

Assessment of Sida's Support for Human Rights and Democracy

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Background	4
Scope and layout of the study	5
Part I: Charting Sida's Support for Human Rights and Democracy:	7
Introduction:	7
Method:	7
General distribution of Sida's support to democracy, good governance and human rights:.....	8
Part II: An Inventory of Problems Discussed in Evaluations of Sida's Human Rights and Democracy Projects/Programs	14
Introduction	14
Scope and selection	14
Categorisation	14
Method	15
Results	15
Conclusions	16
Part III Interventions and Transformations: Program Theory Summarized, Reconstructed and Compared	18
Introduction	18
Focusing on program theory	18
Evaluating program theory	19
Discerning program theory	20
The model of analysis	21
The countries studied	23
Comparing Program Theories	24
The Actor Chain	25
Mechanisms	27
Actors and mechanisms combined:	29
Lack of assumptions	30
Findings and Suggestions	31
How to use the results?	32
Overall Conclusions	34
Lessons Learnt	35
References	37
General References	37
<i>References Part I</i>	37
<i>References Part II</i>	37
<i>References Part III</i>	37
Annex I: Method (in Swedish)	39

Introduction

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), is currently exploring new ways to evaluate projects and programs in the sector of support for democracy and human rights. As is well known, previous attempts, both from Sida and from other development agencies, have run up against problems related to the attribution of effects and the use of indicators to measure success in this sector. The present paper thus discusses an alternative or complementary approach which focuses on the program theory underpinning efforts in the area of human rights and democracy, rather than focusing on actual projects.

In that sense, the present study constitutes a first step aimed at assessing general traits connected to Swedish assistance to democracy. It is a desk-study, in the sense that it has merely relied on compiling existing information in the form of statistics, evaluation reports, and project documents. On this basis, it attempts to paint a general picture of democracy support from three different angles:

- The geographical distribution of democracy support.
- The experiences and problems identified in previous evaluations of democracy support.
- The program theory manifested in project documents and assessment memos.

A desk-study can never aspire to being anything more than a first step. It may make observations and raise certain points, but these are by necessity tentative and subject to empirical confirmation through field studies. Hence, what the present report aims to do is to provide a general overview of the field, and to indicate directions for further discussion or enquiry.

Background

Sida currently supports human rights and democracy projects in developing and transitioning countries with more than 450 million USD annually.¹ The support is broadly divided into efforts towards participatory democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and public sector management/efficiency.

It is often recognised that projects in this area face difficulties with regard to evaluation and assessment of results. In particular, two related problems are present in the area.² In the first place, measuring results with regard to contested and indistinct concepts such as power, participation and influence is difficult and often arbitrary. Second, even if a definition of success can be found and agreed on, establishing causality between the project/program in question and overall political outcomes is seldom straight-forward. In sum and in the poignant phrase of Thomas Carothers, “democracy promoters have tended either to underdo evaluations, carrying them out hap-hazardly, using superficial methods, or to overdo them, elaborating complex, rigid methods...”³

Similarly, there have been several attempts to evaluate Sida’s projects in the area of democracy, good governance and human rights. Apart from a large number of project evaluations (some of which will be discussed in more detail below), there have been more comprehensive attempts to evaluate the field.

For present purposes, the attempt that comes closest to the issues that will be discussed below is Sida/UTV’s previous major project on evaluation of democracy support, summarized in the report “The Evaluability of Democracy and Human Rights Projects” (Sida Studies in Evaluation 00/3). As with the present project, the focus of that project was on the design and planning of projects rather than on their actual execution.

This study proceeded through a thorough analysis – including interviews with intended beneficiaries for instance – of 28 projects in four different countries. For each project, 19 variables including the specification and feasibility of goals, possibility of attribution, availability of data, along with the coherence and realism of the program logic were assessed. Thus, as the title of the report implies, focus was on evaluability rather than on results.

Among the problems encountered by the evaluators, the confusion of goals and purposes, improbability of attribution, and lack of specification of goals and intended outputs figure prominently. With regard to the last point, the evaluators noted that “a main cause of low evaluability is poor specification of objectives” (p. 74).

Another report in a similar vein was the Swedish Emergency Management Agency’s project “Democratisation and Reconciliation in Post-Intrastate Conflict Situations: An Evaluation of the International Contributions to Democratisation and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia 1995–2004”. In the authors own words, this project “probe[s] into the policy logic of the actors, that is, reconstruct[s] the perception of the actors in how democratisation can be achieved.”⁴ As with the previously cited report, focus is heavily on the goals of the interventions in question. In the end though, treatment of these issues remains on a rather lofty level, and without going into details of individual

1 Sidas Årsredovisning (Stockholm: Sida 2004:137)

2 Thomas Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), p. 281ff.

3 Carothers, 1999

4 Anna Jarstad, “International Assistance to Democratisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia: Synthesis Report”. (Uppsala: Department of Peace and Conflict Research, 2005).

projects. Accordingly, conclusions are also rather general (typically of the kind; “absence of a clear reconciliation policy”, or the observation that guiding assumptions “are not based in theory”⁵) in nature.

These studies share with the present one a focus on project design and assumption as the primary target of assessment. This implies that actual results are by and large left aside. This is not to say that this is an unimportant consideration, though. On the contrary, it is only when considering results, that one can conclusively say anything about the key issues of impact, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness.

But even as this limitation must be kept in mind, the study that follows will attempt to make three main contributions:

In the first place, it attempts to provide an overview over a thematic area that has been renowned for its complicated nature. Secondly, it attempts to draw together evidence from one source of information on what works and what does not in the field of democracy promotion; namely the evaluations that have been performed of Sida-supported projects in the area. Finally, through an assessment of the “democracy portfolios” in four different countries, it attempts to reveal some of the assumptions and theoretical constructs that feature prominently in Swedish support to democracy promotion.

In all of these areas, this study cannot obviously claim to be anything close to comprehensive. It should be recognised that it represents a first attempt, and that the sample of countries on which it relies is limited and that its representativity can thus be doubted. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the present study can to some extent pave the way for more well-designed result-based evaluations, and serve as a basis for discussing the overall focus and design of Swedish support to democracy, good governance, and human rights.

Finally, it should be noted that the present assessment holds an additional purpose, which consists in testing the limits of the approach employed here. The report relies on three simple techniques to paint an overall picture of Sida’s work in the area of democracy and human rights. Its production has, by evaluation standards, been relatively inexpensive. This approach raises two questions: First, whether the results that are thus produced have a value even as they contain no information on actual results or effects on democratic development. Below, we will of course argue that that is the case: If problems, inconsistencies, doubtful or unrealistic assumptions are found, these can be discussed without the need to refer to result-based evidence. But this claim can be disputed, and it may be argued that such indications are of no value at all if not followed by evidence on results and effects.

Even if the independent value of the kind of results presented below is accepted however, the question remains whether the approach employed here can be replicated in other areas. We believe so. The overview, juxtaposition of allocations with needs, compilation of evaluation results, and program theory assessment performed here, can be used for most subjects and areas in which allocation is not self-evident, results are unsure, and program theories subject to discussion, something which goes for most of Sida’s work.

Scope and layout of the study

As indicated above, the present assessment thus contains three parts, which can be said to illustrate different aspects of the field of democracy support, namely its distribution, underlying theories, and past experiences:

5 Camilla Elowson, Swedish assistance to democratisation and reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia, December 2004, Uppsala University, both examples from p. 48.

A first part of the study attempted to provide an overview over the recipient countries and institutions for the democracy programmes supported by Sida. This part of the study was based on data from early 2005. Apart from a simple geographical distribution, this part of the essay also classifies Sida's contributions according to a scale indicating degree of political centralisation – from government to civil society. The overall question is thus where and with whom Sida works in order to promote democracy, good governance and human rights. (The result is similar to the Facts and Figures-presentation that other DESO units publish.⁶)

The second part relies on an inventory of all evaluations available concerning Sida support to human rights and democracy projects/programs. The focus lay on the frequency with which different types of problems are brought forward in the evaluation. Problems were categorized into program theory problems, implementation problems and contextual problems. In all, 34 evaluations were considered. As will be demonstrated below, one finding of this exercise was that problems and deficiencies connected to the theoretical underpinnings, ambitions and connection to context appear to be much more frequent than problems related to things such as material resources, practical implementation, etc.

In a third stage, four countries (Bolivia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, South Africa and Vietnam) were selected to constitute case studies. This provided us with a stratified sample of projects, which was coded and systematised according to a set of variables (a model of analysis) chosen to describe the program theory of each project. Thereafter, any patterns of thought and assumptions found are juxtaposed with considerations of validity, plausibility, and feasibility. In all, this part for the analysis thus allows for the assessment of how programmes and projects are structured, and what assumptions and theories are most common in this area of support.

⁶ See e.g. *Gender Equality Enriches the World*, DESO, Sida 2005.

Part I: Charting Sida's Support for Human Rights and Democracy

Introduction

This initial part of the assessment discusses the distribution of Sida-supported projects for democracy and human rights. In doing so, a number of overall questions are addressed:

- Obviously, a recently democratised country in which democratic practices have yet to be fully established, may be in as much need of such support as an authoritarian state in which aspirations for democracy and civil liberties are still being suppressed. Even so, however, the question of whether Sida finances democracy-supporting programmes in democracies or authoritarian states is interesting as it informs about the differing contexts and environments in which such programmes take place.
- Furthermore, this distribution can be discussed on the basis of suitability to the overall goal of democracy promotion. Does it appear that funding for democracy go to the countries most in need of such cooperation?
- More interesting than the aggregate geographical distribution however, is the question of whom Sida cooperates with in each country. In order to gauge this, all contributions are divided according to whether the counter-part is located in the central state organs, in decentralised or autonomous organs, among connecting institutions such as parties or the mass media, or in civil society. Spontaneously, one would expect support for democracy in authoritarian states to go overwhelmingly to activists in civil society, whereas programmes in recently democratised states may be directed to the newly reformed state administration. As will be demonstrated below, however, the opposite is often the case.

Method

The focus of the following pages are Sida-contributions, as registered in the internal administrative system, PLUS, as of latest the 21st of March 2005, determined with action program Human Rights/Democracy as main purpose. Moreover, the investigation has been limited to focus on contributions designated as P (planned) or A (agreed), and which have a DAA 2005 (distributed agreed amount 2005) exceeding zero. Hence, they represent all contributions that were open during the date in question.

However, regional support has been excluded from the investigation, as we have chosen to focus on support to separate nations. All contributions adhering to Russian regions, which in the PLUS system are treated as separate posts, have been combined into one: Russia. The same goes for contributions in Serbia and/or Montenegro.

Working on the basis of the coding and classification in the PLUS administrative system is associated with certain problems. For instance, although a coding guide exists, there is still space for influence by the responsible officer's personal interpretation of different concepts. Nevertheless, this material is the best available and should, at large samples in quantitative treatment and in deeper case studies of smaller samples, give relatively good validity and reliability. For a more thorough description of selection and method referring to each "list", please see Annex II G Method.

General distribution of Sida's support to democracy, good governance and human rights

According to the definition and the selections described above:

- At the time of measurement Sida's ongoing support for democracy and human rights embraced just below 580 million USD (4200 million SEK).
- Average size of a contribution was 1,2 million USD (8,5 million SEK)
- Per country, the average was almost 9,1 million USD (66 million SEK).

Moving beyond the aggregate level, a first query concerns the geographical distribution of contributions. Table 1.1 presents the 50 countries in which DAA was higher than 10.000.000 SEK. (In total, the list contains 68 countries, which shows the extreme spread of Swedish development cooperation.) Apart from amounts, data from Freedom House as to the extent to which political rights and civil liberties are respected in a country is presented. In this scale, a seven (7) represents the case where rights and liberties are least respected, and a one (1) a case of great respect. Based on these scores each country is being rated as "Free", "Partly Free" or "Not Free".

This source of data should be treated with some caution. It represents however, one of the most commonly used indicators of the extent to which a country approximates democratic ideals of respect for rights and liberties, and is frequently employed in social sciences.

Table 1.1 Partner countries with DAA for DHR exceeding 10 million SEK

Land	DAA 2005	DAA Total	FH 2004			FH 2005		
			PR	CL	Status	PR	CL	Status
1. Vietnam	77 575 302	301 558 964	7	6	NF	7	6	NF
2. Nicaragua	68 461 664	259 761 102	3	3	PF	3	3	PF
3. Kambodja	69 582 825	243 293 153	6	5	NF	6	5	NF
4. Sydafrika	77 164 456	229 838 964	1	2	F	1	2	F
5. Tanzania	58 507 790	207 576 300	4	3	PF	4	3	PF
6. Honduras	55 847 000	185 610 000	3	3	PF	3	3	PF
7. Sri Lanka	58 948 579	185 166 510	3	3	PF	3	3	PF
8. Kenya	67 818 412	183 382 000	3	3	PF	3	3	PF
9. Moçambique	61 737 332	178 337 198	3	4	PF	3	4	PF
10. Guatemala	54 564 673	163 489 000	4	4	PF	4	4	PF
11. Bosnien och Hercegovina	67 324 436	163 348 309	4	4	PF	4	3▲	PF
12. Bolivia	37 528 749	160 900 000	3	3	PF	3	3	PF
13. Ryssland	66 038 140	148 806 794	5	5	PF	6▼	5	PF
14. Zimbabwe	34 783 091	110 060 283	6	6	NF	7▼	6	NF
15. Etiopien	18 717 352	109 850 100	5	5	PF	5	5	PF
16. Uganda	36 916 506	93 192 885	5	4	PF	5	4	PF
17. Ockuperat Palestinskt område	40 519 320	78 819 320	5*	6	NF	5*	6	NF
18. Zambia	23 572 691	78 083 874	4	4	PF	4	4	PF
19. Colombia	18 934 860	76 002 860	4	4	PF	4	4	PF
20. Laos	19 947 045	74 900 000	7	6	NF	7	6	NF
21. Rwanda	18 806 782	62 806 228	6	5	NF	6	5	NF

Land	DAA 2005	DAA Total	FH 2004			FH 2005		
			PR	CL	Status	PR	CL	Status
22. Indonesien	26 362 463	61 300 000	3	4	PF	3	4	PF
23. Namibia	8 040 000	53 109 757	2	3	F	2	3	F
24. Kina	16 649 000	50 490 000	7	6	NF	7	6	NF
25. Albanien	20 717 650	47 879 408	3	3	PF	3	3	PF
26. Peru	13 392 841	46 754 590	2	3	F	2	3	F
27. Indien	8 200 000	41 000 000	2	3	F	2	3	F
28. Ukraina	10 225 665	35 391 671	4	4	PF	4	3▲	PF
29. Vitryssland	14 096 173	35 130 000	6	6	NF	7▼	6	NF
30. El Salvador	9 873 848	30 512 300	2	3	F	2	3	F
31. Georgien	14 775 076	30 289 000	4	4	PF	3▲	4	PF
32. Makedonien	19 485 618	29 399 802	3	3	PF	3	3	PF
33. Serbien och Montenegro	50 602 580	95 520 017	3	3	PF	3	3	PF
34. Tadzjikistan	9 725 000	26 230 000	6	5	NF	6	5	NF
35. Moldavien	10 913 704	24 548 000	3	4	PF	3	4	PF
36. Turkiet	5 722 681	23 542 785	3	4	PF	3	3▲	PF
37. Kirgizistan	13 320 130	22 505 900	6	5	NF	6	5	NF
38. Mongoliet	9 706 370	21 200 000	2	2	F	2	2	F
39. Kuba	8 540 000	20 780 000	7	7	NF	7	7	NF
40. Mali	5 918 598	18 020 854	2	2	F	2	2	F
45. Bangladesh	7 018 720	17 350 000	4	4	PF	4	4	PF
46. Angola	8 362 999	16 550 000	6	5	NF	6	5	NF
47. Burkina Faso	4 215 918	11 564 721	4	4	PF	5▼	4	PF
48. Afghanistan	11 500 000	11 500 000	6	6	NF	5▲	6	NF
49. Kosovo	8 223 012	11 323 012	5	5	PF	6▼	5	NF
50. Lettland	4 531 490	11 318 452	1	2	F	1	2	F

A number of observations can be made from the table above. In the first place, it is striking how extremely wide-spread Swedish support for democracy and human rights is. While geographic concentration is obviously not an end by itself, it should be noted that this distribution places very high demands on Sida. Support for democracy and human rights requires insights and detailed knowledge of partly obscure and often highly complex social processes. Possessing the necessary knowledge to perform such analysis in well over 60 countries on all continents is demanding. This assessment cannot assess whether Sida staff possess the necessary political and social knowledge to assess projects in all of these settings, but even if they do, one could doubt whether the goals of the support is best served through a spreading of resources.

The inclusion of Freedom House scores allow for a second set of considerations. As can be seen, Sida's work with democracy and human rights is directed to both non-free, partly free, and free states. As was discussed above, there is by itself nothing strange about such a distribution. Indeed, non-free states are possibly the ones most in need of support to democracy and human rights. Of Sida's support to democracy and human rights, only twelve per cent goes to states that are classified as "free" (such as South Africa, for instance), whereas a quarter goes to non-free states (Vietnam). The intermediary category of partly free states represents 62 per cent.

As the table shows, the majority of Sida's support thus goes to countries that are still far from the democratic ideals. By itself, this is natural as these are the countries most in need of support for democracy. But this also implies that there are important actors – most commonly the government – that obstruct and challenge development towards democracy. In turn, this implies that the consideration of whom to work with becomes paramount. In an established democracy close to all actors can be expected to share the same basic ideals concerning political rights and liberties. That is obviously not the case in countries that are not democratic, where the question of whom to work with becomes more acute. This question will be brought up below.

In addition to the relative level of democracy, one could inquire into the political dynamics that a country undergoes. As the majority of Sida's work takes place in political contexts that are not or partly free, it is of interest if there are political dynamics that seem to favour democratisation. Although one may see partly free states as being naturally in transition, it may be closer to the truth to see them as representing a potentially stable category of “democradura”, “competitive authoritarianism” and the like.

Remarkably, however, most of the countries in the table above are very stable in these terms. This is contrary to what could be expected, i.e., either that support for democracy and human rights would contribute to a decrease in FH values (Finkel et als), or – at least – that Sida's support would go into processes of political change. In both cases, we would expect to see change in the FH scores for most of the cooperation country. But as can be seen in the table, the opposite is truer. In fact, most of the countries in which Sida support democratisation and enhanced governance do not appear to be in processes of transition. Of those that are, the number of negative developments seem to match the positive ones.

Finally, one could note that the most important recipients of support for democracy and good governance tend to be the same countries that are most important in Swedish support in general. While not very surprising, it should lead one to suspect that most of the recipient countries for cooperation in the area of democracy and human rights are not picked because of political developments and openings within them, but for motives that have more to do with historic priorities and choices made by Sweden. Thus, the prominence of the two polar extremes of South Africa and Vietnam – which may seem surprising from a political perspective; one is a developed democracy already, and the other shows few signs of leaving totalitarianism behind – could be explained with Sweden's historic relationships with the two countries.

The kind of general overview performed above is of course very imprecise. For instance, the sum of Swedish cooperation going to a particular country is not very instructive unless we know to whom the money has been directed within that country: Has it gone to the democratic opposition, reformers inside the state, or to political parties?

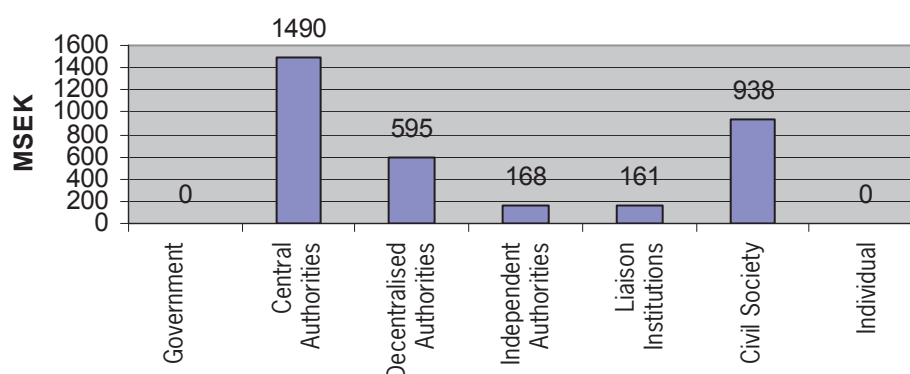
In order to assess this question, all contributions above were classified according to who the primary recipients of Swedish support were. Before the results of such a division are presented, a note of caution should be added: In some cases, such a classification was hard to perform on the basis of the information included in the accounting system used at Sida. Hence, a relatively large number of contributions and projects were deemed to be unclassifiable. In turn, this means that the figures given below should be seen as approximations rather than definitive indications of the extent to which different categories of actors are targeted.

We classified recipients according to a simple scheme of analysis that placed Sida's partners on a scale from the inner circles of the government to the individual citizens. Between these extremes are categories such as “central authorities”, (i.e., ministries, central staff organs), “decentralised authorities” (regions, municipalities), “independent authorities” (courts, ombudsmen, etc), institutions that serve as liaison between state and society (political parties, parliament, the mass media), and organisations in civil society.

In this regard, an additional note of caution should be added. Functions are not similar across countries. In other words, whereas the parliament in South Africa is likely to fill an important role as an independent liaison institution between state and society, it is unlikely that the Vietnamese congress has the same standing or independence. Similarly, the line of division between central and decentralised authorities is obviously clearer drawn in federal than in unitary systems for instance.

In sum, Swedish support to democracy, good governance and human rights appear rather loop-sided, with most funding going to the central and decentralised authorities of the state (Figure 1.2). Apart from that, the distribution is bipolar, i.e., whereas the majority of funds go to the state or civil society, a relatively small amount goes to institutions that are supposed to connect these two sides. This corresponds to what has been noted in some previous country evaluations of democracy support (De Angelo, Farropa and Uggla 2001), and also to a situation that has been referred to as “two-tier” or “hour-glass” politics.

Table 1.2 Sida's HRD support from government to individual (DAA Total, MSEK)



Indeed, in many new democracies, the relative weakness of institutions able to serve as channels between state and society is a problem for political stability and participation alike. Unfortunately, Sida's project portfolio in the area to some extent seems to reflect the same problem. Even as the distribution between funding to state authorities and civil society would become more even if the NGO support channelled through SEKA were taken into account, this absence would most likely persist.

Of course, the distribution differs according to countries. Hence, in certain states there is an even heavier focus on the state (Vietnam is a good example), whereas in others more intermediate categories figure more prominently (in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, decentralised authorities are by far the most common focus of Swedish cooperation). In general though, the distribution above appears to be reproduced within most countries that Sida works with.

The data above can also be put to use to separate the partners/direct recipients of support in different settings. Table 1.3 shows the distribution between different categories of recipients in different settings for the entirety of Sida's support to democracy and human rights in the period considered here (2005). As above, it shall be interpreted with certain caution. Assignment to a category was primarily done on the basis of the (scant) information available in the Plus-system. As can be seen, a large amount of contributions escape categorisation according to this scheme, and for the rest distribution can best be labelled as tentative.

Table 1.3 Recipient of DHR support in different political settings

	Central and decentral. authorities	Independent authorities, and liaison actors	Civil society	Non-classifiable
Free	174 967 603 (36%)	149 199 000 (30%)	133 574 254 (27%)	33 808 613 (7%)
Partly free	1 271 837 000 (49%)	216 165 000 (8%)	534 556 315 (21%)	567 952 870 (22%)
Not free	269 080 023 (32%)	80 416 000 (10%)	269 501 204 (32%)	211 839 457 (25%)

Nevertheless, some important points emerge from the table. In states that are labelled as “Free” according to the definition of Freedom House, distribution is more or less as could be expected. In the non- and partly free categories, however, there are some things that merit further discussion.

In the first place, it is evident that a substantial share of funding is primarily channelled to state authorities. Presumably, this consists of efforts to make the state democratise itself, so to speak. Hence, there are a number of projects that aim to foster soft-liners and reformers in the state. Given what is known of democratic development, such efforts are not unreasonable.

Furthermore, in several non-free states – particularly in totalitarian ones such as Vietnam – there is simply an absence of non-state actors with whom to cooperate, which also explains the focus on the official authorities.

However, it should be noted that supporting actors that are located within an authoritarian framework no doubt requires a high degree of political knowledge and cunning. There is an evident risk that projects that aim to support a democratic turn in the administration, ends up simply strengthening the administration’s performance, without an accompanying transformation of its underlying goals. In view of what has been said above about the commonality of problems connected to project design, goal achievement, and the great geographic spread of Swedish support to democratic governance, this is even more troubling.

Secondly, the distribution seems to reflect what the actual political situation in each setting. For instance, in totalitarian states such as Vietnam there is not much possibility to fund an independent civil society, as there is hardly such a thing in the first place. Similarly, the relative absence of funding that goes to independent and liaison institutions in non- and partly free settings also reflects political facts on the ground most probably. The distinguishing factor between democracies and non-democracies is indeed that in the former there are formal institutions that allow for the regular and effective expression of popular will/public opinion.

But here enters a particular problem which is to what extent it is possible to draw on elements of an established structure to produce far-reaching change. Differently put, the question is whether bureaucratic institutions can be expected to undertake reform that may undermine their power. In this regard, two contrary positions can be held. On the one hand, one may indicate numerous examples of authoritarian states gradually transforming themselves into democracies; such a process would involve most of the established European democracies for instance. On the other hand, though, it may be argued that the real reason for why such states chose to embark on a course, in which they would eventually cede power to their opponents, was the power of the opponents. Accordingly, one should not expect power to be

given away because of simple good will.⁷ Instead, an external pressure will be needed in order to elicit reform (Grindle, O'Donnell and Schmitter), and in several cases reform may actually be impossible even when the alternative is collapse (witness the demise of the European Socialist states for instance).

Obviously, this study cannot settle this matter. It can however indicate the potentially problematic character of expecting democratising reforms to be undertaken by elements of the authoritarian state itself. Such processes could be expected to have a strong element of contingency, and should accordingly be subject to thorough analysis of the incentives and pressures faced by state elites, and the possibilities of them effecting real political change.

The preceding discussion demonstrates some of the questions that arise from a consideration of the distribution of Sida's support to democracy and good governance. Due to the nature of the present assessment, little can be said by way of conclusion, of course. Even so however, points for future discussion and deepened analysis can be indicated. Above, some such issues were high-lighted: the relative absence of communicative or liaison institutions, the tremendous geographic extension, and a partly counter-intuitive distribution between states at different levels of freedom. Moreover, certain questions (such as the assumptions involved in working with totalitarian states, or the extent to which different actors are judged to be ready to change) will receive more treatment in the coming parts of this assessment.

7 As Thomas Carothers has noted: “[d]emocracy programs too often rest on what is either a dreamy, or, seen in another light, a hollow view of politics. Democracy promoters frequently seem surprised by the most banal realities of politics—that power is only rarely given away cost-free, that principles trump interests only occasionally, that zero-sum instincts are as common as cooperative attitudes, that political violence erupts easily when power shifts are occurring, and that historical legacies, whether helpful or harmful to democratization, are extraordinarily persistent. (1999:343).”

Part II: An Inventory of Problems Discussed in Evaluations of Sida's Human Rights and Democracy Projects/Programs

Introduction

Although a comprehensive review of Sida's support to democracy and human rights in its entirety has never been performed, the sector has seen several evaluations. Individual projects and programmes have frequently been evaluated, and Sida's evaluation series contain dozens of titles focusing on democracy and human rights. These evaluations constitute a base of knowledge on what has worked and what has not in development cooperation within the sector of support to democracy and human rights. Therefore, it is natural to start a background review here.

Scope and selection

Sida publishes almost 40 evaluations every year, covering projects and programs as well as larger sectors of support. In general, these evaluations are produced by independent consultants contracted for the assignment by Sida.

Of the existing evaluations, a total of thirty-nine evaluations matched the description human rights and democracy evaluations. Out of these, five were excluded due to major methodological shortcomings or because they focused on organisational capacity or other issues that were not project/program specific. The remaining 34 are included in this analysis.

Categorisation

Problems were defined as factors and structural shortages and deficiencies hindering the fulfilment of objectives (at all levels).

The problems indicated were divided into three categories:

- Category A: Program theory problems
- Category B: Implementation problems
- Category C: Contextual problems

Although sometimes difficult to separate in practice, the theoretical rationale for dividing these three sets of problems is relatively clear. Problems belonging to category A relate to the design of the project in question, i.e., are logically prior to the subsequent categories. Categories B and C, accordingly, relate to problems that appear during the actual implementation of the project. The division between them is one of external versus internal causes. Whereas category B includes problems and obstacles relating to the performance of the project itself, category C relates to problems in the environment in which it is implemented.

Whereas this tripartite division is essentially deductive, an inductive method was used within each category, where all problems mentioned were clustered according to their relative affinity.

Method

All evaluations were read with a focus on summaries, conclusions and discussions on results and relevance. The reason for this focus was to serve as a proxy for relative importance, i.e. it was only when problems were brought up in these discussions that they were estimated to be of such importance that they should be included in the assessment/comparison.

Several different sub-problems of the same type were counted only once (as one problem) in the summary. Hence, the count should not be seen as the number of times certain problems were mentioned, but as indications of the number of evaluations that bring forth a particular problem.

Of course, this is only a very rough indicator, as it does not tell us about the relative weight of the problem in question. Neither does its simple mention inform us if the same problem was present in different parts of the programme implementation for instance. This problem became aggravated due to the difference in nature between different evaluations. While certain of the evaluations only deal with a particular project, others encompass several, geographically or chronologically differentiated projects or even entire programs.

Moreover, the count should be treated with certain caution as it was possible to distinguish a quite large number of *different* implementation problems (B), while program theory and contextual problems were more easily grouped in larger categories. This circumstance made the number of B-problems relatively high (99) compared to A- (56) and C-problems (49). However, few B-problems featured a high frequency.

Results

The results of the inventory are summarized in the table below.

Table 2.1 Summary of evaluation problems (N=34)

A. Program theory problems	B. Implementation problems	C. Contextual problems
A1. Unrealistic assumptions (n=19)	B1. Failing resources (n=7)	C1. The project was poorly adapted to local conditions (n=13)
A2. Unclear formulation of objectives and/or strategies (n=17)	B2. Poor contacts/coordination between involved parties (n=18)	C2. The project depends on external social, institutional or political goodwill and was limited to some extent by its attitude or resistance (n=13)
A3. Illogical structure of the contribution (Irrelevance or poor connection to overarching objectives of the contribution or to the objectives of Sida or the NGO acting intermediate for Sida support) (n=8)	B3. Lack of interest among target group or implementers (n=7)	C3. The project, for internal political or institutional reasons, appeared as incongruous and/or insufficient to fulfil the overarching objectives (n=23)
A4. "Concept-stretching" (Assuming that conceptions and assumptions of a certain institution in Sweden, are valid about its equivalent in the partner country as well.) (n=3)	B4. The contribution has not been implemented in the anticipated extent (n=8)	
A5. Poor connection to academic theories on democracy, human rights and/or poverty reduction (n=9)	B5. The project has been practically reformed compared to original plans (n=10)	
	B6. Poor monitoring/evaluation methods and routines for follow-up and/or lack of baseline study and indicators to measure result/impact (n=15)	
	B7. Discontinuity in leadership and/or personnel. (n=6)	
	B8. Poor preparation (n=4)	
	B9. Administrative problems (n=9)	
	B10. Internal institutional divisions/ conflicts (n=3)	
	B11. "More of the same" – project good but more input/efforts/time needed (n=1)	
	B12. Unclear roles (n=3)	
	B13. Different expectations (n=5)	
	B14. Poor management (n=3)	

In total, of the 34 evaluations in the sample, 31 mention problems related to the underlying program theory, 30 discuss difficulties connected to the context in which they are implemented, and 28 discuss problems related to the practical aspects of the implementation. Hence, there is no greater difference between programs in this regard.

Moreover, it should be mentioned that problems in categories A and C are often closely related (for instance A1 and C1, A3 and C3) and often appear in pairs.

It is perhaps more telling to focus on individual problems that are brought forward in the evaluations. Hence, the most commonly mentioned problem relates to a perceived disjunction between the ambitions of the projects and what can realistically be expected of the project in question; two thirds of all evaluations mention this kind of problem. It should be noted that rather than the uncritical assumption that everything will go according to plan, this set of problems typically indicates unrealistically high ambitions about the broader effects of the project in question on democracy and political development.

Connected to this is the problem of unrealistic assumptions that appear in 19 of the evaluations. This is most frequently connected to unrealistic views on potential impact from rather limited activities. Similarly, in half of the evaluations problems directly connected to the program theory in the form of strategic design and goal formulations of the project are present. One frequently mentioned problem is unclear goals, as well as unclear strategies to achieve them. (Not explicitly included in the analysis, but frequently mentioned in the evaluations is the lack of indicators and measureable goals: something that a previous study also found (Sida Studies in Evaluation 00/3).)

As a contrast, a number of problems which one may expect to be frequently mentioned are in fact rarely brought up in the evaluations. Lack of resources is mentioned as a problem in only seven evaluations, poor management in three, and administrative problems in nine. Furthermore, when resources are indicated as a deficiency, these are often connected to administrative capacity rather than the availability of funds. In short, money does not appear to be a major problem in the field.

Of the implementation-related problems, the one most frequently mentioned concerns the lack of contact and coordination among the parties involved in the project. Even when category B-types of problems are present, they can often be presented as logically secondary to the other types. Consider, for instance, the case of failing resources, which may follow from an unrealistic design of the project in question.

Apart from problems related to the design and implementation of the project in question, there are problems that concern contextual obstacles to its success. In little over a third of the evaluations, a hostile environment was mentioned as a problem for the implementation of the project. While this should perhaps not be seen as a very high figure given that most projects are likely to be politically contentious to some extent, it indicates the need for political skill and capacity in order to overcome such obstacles, as well as a thorough analysis in order to detect them.

Conclusions

This part of the present assessment sums up and analyzes what the evaluations conducted on Sida's human rights and democracy aid has given in terms of problem identification and recommendations concerning models of thought, objectives and activities. It has given some interesting conclusions:

Figures such as the above should be treated with some caution. The evaluations that they draw upon are – even after the exclusion of the most evidently methodologically deficient – not a very coherent mass, and have been performed according to principles and methods that differ greatly.

Even so, however, the above findings indicate some points for further consideration. Chief among them is the fact that problems connected to deficient program logic/poor adaptation to the context appears to be more common as problems than are lack of resources/management for implementation. (Moreover, even when there are problems connected to implementation, these can often be said to have been caused by unreasonable expectations, insufficient attention to planning etc.) Here, then, is a rationale to consider not only the execution of the projects, but also their overall design. (One should note, though, that there may be a bias at work here – it is probably easier for consultants to detect and discuss problems related to design and overall structure, as these can be easily detected through favoured techniques such as document review etc.)

More in particular, it is interesting to note that too few resources is not very often seen as a problem in the field. When resources are indeed mentioned, it is more often in the form of competence and sufficient staffing rather than in purely material form.

Part III: Interventions and Transformations: Program Theory Summarized, Reconstructed and Compared

Introduction

Program theory evaluation deals with the thoughts and lines of reasoning underlying an intervention. As Rossi et al. notes: “Every program embodies a conception of the structure, functions, and procedures appropriate to attain its goals. This conception constitutes the ‘logic’ or plan of the program...”⁸ It is on such aspects that the present study will focus, and the evaluation that it performs will address these issues rather than the actual outcomes and impacts of the projects considered. As we will argue below, the fact that area of democracy support is highly dependent on assumptions and analogies makes the closer study of these features a pertinent approach.

In practical terms, the pages below focus on the program logic of some 50 different Sida-supported projects in the area of democracy, good governance and human rights. The projects have been drawn from four different countries that represent highly different political contexts: Bolivia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, South Africa and Vietnam.

The practical application of a program theory evaluation to this selection of projects yields two kinds of results. In the first place, a number of points are made about the project logics thus discerned, about national variations, commonalities across countries, and the feasibility of assumptions. Secondly, the findings indicate areas for subsequent study and evaluation. Program theory evaluation as applied here is primarily diagnostic, and this exercise thus has to be followed by targeted evaluations, discussions involving program officers, and studies directed at specific assumptions and mechanisms that have been discerned as being of particular importance.

Focusing on program theory

Program theory evaluation (a.k.a. theory-based evaluation, clarificative evaluation,⁹ program logic evaluation etc.) leaves the question of results aside in order to study the underlying assumptions and stipulated rationales for the program in question. The rationale for such an undertaking is relatively simple: Projects may fail either because of problems related to their implementation (e.g., lack of money, steering problems, etc) or because the logic on which they were built was wrong in some way (e.g. inadequate focus, unrealistic assumptions, etc.).¹⁰ Program theory evaluation focuses on this latter set of problems.

What this technique ponders is thus the theoretical basis for the program in question, and this is evaluated according to concepts such as realism, coherence, and relevance. Necessary steps include the re-construction of underlying theory, and the assessment of its constituent parts, as well as their mutual connections. Subsequently, a program theory evaluation may proceed to empirically, theoretically or logically test such assumptions and/or the steps implied in the program logic. Results or impact, on the other hand, are not primarily considered although, as shall be discussed below, such aspects may be included in subsequent steps.

8 Peter H. Rossi, Howard E. Freeman and Mark W. Lipsey, *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach* (London: Sage, 1999), p. 156.

9 Johan M. Owen and Patricia J. Rogers, *Program Evaluation: Forms and Approaches* (London: Sage, 1999).

10 Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, *Implementation* (second edition), (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 191.

One could argue that the same features that make support in the area of democracy and human rights difficult to monitor and evaluate on the basis of results, make assessment of the underlying program theory essential for the development of successful programs. As aid officials working in the area are generally unable to observe the actual impact of their efforts, they have to rely on informed guesses and general assumptions in order to device and implement projects in this area. For instance, supporting a neighbourhood association in the name of democracy, requires a number of explicit or implicit ideas about the possible impact that such a group may have on political decisions, about the aggregate result of a number of such groups pressing their demands against the state, and about the effects of a vibrant civil society on governance in general.¹¹

Similarly, supporting a training program on human rights for police officers requires a similar number of assumptions concerning the reasons for human rights violations and how people react to training, for instance. As a final example, one could mention the frequent use of transferring institutions from established democracies to new ones, with the hope that they will function in a similar manner.¹² In all such cases, and several others, program officers who lack the possibility to observe the eventual outcome of their efforts, have to believe in the accuracy of such assumptions in order to justify the projects.

One should not forget that program theory evaluation cannot aspire to capture the crucial question of impact. Furthermore, it may be prone to misunderstandings and irrelevance if not properly performed. On the other hand, it may serve to question and clarify ideas and assumptions that need to be discussed in order to enhance effectiveness, and thus serve a learning process. Additionally, if unrealistic assumptions and unclear theoretical connections are detected the program theory evaluation will prove its usefulness as an audit technique. After all, and as was noted above, problems in achieving aims can be the result of either faults in implementation or deficiencies in program logic.¹³ And as has been noted, “evaluation of process, impact, and efficiency [...] ride on the presumption that the program theory is sound”.¹⁴ If that is not the case, however, such undertakings may be unable to capture the true reasons for failure or inefficiency.

Evaluating program theory

Experiences of program theory evaluation demonstrate a number of short-comings. However, we would argue that the approach which will be applied below allows us to alleviate some of these problems.

A first problem with program theory evaluation regards the reconstruction of program theories. In most cases, there is no explicit theory that can be distilled from program documents, which means that the evaluator will have to begin his/her work with attempting to piece together such theories for their subsequent testing. In this regard, Frans Leeuw has proposed different methods for the reconstruction of program theories.¹⁵ However, while his ideas deal with questions such as where one should look for theoretical statements, and who shall be able to give his/her views on the subject, it does not tell us about how a scheme of analysis for such statements could be constructed. The absence of a model of analysis, in turn, gives the reconstruction of program theories an ad hoc character when it comes to deciding what elements of a theory shall be included into the evaluation.

11 Cf. Leonardo Avritzer, *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002);

Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

12 Carothers, op. cit., p. 333.

13 Patricia J. Rogers, Anthony Petrosino, Tracy A. Huebner and Timothy A. Hacsí, “Program Theory Evaluation: Practice, Promise, and Problems”, *New Directions for Evaluation*, no. 87, Fall 2000, pp. 5–13.

14 Rossi et al., p. 156.

15 Frans L. Leeuw, “Reconstructing Program Theories and Problems to be Solved” in *American Journal of Evaluation*, vol. 24, no. 1.(2003), pp. 5–20.

In order to counter such a problem, a model of analysis is proposed that, although simple, offers us a guideline as to what elements of the theory needs to be collected/reconstructed. The model relies on two chains, of actors and mechanisms respectively, and will be further discussed below. Apart from making the enquiry more systematic, the application of this model allows for comparisons between the program theories and project logics of different projects.

A second problem concerns the question of how to judge and evaluate the program theories that are discerned in the exercise. One obvious possibility would be to rely on the juxtaposition of the theoretical statements with scholarly findings in order to determine the extent to which they are relevant and correct. While such a procedure is perfectly reasonable, it is not entirely without its problems. For instance, merely listing scattered evidence that appears to contradict or confirm assumptions in the program theory overlooks the fact that most findings in social science are seldom clear cut and possible to apply across different contexts.¹⁶ Indeed, academic work thrives on contradiction and counter-arguments, which makes the use of them as a standard for evaluation less than reliable.

Below, we will present a different way of analysis that relies on an attempt to discern patterns among a larger set of program theories. Hence, the idea is not primarily to see if the theoretical underpinnings of a study concurs with social science findings in general, but to make explicit certain assumptions or theoretical constructs that operate across a large set of projects (of course, such prevalent ideas may subsequently be evaluated through the extent to which they seem to agree with scholarly findings).

These two techniques – using a fixed model of analysis and assessing program theories across a range of different projects – represents an innovation in the use of program theory evaluation. As will be demonstrated below, it allows for comprehensive treatment of a sector or a thematic area. By doing so, it can also serve as a diagnostic tool and to enhance discussions and learning exercises.

Discerning program theory

Sida's portfolio of projects in the area of democracy and human rights amounts to hundreds of projects. To construct a manageable sample, four countries were selected for field studies: Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, South Africa and Vietnam. For these countries, all projects active in the area in April 2005 were initially selected. Subsequently, some projects had to be excluded due to lack of data, or because they lacked relevant components (e.g. evaluations or preparatory assessments). The final sample included 52 projects. (This can be compared with the previous performance of an evaluability assessment on projects in the same area, including 28 projects.¹⁷)

This sample was subsequently coded and systematised according to a model of analysis chosen to describe the program theory of each project. The information used was principally drawn from the assessment memos that constitute the basis for decision-making within the organisation, and that are written by Sida staff for the respective project. Subsequently, interviews were performed with desk officers with insight into the projects in order to validate the findings of study of the assessment memos.

It should be noted that there is no such thing as a "Sida-project", properly speaking, as Sida's role is limited to financing initiatives proposed by the agency's partners. Nevertheless, the assessment memos do detail the appraisal made by Sida of the projects' relevance and feasibility, and hence the theoretical underpinnings for support. (Of course, there may be a mutual effect here also, in the sense that proposals

¹⁶ E. g. Carolien M. Klein Haarhuis and Frans L. Leeuw, "Fighting Governmental Corruption: The New World Bank Program Evaluated", in *Journal of International Development*, vol. 16, 2004, pp. 547–561

¹⁷ Poate et al.. op. cit.

may be described and framed in terms that will appeal to Sida. In such cases, Sida also has an indirect effect on the projects, of course.¹⁸⁾

It should be noted that in several cases the entire program theory cannot easily be discerned, either because certain parts of it are absent, or because they are not expressed in the documentation from the projects. This may not be as grave a fault as it sounds; in a typical example, a project to support the development of a lobbying organisation for a valuable cause may lack a discussion of the possibilities that this organisation has to make an impact on public policy. However, for the present purposes, project logics and program theories were reconstructed, in the sense that natural steps were assumed even when not present in the project documentation (in the example above, it would be assumed that the organisation would target public authorities who would listen and alter their behaviour, for instance). As noted above, such reconstructions were subject to validation with the desk officers.

The program theory of all contributions was summarized and reconstructed in order to allow for comparison. This was done by applying a simple model of analysis that allows for the systematisation of projects according to a common format. This model of analysis fundamentally depends on two chains; one of actors and one of actions.¹⁹⁾

The model of analysis

Normally, a Sida contribution passes through one or several intermediaries before reaching the actual target population, ultimately; people living in conditions of poverty. These intermediaries or actors could be seen as links in a chain between the donor and the target population.

It may seem besides the point to include the chain of actors in an assessment of the program theory. However, we argue that it is vital to connect actions/mechanisms to actors, as the chain of actors contains a number of assumptions about the correspondence between actors' preferences. In effect, this is a chain of delegation with the corresponding possible problems of co-optation, goal displacement, and so on.

In the most general of terms, it is possible to discern some common models of chains that respond to different needs and goals. For instance, if the goal is simply provision of a good, the chain may look as follows:

Provision chain: [Providers – executors – beneficiaries]

In a slightly more complicated model, the goal is not provision, but rather that a target group (for instance, a group of state bureaucrats) starts acting in a different way. For that to happen, another group may have to inform, teach, or support the target group. If that is the case, the model may look like this:

Change chain: [Providers – executors – target – beneficiaries]

In some projects with a political component, it is possible to find an even more elaborate chain, which includes different sets of target groups with one attempting to influence the other, while being changed (for instance, trained) itself. The following is an example:

Pressure chain: [Providers – executors – target (1) – target (2) – beneficiaries]

18 Cf. Clifford Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

19 The model is somewhat similar to the description of “development pathways” discussed by Poate et al, p. 14f. See also, Anna Jarstad. 2005. “International assistance to democratisation in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia: Synthesis Report”. Uppsala: Department of Peace and Conflict Research.

The relevant actors and the actions that they are supposed to undertake were structured into a table as below, where a fictive example illustrates a potential program theory, for a program outlined according to the pressure chain. The model distinguishes between actions that take place within an actor (internal transformations, white fields) and actions that are outward directed towards another actor (external transformations, shaded fields).

Internal transformations are processes, mechanisms, transformations and changes that an actor has to experience in order to “respond” to an intervention of a previous actor in the chain. This transformation is crucial in order to bridge over to the next link in the chain of acts that leads towards the objective. The list of transformations include categories such as “Absorption of information/training”, “Absorption of arguments”, “Change in behaviour or attitude”, and “Internal Reform”.

External interventions are actions that an actor conducts with direction to other actor(s) in the chain. Obviously, there is quite a long list of possibilities in this regard. It includes categories that relate to education and information (e.g., “Capacity training”, “Information campaigns”), material support (“Financial contribution”, “Material provisions”), and pressure (“Lobbying”, “Litigation”). Other categories capture mechanisms that are not as clear-cut, but which are nevertheless crucial. Examples include “Demonstration effect”, or “Spreading effects” that attempts to capture two possible mechanisms by which effects on the target group are supposed to spread to the broader population.

For both these general sets of mechanisms, coding was done according to an open model, in which new categories were added as they appeared.

Table 3.1 Example of our Program Theory Model of Analysis

Actor	Actor's Internal Transformation	Contextual factor and its Transformation/Intervention
	Actor's External Intervention	
Donor/Sida	Financial contribution (to Actor X)	
Actor X	Training of Actor Y	Other donor: Financial contribution
TG1: Actor Y	Being capable of learning, change of behaviour Have the possibility to apply new knowledge in treatment of Actor Z, for instance lobbying	Actor R: Opposition/threat to Y's treatment of Z
TG2: Actor Z	Susceptibility of influence by actor Z. Ability to effect change in behaviour Target group large/ representative enough to allow for significant impact on society	
Society:		

Thus, the program theory of each of the projects in the sample was reconstructed to fit into this model of analysis. By converting projects to a common format, comparison and aggregation between projects became possible. Below, most of these aggregative measures are simple counts of the number of times a certain feature (an actor, a specific mechanism, etc) appear among the projects. Due to the nature of most projects, such counts can take very different forms, however. It is very common, for instance, that one particular project features several different target groups, and hence, several different mechanisms. Below, most counts have been made according to whether a particular feature appears in a project or not. For

instance, it was found that the internal mechanism of “change in behaviour” is expected to occur in 21 of the projects, whereas 17 projects include elements of the external mechanisms of lobbying and litigation.

The countries studied

The four countries studied obviously differ greatly according to political context:

- Bolivia is the longest standing democracy of the four, and has during the last decades undertaken a number of institutional reforms including decentralisation and the creation of new institutions such as the human rights ombudsman. But these institutional reforms have not precluded a growing political instability, particularly in the form of potent social mobilisation.
- Bosnia-Herzegovina represents a post-conflict case in which the most acute political task is to construct a viable state out of the institutions and regional autonomies created in the Dayton peace accord, while promoting reconciliation of the main ethno-religious groups in the country. In this, the proximity of the country to the European Union gives it a special position.
- South Africa has to be counted among the success cases of the African countries that been democratised in the 1990s. Fears of violent conflict emerging out of the post-apartheid situation have largely subsided, as political and economic development has continued apace. Even so, however, the country faces a number of pressing problems as it tries to live up to the expectations of its population in terms of social and economic conditions.
- Vietnam, finally, remains a totalitarian dictatorship. In spite of economic liberalisation and tentative steps towards more administrative openness, the party continues to stay firmly in power, and neither political opposition nor a civil society can be said to exist. What has come instead of democratisation are a number of piece-meal institutional reforms, but it is uncertain how far these go in the direction of democratisation.

Apart from actual political conditions, the four countries represent somewhat different models of partnership. If the primary partners of Swedish development cooperation in the area of democracy promotion are divided according to whether they are located in the central reaches in the state, in decentralised or autonomous state agencies, or in society; each country represent a different model, as can be seen in the next table which shows the attribution of funds in the original sample (i.e., the projects underway by early 2005).

Table 3.2 Millions of Swedish Crowns distributed to different actors in democracy promotion

Country	Central state	Decentralised or autonomous bur.	Society	Unclassifiable
Bolivia	74 (56%)	30 (23%)	25 (19%)	3 (2%)
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5 (3%)	99 (52%)	55 (29%)	31 (16%)
South Africa	119 (33%)	114 (32%)	113 (31%)	14 (4%)
Vietnam	83 (46%)	54 (30%)	10 (6%)	32 (18%)

As can be seen in the table, the primary partners of Swedish democracy aid appear to vary, and can be found in any of the three categories. In no case is one class of recipients completely ruled out. On the contrary, with the exceptions of partnerships with the central state agencies in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and with social actors in Vietnam; all sectors in all countries receive a substantial portion of funding. (In both

of the exceptions, the relative absence of funding can be said to correspond to a real absence; just as the central state is very weak in Bosnia-Herzegovina, there are not very much of a civil society in Vietnam. With regard to the latter case, the real degree of decentralisation and autonomy of parts of the bureaucracy can of course be expected to be very low. For practical purposes that category should possibly be counted as less than autonomous from the central state organs, making the latter the predominant recipient.)

Given these differences, an overall question of the analysis becomes the extent to which projects in the area of democracy support are contextualised, i. e., if their design responds to the political conditions in which they will operate. It is a common lament of projects in the area of democracy and good governance that they are insufficiently related to political conditions in the countries in which they work.²⁰ In this regard, two hypotheses can be made: According to a convergence hypothesis we would expect to find a typical way of performing democracy projects that does not differ much between countries. No matter how stark the regional differences, they would be overcome by such a preferred way of working. Conversely, one could speculate that certain factors, such as contextual ones, do assert themselves over the projects. If that is so, one would expect a fundamental divergence between the logics of the projects in the four countries.

The variation between countries constitutes a general theme in the following discussion about results. Such a discussion is not the only task, though. Of potentially greater importance is what this sample of projects may tell us about Sida's work with democracy in general. Thus, although the reduced number of projects should inspire caution in this regard, the following pages will attempt to give a general overview of common patterns and variations in Swedish support to democracy promotion.

Comparing Program Theories

Having converted the program theory of each of the 52 projects into a comparable format, the assessment relies on the comparison and aggregation of these project logics. For reasons of length, the present assessment can not be exhaustive. Rather, it only presents some examples that are intended to demonstrate the kind of assessments and discussions for which such a material can provide a basis.

In the first place, the actor chain will be subject to examination and discussion. As was noted above, when it comes to executing agencies the elements of this chain relies on assumptions concerning the suitability of different actors, about the concurrence in goals, etc. For target groups, conversely, the structure of the actor chain demonstrates who are to be subject to the project intervention. Information on who is targeted in the projects should give an idea of where the primary deficiencies that the projects are set to alleviate are to be found.

Secondly, the elements of the action chain — the mechanisms involved in the projects — are examined. In this regard, the frequency with which certain mechanisms are used will inform us on the degree to which different actions are judged as feasible, what assumptions are held about how to best influence target groups, and what internal transformations are required in order to projects to be effective.

Third, the analysis below will demonstrate how information from the two chains can be combined to inform us on what changes and developments are expected from whom.

Fourth and finally, whereas the previous questions assume that the (reconstructed) program logic is more or less clear, the material can also inform us on the extent to which that is true. The final part of this section thus asks to what extent an elaborate program theory is really present when it comes to ideas about broader impact.

²⁰ E. g. Carothers, op. cit., p. 338f.

The Actor Chain

In our scheme of analysis, we distinguish between actors according to the different roles that they fulfil in the project in question. Hence, supporters are contributing funds or activities to the project, executors are charged with the actual performance of project activities, targets are actors that are supposed to change or alter their behaviour as a result of the intervention in question, and beneficiaries, in turn, are the actors that are supposed to draw benefit from such changes.

It should be noted that these categories are not fully exclusive. For instance, it is relatively common to find that the same actor is included both as executor and target. For instance, that is the case when a state agency provides training to its own employees.

A first query then, relates to what actors are charged with the different functions. Primarily, this is an issue with regard to the two ‘middle’ functions of executors and targets. Supporting and beneficiary actors do not exhibit many differences; typically Sida and other international agencies cover the first, while citizens in general are the beneficiaries in most cases.

In more analytical terms the distinction between executors and targets relates to who will initiate political developments, and who will be targeted by such initiatives. Hence, while one would expect executing actors to hold a view of goals that corresponds to Sida’s own (in order for delegation to work), this needs not necessarily be the case when it comes to targets. On the contrary, and as shall be further discussed below, the targets can be seen as the actors that need to be changed (either qualitatively; by fundamentally altering their behaviour for instance, or quantitatively; by becoming better at what they do).

On order to answer the question of who is responsible for producing change and who is the target of such efforts, the actors are divided into four categories; central state authorities, non-central and autonomous state authorities, national non-state actors, and international actors (typically consultants or Swedish authorities involved in “twinning” exercises).

Table 3.3 Number of projects involving different types of actors in different tasks

	Bolivia c state	Bolivia dec state	Bolivia no-state	Bolivia internat	Vietnam c state	Vietnam dec state	Vietnam no-state	Vietnam internat
Execution	2	3	1	3	6		1	6
Targets	4	4	4		8	3	6	

	B-H c state	B-H dec state	B-H no-state	B-H nternat	South A c state	South A dec state	South A no-state	South A internat
Execution	3	3	2	13	2	6	8	6
Targets	9	12	15		14	14	13	

In spite of what could be expected, central state authorities are not only included as targets for interventions, but also as executors of projects. This is particularly so in Vietnam, where a majority of projects rely on the central state bureaucracy as implementer of the projects. This contrasts with the more democratic cases, such as Bolivia, where only one such case exists (support to enhanced management systems implemented with the Bolivian vice-presidency). Similarly, in South Africa, central state authorities are rarely executors of projects, but feature frequently as targets of actions.

The high reliance on state agencies as executors of democracy projects in a totalitarian state such as Vietnam represents a paradox. It can be explained, though, by the simple fact that in a totalitarian state

there are very few possibilities of working outside of the state. Indeed, there is only one project in Vietnam that relies on national non-state actors in an executive function, and it rests on supposedly autonomous NGOs and other associations in the field of gender.

With regard to targets, this category in a sense gives an impression of what actors are to be changed, strengthened or altered in order for democracy to be enhanced. Here again, Vietnam again stands out as most projects – although performed by state agencies – also have as their targets other state agencies. Conversely, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, most projects aim to produce change in society in order to enhance democracy. Bolivia and South Africa present a more varied picture, with state and non-state actors about equally in focus. In this regard, however, the distribution of targets is not very surprising. The obstacles to advancing towards enhanced democratisation can be said to be located in society as well as in the different reaches of the state in Bolivia and South Africa, whereas the distribution of targets in Bosnia-Herzegovina appears to respond to an interpretation in which lingering conflict still plagues society. In Vietnam in turn, the fact that the primary obstacles to reform are located in the central state appears quite reasonable.

Going into even more detail, it is possible to separate top-down from bottom-up approaches. The former consists of central state agencies as executors and decentralised agencies or social groups as targets, the latter of the reverse situation (decentralised agencies and social groups as executors and central authorities as targets). Accordingly, in the top-down cases, central state agencies try to change the practices of institutions and organisations at lower level, while bottom-up approaches feature the reverse order of things; assisting more or less autonomous groups to influence the central state agencies.

Table 3.4 Number of projects featuring top-down and bottom-up approaches

	Bolivia	Bosnia-Herzegovina	South Africa	Vietnam
Top-top	1	1	1	5
Top-down	1	5	1	3
Bottom-up	2	4	9	1
Bottom-bottom	3	10	13	2

Any democratisation process will require working both with the state and with society. However, these findings indicate a variation between the countries that is of some interest. Most notable is the reliance in Vietnam on the central state authorities as both implementers and as targets. Also, it is evident that in Bosnia-Herzegovina quite a large number of projects feature central state organs in an executive capacity, and groups at lower levels as targets. This is a surprising finding given the decentralised nature of the country, but corresponds to a large number of projects in which a centrally located institution receives support for strengthening its relationship with local entities.

South Africa represents the converse situation, in which support overwhelmingly goes to groups and actors that are independent from the central state, and which act either against the organs of the state or against other parts of civil society/decentralised agencies. (A large number of projects contain simultaneous actions against both the “top” and the “bottom” level. An example of such is the support to land organisations that simultaneously lobby against the authorities and attempt to educate small-holders.)

Again, one should note that the question of who attempts to change whom relates to a broader question of initiators and objects of changes in a democratic direction. In Vietnam, the fact that most projects target central state authorities corresponds to the totalitarian situation in which the country finds itself. However, that initiators are to be found at the same level may be more surprising as it appears to rely on an assumption that there is a real willingness at that level to pursue democratic reform. Whereas the

present assessment cannot, of course, vouch for the correctness of such an assumption, it can make it explicit in order for further discussions to respond to its accuracy.

In sum, the previous discussion lets us appreciate some fundamental differences in how projects in the area of democracy support are conceptualised. Whereas in Vietnam, a typical project consists in central state agencies attempting to influence other parts of the bureaucracy at the same level, projects in South Africa are much more likely to include elements of society attempting to influence the state. Conversely, in Bosnia-Herzegovina most projects aim at producing change in society, and the initiators of such projects are found both at the level of central authorities, in society itself, and among international consultants.

Mechanisms

The previous discussion has relied on an analysis of the actor chain. Moving on to the intervention chain, attention shifts from who participates in the project to what is actually supposed to happen within it, and the assumptions that are included in such assessments. In this regard, it is helpful to distinguish between the internal and the external effects and transformation that are supposed to take place within the projects.

External effects represent the attempts at influence between the different actors. In particular, interest here is on the mechanisms that make up the relationship between executing and target group. In table 6, some of the mechanisms by which such influence can be exercised are presented. It is relatively rare that they are used in isolation; more typically projects tend to include several different methods of influence.

To this effect, the scheme of analysis separated between a number of different possible mechanisms, ranging from the provision of thematic expertise through the placement of international experts (for instance, providing Swedish experts to perform a study of corruption in Vietnam), to support of court litigation against government authorities (by supporting the Treatment Action Campaign's work to make the South African government distribute antiretroviral HIV treatment), and capacity training in a number of areas (informing Bolivian public servants about new laws and regulations).

Table 3.5 Number of projects that contain different external mechanisms

	Total (52 projects)	Bolivia (6 projects)	Bosnia- Herzegovina (17 projects)	South Africa (19 projects)	Vietnam (10 projects)
Thematic expertise/external consultant	15 (.29)	0 (.00)	4 (.27)	7 (.37)	4 (.40)
Information campaigns	19 (.36)	2 (.33)	2 (.20)	9 (.47)	6 (.60)
Capacity building, training	34 (.65)	3 (.50)	11 (.82)	12 (.63)	8 (.80)
Twinning, international exch.	8 (.15)	0 (.00)	2 (.13)	1 (.05)	5 (.50)
Advocacy/lobbying/litigation	18 (.35)	1 (.17)	4 (.27)	8 (.42)	5 (.50)
Material, financial support	17 (.33)	3 (.50)	5 (.33)	4 (.21)	5 (.50)

As can be seen in the table, training dominates as the instrument of choice in democracy support to these four countries: Indeed, two thirds of all projects contain elements of capacity training. The remainder of the mechanisms considered here are involved in between 30 and 40 per cent of the projects. The special case of international exchange and "twinning" initiatives features in only 15 per cent.

The general picture is thus rather eclectic in that a variety of mechanisms are employed. Furthermore, no country appears to stand out very much from the average. In practice, this means that the same mix

of policy instruments appear to be used in all four countries with few exceptions. Given the different political circumstances, this is somewhat surprising. It would seem reasonable to expect that needs differ in the four countries: Whereas material support may be more called for in one case, information and training may be the primary deficiency in another. If such differences exist, they are weakly reflected in the data. True, capacity training appears more common in the countries with least experience of democratic practices, and material provisions are more frequent in the poorer countries. Beyond this, however, there is no clear-cut division between different mechanisms being employed in different countries. Certain elements of the table are even counter-intuitive in this regard. For instance, “twinning” and exchange with Swedish counter-parts is more commonly used in the countries in which bureaucratic practices could be expected to differ most from Swedish ones: in totalitarian Vietnam, and in the constitutionally exceptional Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Finally, one should also note that there may be an element of concept stretching in the table above. In particular, the fact that four projects in Vietnam involve mechanisms of lobbying and advocacy may seem surprising, but in most of these, the mechanisms is of a “top-top” kind, i.e., involves one part of the state attempting to influence another. Only in one Vietnamese project does this particular mechanism consist in social actors trying to influence the state present.

It is often more simple to trace the external effects that are supposed to take place in a project than the internal changes that are supposed to occur. Examples of such mechanisms is the creation of more tolerant attitudes among youth in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the increased openness towards the public among Vietnamese bureaucrats that a media support program is supposed to create. Despite their often diffuse character, such mechanisms and transformations are no less important for the program logic to work. Below, the frequencies with which some of these mechanisms occur are displayed in table 7.

Table 3.6 Number of projects containing the following internal effects

	Total (52 projects)	Bolivia (6 projects)	Bosnia- Herzegovina (17 projects)	South Africa (19 projects)	Vietnam (10 projects)
Absorption of info/train.	39 (.75)	3 (.50)	15 (.88)	13 (.68)	8 (.80)
Change in attitudes	15 (.29)	1 (.17)	5 (.29)	5 (.26)	4 (.40)
Change in behaviour	19 (.36)	1 (.17)	7 (.41)	7 (.37)	4 (.40)
Internal reforms	22 (.42)	3 (.50)	7 (.41)	9 (.47)	3 (.30)

As can be seen in the table, there are some typical expectations as to what projects are supposed to contribute to: In keeping with the stress on capacity training above, a majority of projects involve assumptions concerning the absorption and application of information. In comparison, other expectations about the internal processes that are supposed to occur are rarer. One could interpret this as evidence of a view of change as primarily a question of absorption of information.

However, there are also some differences between the countries. In this regard, it is instructive to compare Bolivia with the other cases (it should be noted though that the reduced sample for Bolivia makes such comparisons somewhat uncertain). In Bolivia, what appears to be expected are internal reforms to enhance efficiency, etc., rather than any reorientations with regard to attitudes and behaviour. In the other three cases, the latter kinds of changes are much more frequently stressed. Thus whereas in Bolivia support goes to ongoing processes of reforming the state, in the other cases the goal instead seems to be to make it perform in a different way (i.e., more democratically). In line with what could be expected this tendency is also stronger in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Vietnam than in South Africa, where internal reform is more commonly stressed.

Actors and mechanisms combined:

Finally, we should ask to what extent different assumptions are applied to different actors, i.e., how the two chains combine. Are certain mechanisms only applied to certain actors? Is it possible to find a model according to which different types of actors receive different kinds of incitements to change or develop?

Below a selection of mechanisms are presented. These include three of the most commonly assumed internal transformations. Furthermore, three different instruments of influence are included in the count. To a certain extent, these correspond to the metaphorical carrots, sticks and sermons that constitute the tools of leverage.²¹ In political terms, these categories translate into material support, information and training, or lobbying and litigation. Each of them can be said to embody implicit and explicit assumptions about the deficiencies that an actor has, and accordingly, what instruments will make that actor perform differently. Hence, material support must depend on an idea that material conditions are not conducive to democratic governance. Similarly, the provision of information and training depends on the assumption that it is lack of knowledge that pose a primary obstacle.

Table 3.7
The number of projects in which the following actions are supposed to take place, below the executive level

	Bol. cent. state	Bol. decent.	Bol. society.	Viet. cent state	Viet. decent.	Viet. society
Change in attitudes (IT 3)	1			3		
Change in behaviour (IT 4)	1			3		1
Internal reforms (IT 6)	2	1	1	2		
Material and financial support	1		3	4	2	
Information and training, twinning	1	2	2	4	3	5
Lobbying and litigation, popular participation	1			5		

	B-H. cent. state	B-H. decent. state	B-H. society	SA. cent state	SA decent. state	SA civil soc.
Change in attitudes (IT 3)			5	3	1	2
Change in behaviour (IT 4)	2	1	7	3	2	4
Internal reforms (IT 6)		2	3	3	5	2
Material support		4	1	3		1
Information and training, twinning	3	6	8	9	9	11
Lobbying and litigation, popular participation	4	4		8	6	

	Total	Total	Total
Change in attitudes (IT 3)	7	1	7
Change in behaviour (IT 4)	11	3	12
Internal reforms (IT 6)	7	8	6
Material support	8	6	5
Information and training, twinning	17	20	26
Lobbying and litigation, popular participation	18	10	0

²¹ Marie-Lousie Bemelmans-Videc, Ray C. Rist and Evert Vedung (eds.). *Carrots, Sticks and Sermons: Policy Instruments and Their Evaluation*. (Piscataway: Transaction Publishers 1998). Note that for each of these categories, counts were only made on target groups.

Unfortunately, few clear conclusions jump out from the table above. True, information and capacity building (or, “sermons”) appear to be most frequently employed against actors in society, just as lobbying and pressure (“sticks”) are used against the state. Indeed, it is striking that actors beyond the state are seldom being offered anything but training. In comparison, material support (“carrots”) features very rarely. With regard to internal changes, these are expected to occur with equal frequency in state and society.

When country variations are taken into account, some differences become clearer. Some of the patterns noted above reappear here. It is interesting to note, for instance, the difference between Bosnia-Herzegovina where it is primarily social actors that are supposed to alter their preferences and behaviour, and Vietnam, where such changes are expected to occur in the central state. As discussed, such differences appear to correspond to the political realities of each country.

Inexplicably, assumptions about the susceptibility of the central state organs to change are most frequent in the polar opposites; Vietnam and South Africa, whereas such assumptions are much less frequent in Bolivia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Lack of assumptions

The scheme employed in the present exercise also allows for an estimation of missing assumptions or links in the proposed causal chain. Above, such links have been deliberately reconstructed to a certain extent, as was discussed initially. One can, however, add an analysis of what is rarely, if ever, discussed in Sida’s appraisals of the projects that the organisation supports.

Generally speaking, much more argument and thinking appears to go into the first steps of the chain; i.e., the relationships between supporting and executing agencies, and the primary target levels. Conversely, discussions of how the project is supposed to impact on the population in general are often more absent, as assumptions in this regard are seldom explicit.

Of course, the fact that ideas about how impact is to be achieved are seldom explicit, should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of a lack of thinking or lack of theoretical support for a project. After all, there is enough evidence to support tacit assumptions concerning issues such as the importance of strong civil society for democracy; the positive effect of a human rights ombudsman on the rule of law, and so on. But it is also true that such effects are seldom automatic, and to the extent that the absence of discussions about how to reach broader impact indicates an absence of thinking in this regard, this amounts to a problem.

Below, the frequencies with which some possible broader effects are included and discussed in projects are given. As can be seen, the common lament in the evaluations of projects aimed at supporting democracy and human rights – that intended mechanisms are seldom clear – re-appears in this analysis.

Table 3.8 Impact made explicit. The fraction of projects that contain discussions about certain mechanisms related to impact beyond target group level (TGL2)

	Bolivia	Bosnia-Herzegovina	South Africa	Vietnam
Enhanced service provision	7/8	6/12	10/22	4/5
Demonstration effects	0/1	0/7	0/4	0/3
Change in preference, attitude or behaviour	---	4/10	0/3	6/8
Make use of offered opportunities	---	2/13	0/8	9/12
Absorption of argument or information	0/2	2/6	0/7	7/12

s can be seen in table 9, there is both thematic and geographic variation in this regard. For instance, projects concerning Vietnam are typically much more developed in this regard, which may be an effect of them being designed in a more difficult environment. Conversely, projects in the two democratic states seldom contain much in the way of explicit thinking about impacts, beyond the effects that can be tied to enhanced service provision.

More interesting, however, certain mechanisms are much more frequently discussed and problematised than others. As was just mentioned, issues and questions connected to service delivery are often mentioned and discussed. However, the capabilities of target groups to absorb arguments, and to effect changes in preferences and behaviour, are more rarely explicitly mentioned in the project assessments. In particular, there is no example of the demonstration effects (i. e., the project having a broader impact by influencing sectors of the population beyond the target group) being treated in even the most superficial manner.

But only assessing the extent to which mechanisms are explicitly indicated does not allow for the assessment of patterns of more profound thinking concerning impact. An even stricter evaluation would be to distinguish the projects that contain an elaborate discussion on their mechanisms of impact. If this criterion is applied, a rather discouraging picture emerges, although one with important difference between countries. Such elaborate discussions about impact appear in seven out of ten projects in Vietnam and in two out of six projects in Bolivia; but in South Africa and Bosnia-Herzegovina they are even more infrequent.

Findings and Suggestions

As has repeatedly been indicated above, the different mechanisms involved in the projects relate to assumptions about the possibilities and feasibility of effecting certain actions. For instance, using lobbying as a strategy implies assumptions regarding the susceptibility of the targets to such actions, just as “twinning”, the mutual exchange between a Swedish and a local agency, relies on assumptions concerning the transferability of the experiences, the power of example, and so on. Similarly, using capacity training as a mechanism must build on the assumption that it is lack of capacity which is the principal deficiency to alleviate. The evaluative aspects of the present exercise are primarily related to such assumptions, and some general points can be highlighted:

- First of all, the assumptions described can be discussed on the basis of their realism. In this regard, it bears noting that certain mechanisms appear more attainable than others. Typically, one would expect changes in attitudes and behaviour to be more difficult to effect than the simple transfer of material provisions for instance. Even so, however, it is notable that more projects rely on the former mechanisms than the latter. While this may be justified, the assumptions about the feasibility of changing attitudes and behaviour that are thus made explicit can be subject to a critical discussion.
- Second, mechanisms and assumptions can be related to the context in which they are supposed to work. For instance, it is notable that different forms of training and provision of information is the most commonly employed mechanism. But information is but one link in a chain that typically relies on assumptions concerning the ability of actors to digest information, to act accordingly, and subsequently have an impact on their broader context. Furthermore, such a mechanism necessarily implies the assumption that a primary obstacle for attaining democratic development is the lack of knowledge. Such a belief could be critically assessed on the basis of what is known about the local context.
- Third, and related to the previous point, the relatively frequent use of certain instruments in some countries but not in others could serve to discuss their use. This can be exemplified with so called

“twinning” exercises that consist of Swedish authorities being tied up with authorities in partner countries. The twinning mechanism relies on a number of assumptions about the transferability of experiences and ideas across contexts. While there is nothing extra-ordinary about that, it is, as was noted above, surprising to find that this mechanism is more commonly employed in the two cases that are possibly the most far removed from the conditions in which the Swedish bureaucracy operates; Vietnam and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

- Fourth, the absence of a discussion of certain links — particularly ones related to broader impact — is worrying. If that corresponds to a real absence of thinking about such issues, the potential effectiveness of the projects can be doubted. Unfortunately, these findings resonate with a previous study of a sample of Sida projects in the area of democracy and human rights, which found that “[t]he projects reviewed were very weak in specifying assumptions that would allow the activities to be convincingly linked to the goal”.²²
- Fifth and finally, the results above can provide an answer to the question about convergence and divergence that was initially posed. Unfortunately, the answer is not as clear as one would hope: There are both common and different elements between the countries, and in few countries are particular mechanisms completely absent. That said, however, the above pages did find a number of variations that appear to respond to local conditions: Using the provision of materials in poorer countries, focussing on society in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the state in Vietnam, and so on. On the basis of such findings, projects do appear designed according to the local political exigencies to a certain extent, which provides support for the divergence hypothesis and refutation for the convergence one.

Findings such as these are of course tentative, and as has been repeatedly stressed, constitute only one step towards an evaluation of the projects involved. Even when doubts, ambiguities or improbabilities can be detected, such identification must be complemented with more profound studies.

How to use the results?

The previous results amount to a rough description of the program theory and project logic of a sample of democracy promotion projects supported by Sida. It should be noted, however, that apart from general discussions of the kind just undertaken, a number of more rigorous evaluative activities (discussions, targeted evaluations, or academic studies) can be planned on the basis of these findings. Such activities can serve both the purpose of control and that of learning.

With regard to control, it is possible to subject the findings to an evaluation of the feasibility and realism of the assumptions involved. Thus, the assumptions involved may be juxtaposed with what is known about certain mechanisms.²³ For example, the importance of assumptions concerning training in different forms could be evaluated on the basis of what previous studies and evaluations have said in that regard.²⁴ Similarly, assumptions about how certain forms of behaviour spread in a polity, should take into account studies of the critical mass necessary to sustain such behaviour.²⁵

22 Poate et al., op. cit., p. 74.

23 Klein Haarhuis and Leeuw, op. cit. See Ray Pawson, “Evidence-based Policy: The Promise of ‘Realist Synthesis’”, in *Evaluation*, vol. 8, no. 3. (2002), pp. 340–358 for an interesting perspective on how to perform such a juxtaposition.

24 See for instance, Steven Finkel, “Can Democracy be Taught?” in *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 14, no. 4 (2003), pp. 137–151; and Harry Blair, “Jump-Starting Democracy: Adult Civic Education and Democratic Participation in Three Countries” in *Democratization*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2003), pp. 53–76.

25 Robert Axelrod, *Från konflikt till samverkan*. (Stockholm: SNS förlag, 1987).

Alternatively, the findings above could be used to design studies in order to specifically test certain assumptions. Given that lobbying and public pressure appears to be a frequently used mechanism against the central state authorities in South Africa in particular, a separate study could be commissioned to test the susceptibility of the South African state to such measures.

Of course, the information contained in such studies could also be used for learning purposes. In fact, one of the principal uses of the kind of evaluation presented above is possibly diagnostic. For instance, the finding that over half of the projects surveyed contain elements of capacity building could lead to a discussion of the experiences of such elements, if there are Sida-specific factors that lead to such a focus, and what the alternatives are. In this regard, it is informative both to make comparisons both between Sida's experiences from different countries, and between the experiences of different bilateral development cooperation agencies.

In sum, it should be stressed that the program theory evaluation sketched above constitutes nothing but a first step. Subsequently, additional discussions and studies have to be undertaken to turn the findings into operationally useful results. Even so, however, the example here has shown how the systematic, comparative approach used for analysis can lead to the advancement of a number of points for further discussion and inquiry.

Overall Conclusions

Three different sources of data have been used for the present overview of Sida's support for democracy and human rights; information from Sida's accounting system, experiences contained in project and programme evaluation, and the information on program logic and theoretical constructs that are manifest in assessment memos.

In a sense, this study has not added any new knowledge, but has merely attempted to gather, systematize and process existing data. It has consisted in three desk-studies, and suffers from the limitations of such. As the previous pages have demonstrated, however, such methods are no panaceas for the problems associated with evaluating this area of development cooperation. Importantly, none of them can overcome either the problem of attributing causal influence nor defining what shall be counted as a success in such endeavours. Moreover they are unable to say anything about actual conditions, and accordingly, about the achievements or obstacles that the projects have actually faced.

Nevertheless, the three different sources allow for some triangulation and for a more profound analysis, than any one of them would have done by itself alone. Hence, there are a number of general issues and conclusions that appear to be supported by two or three different sources of data. Below, some of them are discussed in more detail. As will be seen, however, they are closely related to each other.

- *Insufficient attention to overall goals and how programmes are supposed to reach their impact.* As the review of evaluations and the assessment of program theories made clear, there appears to be a need to enhance attention to overall goals and how they should be reached. Most projects appear well developed and considered with regard to their direct implementation, but less so when it comes to how they are supposed to impact on democracy and good governance in general. Similarly, the review of evaluations indicated that this problem is more frequently mentioned in evaluations than problems such as failing implementation or resources, administrative problems, etc.
- *Need for thorough political analysis of the potential of the project in question,* and of how it relates to the political environment. Indeed, this is another problem that is frequently mentioned in evaluations of Sida-financed projects in the area under study. As has been shown above, Sida does not appear to be applying the same standard format for projects in different countries. While this is definitely a strength, this also indicates the need to assess the political potential of each project by itself. A complicating factor for this was found in the initial assessment of the distribution of support for democracy; the fact that Sida's resources are very broadly spread as was indicated in the initial study. Ideally, Sida should possess the ability to make thorough and detailed assessments of the political situation in the dozens of countries in which it has a substantial funding for these projects. One can discuss whether that is the case today.
- Related to the previous two points is *the need to discuss incentives for change.* As was noted in part three of this assessment, there is a relatively high reliance on information, and less on the kinds of metaphorical carrots and sticks that may induce a particular behaviour. This can be coupled with the fact that the "chains" for each contribution in many cases may contain actors/links whose interest in the process may differ from Sida's. One may doubt, for instance, what the interest of the one-party parliament of Vietnam is in broadening its contacts with people: Is it to help undermine the state structure of which it is a vital element, or is it to provide a modicum of openness that may preclude calls for democracy? In discussing such cases, the question of how to bring about certain behaviours becomes central. And such a consideration could be combined with a finding that appeared in the initial assessment, which demonstrated that Sida to a substantial degree works with official institutions even in political settings that are less than democratic.

- In connection to this point, *one should discuss whether the kind of macro-level reorientations that democratisation and fostering good government entails can be created by singular projects*. Bureaucracies are by definition resistant to change, and it also needs to be recognised that most political elites have relatively little to gain from a reorientation of the polity. Furthermore, projects in this area of support run the risk of becoming compartmentalised, i.e., detached from the environment in which they are set to function, which will either thwart their original purpose or make them inefficient. Hence, it is easy to make the case for the necessity for Sida's support to be directed at on-going processes of reform which demonstrate a political readiness to make political and administrative change. However, juxtaposing geographic Sida's distribution of support with changes in Freedom House scores (admittedly not the most fine-tuned of measurements) reveals that this seems not to be the case in any the major recipients. On the contrary, most of them appear to be highly static politically. If one looks beyond the respect for freedoms to the actual centres of power, one can note that among most of the main partner countries, the same party has been in power for the last decade. While this may not automatically preclude administrative and political reform, it should at least lead to a questioning as to what political reform processes are underway in these countries.

Lessons Learnt

This assessment has primarily drawn on the examination and analysis of written sources. Some interviews have been undertaken, but they primarily served to corroborate or develop the written material. No field visits have been undertaken.

The reader will have to judge for herself whether the results from this overview are useful. Of course, there are severe limitations with regard to what a study like this can say. But even so, it may be argued that this technique has some virtues of its own:

In the first place, it is relatively easy and inexpensive to perform. This is important because it means that it can be used as a first step, without consuming too much resource. Second, it provides an initial overview over the subject which may both lead to conclusions in its own right (such as the above), and to indications for future studies. While the former will by necessity be rather general and without result-based evidence, the latter can provide such data.

Det är en explorativ studie som skapat en modell under hand, vilken kan förfinas, utvecklas och förbättras.

Apart from such general observations, this assessment has raised a number of more technical or methodological points on the basis of each of the three components.

With regard to the first study, the exercise, although very crude, indicates a number of results that can be obtained from a simple monitoring of distributed amounts; basically asking the twin questions of where sums are being spent, and in cooperation with whom. Already on the basis of such a very simple distribution some findings could be drawn, which could inform and direct future studies. Furthermore, some more evaluative conclusions could also be made on this basis, such as the points about geographical distribution and the presence of processes of political change or not in the partner countries.

The second study consisted in a kind of meta-study that compiled results from a large number of evaluations. A first point to note is thus that there are a number of potential problems with such a compilation, particularly as to what regards the aggregation of findings across a range of intellectual products that differ very much among themselves. Even so, however, the results demonstrated that certain problems seem to recur in this particular sector, and as could be seen, these were generally connected to the overall design of the project supported, and less so to its actual implementation. Although very general, such

findings anyhow indicate the problematic nature of project design in the sector, while they also underpin the focus on program theory.

The example of a program theory evaluation showed how such an exercise can help discern weak points and unsustainable arguments and assumptions in the project design. Above, the example of the lack of discussion concerning impact mechanisms was given as an example of this.

Although the sample used for this essay is too small to be able to claim to be representative, some tentative points could be made concerning underlying assumptions and prevailing models of action in the Swedish support for democratisation. In the same vein, the previous exercise identified a number of points and areas for future discussion, and — perhaps most important — for future studies and evaluations. For instance, given the importance attributed to mechanisms connected to training and to applying different pressure techniques against central state organs, there is a need to commission studies that can give clear indication of the extent to which related assumptions are justified, the conditions under which such mechanisms are likely to succeed, and the obstacles that they may face.

In sum, and repeating a point that has already been made several times in the text, there are a number of things that can be learnt from the kinds of assessments performed here, even as they cannot aspire to capture whether a project has been effective or not. It may be that it is the nature of the field of support to human rights and democracy itself which makes assessments such as these fruitful. As it deals with complicated social phenomena, rely on a number of implicit theories about how to produce change, and have results that are hard, if not impossible to observe in the short-term, this area may be particularly suited for the kind of exercise performed here. But then again, they should not substitute for continued attempts to measure and evaluate actual results. In the end, it is only by such studies that hypotheses and discussions such as the ones of this essay can be sustained and proved.

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Annex I: Method (in Swedish)

Inledning

Vid urvalet av "Sidas biståndsinsatser för MR och demokrati" har ett antal viktiga val och beslut träffats. Självfallet syftar Sidas utvecklingssamarbete alltid till att bidra till förstärkandet av mänskliga rättigheter och demokrati i världen, men att undersöka alla insatser som på något sätt tangerar dessa målsättningar vore omöjligt. För att begränsa antalet undersökta insatser har den information som ges av Sidas administrativa planeringssystem, PLUS, använts. Sidas handläggare klassificerar här sina insatser vilket ger underlag för statistik och kvantitativa jämförelser. Detta är det mest fullständiga och bearbetningsbara material som finns att tillgå om Sidas biståndsinsatser. Att använda sig av uppgifterna är dock förknippat med bland annat vissa validitetsproblem. Sidas statistikhandbok ger definitioner på de olika kodningarna men det finns naturligtvis stort utrymme för individuell tolkning. Därmed kan vi inte nå fullständig tillförlitlighet vad gäller informationen om insatserna men givet förutsättningarna är det, det mest lättillgängliga och säkra tillvägagångssättet.

Urval

- Endast landprojekt och -program valdes ut, inga regionala stöd.
- *Handlingsprogram MR/Demokrati, huvudkomponent kodat 2* (Alternativa handlingsprogram är miljö, gender och fattigdom. Huvudkomponenten MR/Demokrati kan dessutom viktas som 0=Ej relevant/tillämpbar på fred, demokrati och mänskliga rättigheter, 1=Hänsyn har tagits till fred, demokrati och mänskliga rättigheter, samt 2=Huvudsyfte att främja fred, demokrati och mänskliga rättigheter.)
- För att fokusera på pågående insatser valdes insatser ut vars *Distributed Agreed Amount 2005* överstiger 0 (DAA 2005>0).
- Av samma anledning koncentrerades urvalet på *insatser med status A (agreed) och P (planned)*, men ej på insatser som har status *C (completed)*, *I (indicative)* eller *R (rejected)* – dessa finns bara med i "Total"-listorna eller gamla listor)
- Utöver detta begränsades urvalet med de insatser ut vars *huvudsektor* är HR/Demo, dvs insatser som klassificerats med kod 2 under 1. *Mänskliga rättigheter och demokratisk samhällsstyrning*.
- Under huvudsektor 1 finns ett antal *delsektorer* där följande valdes ut: *demokrati, mänskliga rättigheter, offentlig förvaltning, rättsväsende, övriga sociala sektorer, övrigt inom mänskliga rättigheter och demokratisk samhällsstyrning*
- Under delsektorer finns ett antal *sektorer* varav följande valdes ut: *allmänt inom demokrati, allmänt inom mänskliga rättigheter, central statlig förvaltning, civila samhället, demokrati och offentlig sektor, ekonomisk förvaltning, ekonomiska sociala och kulturella mänskliga rättigheter, film, förvaltning, kommunal förvaltning, lokal statlig förvaltning, mediestöd, politiska och civila mänskliga rättigheter, rättsfrågor civila samhället, rättsväsende offentlig sektor, social förvaltning, studier utvärderingar seminarier, valstöd, övrigt inom förvaltning och service, övrigt inom MR och demo.*

Tillvägagångssätt

- Sidas uppställda LIS-rapporter hade inte kapacitet att visa detta begränsade urval, varför Sidas statistiker presenterade skräddarsydda Pivottabeller utifrån urvalsönskemålen beskrivna ovan.
- Dessa Pivottabeller uppdateras kontinuerligt och dagligen, men eftersom en sådan dynamik och föränderlighet försvårar jämförelsen med senare tillagda klassificeringar lades informationen i dessa över i separata Excel-tabeller som inte längre är uppdaterbara. Urvalet gäller därför insatser som var aktiva och registrerade den 21 mars 2005.

Egna bearbetningar: generellt för alla listor

Till flera av listorna har nedanstående uppgifter lagts till för respektive land, i syfte att åskådliggöra vilken typ av bistånd som går till vilken typ av länder.

- Freedom House demokratiindex *Freedom in the World 2004*.
Källa: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2004/table2004.pdf> (oberoende länder) samt <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2004/terr2004.pdf> (omtvistade territorier) samt *Freedom in the World 2005*.
Källa: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2005/table2005.pdf> (oberoende länder) samt <http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2005/terr2005.pdf> (omtvistade territorier).
- Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2004.
Källa: <http://www.transparency.org/cpi/2004/cpi2004.en.html>.
- Freedom House Press Freedom Index 2004.
Källa: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/pfs2004/pfs2004.pdf>
Indexet är endast uppställt för jämförelse vid mediestödsinsatser.

Listorna bearbetades också för att bättre åskådliggöra stöd till länder som i PLUS-systemet behandlas som flera enskilda regioner.

- *Ryssland*: För att tydliggöra har samtliga Rysslandsregioner lagts samman till en post som omfattar hela Ryssland.
- *Serbien/Montenegro*: Vidare är det i PLUS är möjligt att registrera insatser i Serbien/Montenegro under tre olika kombinationer: Serbien, Serbien och Montenegro samt Montenegro. Samtliga insatser i dessa kategorier lades ihop till en gemensam Serbien-Montenegro-post.
- *Etiopien*: En insats i Etiopien var felaktigt registrerad och stod som DAA 2005 SEK –2 500 000 samt DAA total SEK –62 500 000. I PLUS-systemet representerar positiva summor utbetalningar och negativa summor återbetalningar, vilket tydde på en felregistrering. Felet drog betydligt ner Etiopiens totalsummor tills ansvarig handläggare i PLUS hade korrigerat insatsinformationen. Den 1 april 2005 ändrades denna enskilda insats i samtliga listor i enlighet med insatsens utseende detta datum.

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Sida's support for promotion of gender equality in partner countries:
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Katica Hajrulahovic, Tale Kvalvaag
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