal "Nicolás de la Cruz"	SI	Municipio de Santiago Texacuan- gos, Dpto. de San Salvador	Fidelina Fernández de Miranda
Biblioteca Pública Municipal de San Martín	SI	Municipio de San Martín, San Salvador	Ana Griselda Polanco Valladares

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Department for Africa
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Asia Department
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Börje Svensson, Enrico Delaco, Andreas Högberg
Sekretariatet för utvärdering och intern revision
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Department for Latin America, Department for Infrastructure and Economic Cooperation
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Department for Democracy and Social Development
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Margareta de Goys, Asmara Nababan, Henrik Alffram
Department for Democracy and Social Development

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