

Sida's Performance Analyses

– Quality and Use

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and Methodology**

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Sida Studies in Evaluation 04/02

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This report is part of *Sida Evaluations*, a series comprising evaluations of Swedish development assistance. Sida's other series concerned with evaluations, *Sida Studies in Evaluation*, concerns methodologically oriented studies commissioned by Sida. Both series are administered by the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit, an independent department reporting directly to Sida's Board of Directors.

This publication can be downloaded/ordered from:
<http://www.sida.se/publications>

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Sida Studies in Evaluation 04/02

Commissioned by Sida, Department for Policy and Methodology

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Registration No.: 2003-002940

Date of Final Report: May 2004

Printed by Edita Sverige AB, 2004

Art. no. Sida4246en

ISBN 91-586-8475-1

ISSN 1402—215X

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Preface

The present report is the third assessment of the quality and the usefulness of Sida's so called Performance Analyses. A Performance analysis constitutes an input along with a Country Analysis for orienting the revision of a Country Strategy for Swedish Development Co-operation. When developing a Country Strategy a reflection on results and past experiences is needed.

In light of a renewed commitment in Swedish Development Co-operation to alleviating poverty the Guidelines for Swedish Country Strategies (2001) are being reviewed. One important question for future work is how to strengthen a results-based oriented approach to all development co-operation.

Sida commissioned The Swedish National Financial Management Authority (Ekonomistyrningsverket, ESV) to undertake a study of Sida's Performance Analyses. The study resulted in this report, which has been an important input to the discussion on results-based orientation for the elaboration of new Guidelines for Swedish Country Strategies.



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1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to assess the quality and usefulness of a sample of performance analyses made by Sida. The ultimate purpose is to enhance the use of the performance analyses in Sida's country strategies. As Sida defines it, analysing quality is to assess the performance analyses in respect of their reliability, merits, shortcomings and general usefulness as a basis for the country strategy documents.

The assignment includes analysing the documents and the processes, identifying best practices and making recommendations. More precisely, the following areas were to be studied:

- To what extent do the performance analyses comply with Sida's guidelines for the production of performance analyses?
- To what extent have the conclusions drawn in the performance analyses led to action being taken in the country strategies?
- Have the performance analyses improved in comparison with earlier studies made by Sida (UTV/96 and UTV/98)?
- To what extent does the process of drawing up performance analyses affect their quality?

In addition the study should

- Identify two best practices
- Make recommendations to Sida.

The study has had the character of a desk study. It has concentrated on comparing documents, and has been supplemented with some interviews. The consequence is a fairly shallow analysis that cannot provide answers to all the reasons for using, or not using, the performance analyses in the country strategies. What we have done has primarily been to register different events in the documents, without really knowing why they have been included, and to make some reflections.

The countries and regions included in the study were: Zambia, Angola, Kenya, Namibia, the Great Lakes Region, South Africa, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Colombia and Bolivia. All the countries have both a performance analysis and a country strategy. For the Great Lakes Region there is only a performance analysis; the strategy had not been completed at the time the Swedish National Financial Management Authority received this assignment. The country strategies sent to the Swedish National Financial Management Authority for South Africa, Namibia, Kenya and Vietnam are proposed strategies that have not yet been approved by the Government.

Our first task was to determine the extent to which the performance analyses complied with Sida's guidelines.

2 To what extent do the performance analyses comply with Sida's guidelines?

In this section we provide a general description of the ways in which the performance analyses comply with Sida's guidelines. The section also includes the specific questions raised in the Terms of Reference for the study on how the general analyses are handled. We also try to answer two other specific questions raised, viz. the extent to which the results achieved by other donors are included in the analyses and the ways in which the results of sector programme support and budget support are treated.

The extent to which the performance analyses comply with the guidelines varies. This makes it difficult to draw any general conclusions. There are examples of analyses which comply with the guidelines almost to the letter, for example the analysis for Angola, while others do not. The reason for the latter is, in many cases, quite simply that the analyses have been written by consultants that were given special terms of reference to follow, instead of the guidelines. Examples of this are the performance analyses for Bolivia and South Africa (see appendix on how the performance analysis for each country complies with the guidelines).

A large proportion of the performance analyses fulfil the requirements of the guidelines in parts. The degree to which the analyses comply with the guidelines also varies between different sections in the same performance analysis. A number of distinctive features can be seen when studying the performance analyses. A majority of the analyses include the headings specified in the guidelines. Thus, a study that concentrated on compliance with the guidelines in respect of headings would fulfil the requirements of the guidelines to a greater extent than a study that solely concentrated on the texts in the analyses. Texts for a specific section do not always take up *all* the questions specified in the guidelines. Hence, at first sight, the requirements may seem to be fulfilled, but when the text is scrutinised, the picture that emerges is that the degree of fulfilment is lower. The reverse situation is also found, i.e. analyses that lack the specific headings but nonetheless take up the subjects listed in the guidelines or take up subjects under "wrong" headings.

Requirements in respect of some of the items in the guidelines are implicitly fulfilled; that is to say, sometimes the questions are not answered explicitly, but the answers can be found from an in-depth study of the text.

The guidelines for the *general analysis* are mainly followed. Exceptions are the analyses for Bolivia, Colombia and South Africa. These do not comply with the structure given in the guidelines. Amongst the remaining analyses, one item that is often left out is the occurrence of corruption.¹

The *sector analyses* do not follow the guidelines to the same extent as the general analyses. Half of the performance analyses contain a performance matrix, while the other half do not.² Amongst the matrixes included, three follow the structure given in the guidelines, viz. Sri Lanka, Namibia, and Angola. The performance matrix for Kenya does not include expenditures, while the performance analysis for the Great Lakes Region uses other terms than those in the guidelines.³

¹ An analysis of corruption could not be found in the performance analyses of Sri Lanka, Great Lakes Region, Vietnam, Colombia, Bolivia and Zambia, for example.

² The analyses that include a performance matrix are those for Sri Lanka, Great Lakes Region, Namibia, Angola, Zambia and Kenya. In the analysis of cooperation in Kenya, a matrix is missing for one programme (Rural Integrated Health Services Programme).

³ The terms used are: Achieved Impact, Expected Results, Achieved Results, Planned Activities and Performed Activities.

In most cases references to sources are not satisfactory. References in the form of footnotes, with varying degrees of accuracy, are included in about half of the analyses.

To sum up, although it is difficult to draw a general conclusion on account of the variety of the analyses, the overall assessment is that the performance analyses comply with the guidelines, even though occasionally there are some details which are not included.

2.1 To what extent are the results achieved by other donors included in the analysis?

The experience gained by other donors (and to some extent the results achieved by them) was included to a certain extent in all the performance analyses studied. However, this issue is treated quite differently in the analyses.

In some analyses, for example that for Sri Lanka, the experience of other donors is not given a special section, but is mentioned sporadically in the analysis instead. The *Introduction and Summary* section states that the Norwegian Government has been re-engaged in the peace process, but provides no information on the result of this re-engagement⁴. Further on, in the *sector analysis*, the Norwegian engagement is mentioned in passing⁵. In the section on *Economic Development*, the contributions and results of other partner organisations are briefly mentioned. This concerns the SIYB (Start and Improve Your Business) Programme.⁶ Apart from this, the performance analysis includes a section on *Co-operation with Swedish NGOs* which briefly reports the results achieved by Swedish NGOs. The conclusion drawn is that the experience and results of other donors are included, but only to a small extent.

In most of the performance analyses studied, there is a special section on the experience gained by other donors. For example, the analyses for Zambia, Angola and Kenya provide the reader with information on the donors that are active in the country, an overview of their main objectives, the focus of their work, the sectors they are active in, their activities, their experience and, in some cases, their results.

In the performance analysis for Kenya, the *general analysis* includes a section entitled *Experience Gained by Other Donors*, which consists of two pages⁷. It takes up donor policies for development cooperation with Kenya and some of the experience gained by donors (World Bank, IMF, UN, EU and the Netherlands). As the heading implies, this section mostly concentrates on the experience gained by these donors and less on their results. The *sector analysis* includes only a short section on other donors involved in the *Rural Integrated Health Services Programme*. This section presents other donors working in the health sector but does not include any results achieved by other donors.⁸ In the *National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Programme*, other donors are briefly mentioned, but not their results⁹. To sum up, the performance analysis includes very little information on the results achieved by other donors, although other donors and their experience are presented.

In the case of Zambia, the section on *Conclusions* is a section on the aid flows and experience of other donors, two pages long.¹⁰ This section describes the sectors selected by other donors, their activities, and the focus of their work. The overall experience gained and results achieved by other donors are

⁴ Performance Analysis, Sri Lanka, p. 3.

⁵ Ibid. p.13.

⁶ Ibid. p.16.

⁷ Performance Analysis, Kenya, p. 4 f.

⁸ Ibid. p. 26.

⁹ Ibid. p. 31.

¹⁰ Performance Analysis, Zambia, p. 4 f.

said to be mixed. Some examples of positive and negative results are given in the text, based on evaluations made by the donors. In conclusion, the section on the experience gained by other donors gives a good fairly overview of the main activities, experience and results of the other donors.

In summing up our observations, we can draw the following conclusion: the experience of other donors is included in the performance analyses, but in some cases only briefly and sporadically. However, some of the performance analyses provide a fairly good overview of the main activities and experience of other donors, and sometimes also their results.

2.2 How are the results of sector programme support and budget support treated?

It has proved to be difficult to follow the guidelines' model for reporting performance when it comes to sector programme support and budget support. Therefore, according to the guidelines, there is scope for a flexible approach where this form of reporting is concerned.

About half of the countries included in this study received sector programme support or budget support during the strategy period: Vietnam, Zambia, Namibia, Rwanda and Bolivia.¹¹ In general, the results of budget support and sector programme support are not treated specifically in the analyses. Instead, budget support is usually dealt with in the general analysis, as a strategically important question for future cooperation: Should budget support be introduced or not? As an example, in the performance analysis of Zambia it is stated that *"it was considered throughout the period that the political, economic and governance conditions for budget support were not in place. It was also concluded that the conditions justifying more long-term and closer cooperation with key institutions on the macroeconomic arena (—) were not present."*¹²

Whether a country receives sector support or not can be hard to determine merely by reading the performance analyses. If sector support is mentioned, it is generally included in the specific sections on performance in the different sectors. The following examples have the aim of exemplifying how budget support and sector programme support are taken up in the performance analyses:

The example of Rwanda: too early to know about results as budget support has been introduced very recently
In the introduction to the performance analysis for the Great Lakes Region, it is said that, in Rwanda, humanitarian assistance has been replaced by long-term bilateral cooperation which includes budget support. This budget support has been provided for the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy and for macro-economic reforms. It is stated that the phasing out of humanitarian assistance and the building up of long-term development activities has generally been successful. However, it is too early to see visible results from the projects in the areas of capacity building, human rights and democracy.¹³ Many development projects started only recently and it will take some time before the results are visible since the effects aimed at are long-term effects. In a section entitled *General conclusions from Swedish cooperation with Rwanda 2000–2002*, one of the conclusions is that the gradual shift from one type of support to the other took some time due to the organisational structures at Sida. Some humanitarian projects, mainly in the health sector, have been successfully transformed into long-term engagements.¹⁴

The example of Vietnam: Sida and the embassy will need to extend their capacity if budget support is increased
In the performance analysis of support to Vietnam, it is said that budget support will probably play an increasing role and capacity will be needed for monitoring and dialogue purposes.¹⁵ Budget support is

¹¹ Inventory of programme support contributions by Sida, 2002, Programme support – Sida working paper no. 2.

¹² Performance analysis, Zambia, p. 2.

¹³ Performance analysis 1999–2002, Great Lakes Region, p.4.

¹⁴ Ibid. p.35.

¹⁵ Performance Analysis, Vietnam, p. 9.

taken up in the general analysis section. This section includes a so-called portfolio analysis (only a summary is presented in a table) of the 17 programmes of which budget support is one. The table shows that budget support has been considered to have a “large” volume, concentration is “high”, with a “medium” number of donors. The sensitivity of issues involved is said to be “low”, the risk of the programme is “medium” and the existence of Swedish resources and experience is summarized as “low” in the table. In this section it is also said (in a table) that budget support is not a complex issue, but leads to fairly large demands for capacity at Sida and the embassy, as a large amount of dialogue and coordination are required.¹⁶ The *results* of budget support are not taken up specifically in the performance analysis.

The example of Vietnam: developing the sector-wide approach and considering sector programme support

According to the performance analysis for Vietnam, sector programme support was introduced in several sectors during the 1990s and remains the preferred method for Swedish development cooperation with Vietnam.¹⁷ However, it is said that the sector-wide approach has not been fully developed yet.¹⁸ In some sectors Vietnam has chosen *not* to apply a sector-wide approach. This is the case with the PAR masters’ programme, for example.¹⁹ There are also sectors where sector programme support has been considered by the analyst but where its introduction is not recommended. As an example, it is stated that: “*at present, the prospects of any kind of health sector programme support are considered small*”.²⁰

The example of Bolivia: there is a lack of a sector-wide approach and coordination

In the performance analysis of Swedish support to Bolivia, sector programme support is mentioned in one context: it is concluded that the Swedish interventions were more oriented towards supporting projects than sector programmes. According to the analysts, this means that the Swedish cooperation programme in Bolivia was not implemented in accordance with Sida’s policy for sector programme support, in which it is said that that a sector-wide approach should be strengthened in the implementation of programmes. One of the sectors that received sector programme support during the period was education. When describing work in this sector, some problems are mentioned. As an example, it is said that coordination problems have occurred with the donors.²¹

To sum up, the results of budget support and sector programme support are usually not taken up specifically in the analyses. Budget support is usually included in the general analysis as an important question for future cooperation, for example “should budget support be introduced or not?” Or “what would the introduction of budget support imply for development cooperation with this country?” The results of sector programme support might be included in the sector analyses, but are not dealt with specifically. Certain issues and problems related to sector programme support are often mentioned, for example capacity for implementation and coordination.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 8 f.

¹⁷ Ibid. p.5.

¹⁸ Ibid. p.6.

¹⁹ Ibid. p.17.

²⁰ Ibid. p.40.

²¹ Performance Analysis, Bolivia, p. 13 f.

3 The quality of the performance analyses

Our point of departure in this section is to discuss ways in which a performance analysis should be made in order to be *useful*, i.e. what criteria, ideally, it should fulfil. We refer to a performance analysis as such.

The questions asked by Sida are:

- What kinds of results are analysed?
- How are the results analysed?
- Are the analyses useful?
- Are the analyses reliable?

One of the purposes of this study is to make a comparison with earlier studies made by Sida (UTV/96 and UTV/98) to see if quality has improved. The quality indicators listed in the former performance analyses of Sida, the Swedish development cooperation agency until 1995 when Sida took over, are the same as the four questions mentioned above.

We have chosen not to make this comparison with Sida's earlier studies, apart from some general comparisons, for the following reasons. To make this kind of comparison the same kind of categories and assessments must be used, which is almost impossible unless it is the same person that makes this classification. Another reason is that it is doubtful whether the material we have is good enough to answer the first two questions asked above, i.e. what kinds of results are analysed and how they are analysed. Forming clusters of types of performances, i.e. outputs or impacts, as well as types of analyses, in comparison with earlier studies, does not say very much. If, for example, we find that 70% of the objects in our sample of performance analyses are outputs and 30% are impacts, what conclusions can we draw from this?

We do not have the same data for analysis, i.e. the same countries and projects. The development cooperation programmes can be in different stages of implementation and it is perhaps too early to talk about impact. The character of the projects can also differ. Perhaps the proportion of assistance provided together with other donors has increased and therefore it is more difficult for Sida to say anything relevant about its part of the total project etc. The main questions that we try to answer are therefore whether the analyses are useful and reliable.

3.1 Quality

Our general comment on the performance analyses is that they differ in both scope and content. We have already mentioned some of the differences above. These differences can be explained to some extent. The guidelines for performance analyses are *guidelines*, not regulations. In some of the instructions or terms of reference given to consultants, for example, it was not stated explicitly that these guidelines should be followed. Differences also arise on account of the purpose of the report, the use of time, and the skills of the evaluator.

We make a distinction here between usefulness and use. In this section we concentrate on usefulness and not use. Our point of departure is that it is possible for the analyses to meet certain quality criteria in order to make them useful, i.e. whether they are used or not. Information can be used despite the intrinsic quality of the report. However, intrinsic quality should not be overestimated. If the use of the

analysis is known to be limited, despite the quality of the report itself, there is of course no reason to over-elaborate the report. That would be financially indefensible. Our main quality criteria are reliability, relevance and readability.

Reliability

In this context reliability can be divided into three different aspects: *sincere*, *accurate* and *well-founded information*. Sincere information means that it is complete, or at least not biased. Accurate information means that the analysis is presented according to the principles for the type of information in question: for example, a statistical analysis should be presented according to statistical criteria etc. Well-founded information means that the assessments made are founded on facts and not on loose assumptions about development.

It is difficult for us to comment on *sincere information*, i.e. complete or unbiased information, since we do not know the scope or content of the information available on the different projects etc. Our discussions in the interviews with employees at Sida and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have concerned the general problem of objectivity in reporting information. Analyses made by the people responsible for different programmes or by consultants who are possibly former employees of Sida involve a general problem of sincerity. Who has an interest in phasing out projects that they have dedicated their life to? “Once Latin-America, always Latin-America”, as one of the persons interviewed said. The general view among those interviewed, both at Sida and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is that there is a great risk that information is biased.

This is ultimately a strategic problem for Sida as a whole and is not one that we can solve, even though it concerns the entire matter of legitimacy. In response to the question of what should be done about it, one employee at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that you have to visit the country yourself and talk to people on the spot.

However, we have tried to look at one aspect of sincerity. This is the way in which the information contained in the performance analysis is taken up in the country strategy. Is, for example, the information in the latter report more positive than in the performance analysis? Does it, for example, only present the successes and omit less well-performing programmes? This is important to know since it is not uncommon that decision-makers and other stakeholders involved in the country strategy process do not read the performance analysis document in its entirety, but rely on the summary that appears in the strategy document.²² Therefore, does the summary of the performance analysis in the country strategy tell “the whole truth and nothing but the truth”?

In most cases the summary seems to give the reader a fair and correct picture of the main findings in the original document, particularly in those cases where the results have been analysed quite thoroughly. As an example, the strategy for *Zambia* seems to have the ambition to give prominence to both the positive and negative findings of the performance analysis.

There is a risk that the summary of the findings of the performance analysis may be too brief, omitting information that might be important for the reader. In the country strategy for Bolivia, for example, the summary of the performance analysis is presented in the form of a list of “important conclusions that should be emphasized”. One of these conclusions is: “*The Swedish aid has been well adjusted to the present priorities of Bolivia, it has been relevant to the needs of the country and contributed to the strengthening of social institutions*”.²³ The uninitiated reader might think hard facts from evaluations lie behind such a statement. However, the original document states that: “*It cannot be determined in general whether supported (social)*

²² Interviews with officials at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs as part of this study.

²³ Country strategy, Bolivia, p. 9.

*institutions have become stronger thanks to the Sida contribution. However, the analysis of the PROANDES suggests that this has been the case in that program.”*²⁴

For the reader, it could be important to be able to go back to the original source of a certain fact or conclusion drawn in the country strategy. To facilitate this, it would be of great help if the country strategies contained references to sources, for example in the form of footnotes. This is not the case in the country strategies we have studied. In our opinion, it is quite often difficult to find the origin of a certain piece of information or a conclusion in the performance analysis.

The second aspect of reliability, *accurate information*, is not relevant here because we do not have access to the original material. We have no idea of the quality of the sources or how these sources are analysed. It would have been impossible to include a study of this type within the time schedule for this report. However, we would like to make a general observation. At Sida there seems to be a great trust in evaluations. If an evaluation is made in any area, the results are “true and reliable” and safe to refer to. Anyone who has read at least a couple of evaluations knows that this is not always true.

However, what we can comment on is whether the information in the performance analyses is *well-founded*. In most cases the source references are not satisfactory in the sense of being well-founded. Continuous references in the form of footnotes can only be found in some of the analyses. One general procedure used in the performance analyses is to have a few footnotes as well as references at the end of each chapter, or alternatively at the end of the document. This means that it is almost impossible to check the reference and the statement it refers to in the performance report.

To give an example: “*Reviews and various assessments undertaken during the CPLAR-1 have all concluded that the programme has been generally successful. Apart from capacity, competence and technological development of the land administration sector, the programme has contributed to improved land legislation, valuation, training and information.*”²⁵ The text refers to reviews and assessments, but which reviews? No references are included as footnotes, at the end of the chapter, or in the text.

Another type of statement that can be found in the performance analyses is a general reflection combined with a very clear indication of a lack of evaluations: “*There is no evaluation conducted of these projects but a general view is that OCHA via the fund rapidly succeeded to take care of suddenly emerged humanitarian needs.*”²⁶

However, there are of course many other cases where there are proper footnotes.

Another aspect, which we consider important, is lack of information, i.e. a statement of whether the project etc. has been successful or not. The problem is a “non-existent problem” in some cases, for example in cases where the project is new and where no information can be expected. The problem, as we see it, is in all the other cases where there are no comments on what should be done about the missing information. Is there a plan to obtain the missing information? Or is it difficult because of circumstance x or circumstance y?

We think that there ought to be a note on the reliability of the information; whether it is available or not. The following example, taken from the performance analysis for the Great Lakes Region, makes that note:

“The performance analysis is based on a selection of projects made by Sida. Although a good spread of projects has been chosen, the selection still constitutes a limitation regarding the data on which the performance analysis has been based. Since the reviewed projects/programmes constitute only a portion in relation to the total of all Sida development co-

²⁴ Performance Analysis, Bolivia, p. 12.

²⁵ Performance Analysis, Vietnam, p. 28.

²⁶ Performance Analysis, Angola, p. 22.

*operation projects in the countries, the value of general comments are lessened and the cumulative effect on the totality of the project interventions cannot be assessed. Further it should be noted that only a few evaluations have been undertaken of the projects/programmes included in the performance analysis. In conclusion, the above factors should be taken into account when reading and using the information made available in this report.”*²⁷

Another example is from Sri Lanka: *“It contains the large and most important projects but leaves out several smaller ones. Considering the low percentage of GDP that Swedish development co-operation represent, 0.0005%, it is important to analyse the results in relation to their catalytic effect and their ability to support processes that can contribute the objectives of the strategy”*²⁸

Relevance

Relevance can be divided into *validity* and *essentiality*. Validity (construct validity) means that the analysis measures the “right things”, i.e. in relation to the goal concerned. Essentiality means that the analysis should contain things considered essential for, in this case, a strategic decision. This means that there must be an *explanation* of why an effort was successful or not.

Where relevance in the first sense, *validity*, is concerned, one of the headings in the guidelines is relevance. According to the guidelines, relevance should be reported on the basis of changes in composition of donors, in relation to the country’s needs and strategies, for the specification of the role of the contributions in the sector/area, and whether the relevance analysis made in the planning stage still applies, both in relation to Swedish development objectives and the objectives of the partner country.

What we can conclude as a general observation from the performance analyses is that the question of relevance, under the heading relevance, concerns relevance in relation to the country’s needs and strategies, and a specification of the role of the contributions in the sector/area.

An example taken from Zambia illustrates this: *“Taking into account the government’s sector objectives, as set forth ASIP, the draft National Agricultural Policy and ASIP’s successor, the new Agriculture Commercialisation Programme (ACP), and those of the Country Strategy (1999–2001), it is concluded that all Sida supported projects have been relevant and in accordance with development policies and objectives of key priority areas for both Zambia and Sida.”*²⁹

Another example is taken from Angola: *“The conclusion, in general, is that the aid has been relevant in relation both to the needs of the target groups and the Swedish aid policy and to more specific goal ‘to save and protect life and to relieve distresses.’”*³⁰

Relevance in respect of other donors is normally discussed elsewhere in the performance analysis. This is an important criterion in the analysis that we can call *context*, i.e. an *explanation* of why the programme is being performed and its relationship with other programmes in the sector. The last part of relevance above, viz. if the relevance analysis made in the planning stage still applies, both in relation to Swedish development objectives and the objectives of the partner country, we interpret more as a *conclusion* for the future, i.e. is it relevant to continue to support these projects etc.

What we lack is a discussion on relevance related to the specification of the role of the contributions in the sector/area. An important aspect to discuss here is the effectiveness of specific support. The support or programme may be relevant in light of the need, but is it the most efficient tool to meet that need? The absence of cost effectiveness analyses is total.

²⁷ Performance Analysis, Great Lakes Region, p.2.

²⁸ Performance Analysis, Sri Lanka, p. 3.

²⁹ Performance Analysis, Zambia, p. 8 f.

³⁰ Performance Analysis, Angola, p. 61.

Readability

Another important criterion, especially from our point of view, is *readability*. Even though the quality of the performance analyses differs in the senses mentioned above, their readability does not differ that much. Many performance analyses have the character of an enumeration of different projects.

After reading a performance analysis it is almost impossible to remember very much of what has been written. To be frank, the documents have more in common with a thesaurus than with an interesting analysis. The problem, as we see it, is the lack of analyses in the sections on sectors and in the general analysis. At the end of each sector section there should be a summary of what has worked well, of the types of support that are worth continuing, and of the general lessons we have learned to use in future support. For example, do the NGOs have some successful projects or useful experience that can be passed on to others?

In the section entitled general analysis, there should be a discussion of the sectors that have worked well, of general cross-sector experience that should be passed on to others, and of future support. After having read this section, a reader of the general analysis should get a good picture of development cooperation in the country. There is no need for the performance analyses to describe all the different projects in the country since the country strategy does not make decisions at that level.

The following matrix summarises some of the aspects of quality and questions mentioned above that should be included in a performance analysis:

Aspects of quality in the Performance Analysis

<i>Level</i>	<i>General analysis</i>	<i>Sector analysis</i>	<i>Project analysis</i>
Quality			
Reliability	Completeness of the performance analysis measured e.g. as : a) share of the economic aid (despite the quality of the information) b) share of number of projects (despite the scope of the projects) c) share of the economic aid or the projects where there is reliable information d) share of the total budget	Completeness of the performance analysis measured e.g. as: a) share of the economic aid (despite the quality of the information) b) share of number of projects (despite the scope of the projects) c) share of the economic aid or the projects where there is reliable information d) share of the sector's budget	The project information should: a) not be biased (sincerity) b) be accurate (carefulness) c) be well-founded (empirical and confirmed) d) describe the support in relation to other donors
Analysis	What kind of support works well, despite sector? Why? What doesn't work? Why not? Is there any sector where the support is very efficient? Why?	What kind of support works well, despite project? Why? What support doesn't work? Why not? Is there any kind of project that works better than other projects? Why?	What data is available and what is missing? Goal fulfilment? What works well in the project? Why? What doesn't work well? Why not?
Relevance	Right sectors within the country?	Right projects within the sector?	Right project?
Conclusions	Should any sector get more support? Is there any kind of activity, despite sector, to be supported more heavily?	What projects to continue as up to now, get more support, get less support or be phased out? What activities to support, despite project?	If data is missing, what steps to take? Should the project continue as up to now, get more support, less support or be phased out?

3.2 Best practice?

One of the assignments given to the Swedish National Financial Management Authority was to identify best practices. But what are best practices? And in what sense? Are we talking about best practices for the fulfilment of the general guidelines or for whether the reports comply with specific directions given to the writer of the report? Should best practice be measured on the basis of the extent the performance analysis is used in the country strategy?

If we delimit our judgement to the quality of the performance analyses as such, regardless of whether they have been used or not, we have pointed out above that some of the performance analyses are better than others. To some extent this probably depends on the quality of the guidelines as well as the time the authors had at their disposal for writing the report. We have had difficulties in finding best practices in an absolute sense, i.e. that one or two of the reports are examples to be followed by others. What we have found is rather “slices of best practices”, selected from different performance analyses and which are perhaps possible to combine into a theoretical best performance analysis. If the guidelines are the norm, we can find different performance analyses that are relatively best in their compliance with different parts of the guidelines as discussed above.

- The guidelines for the *general analysis* are mainly followed by all performance analyses. Exceptions are the analyses for Bolivia, Colombia and South Africa.
- The *sector analyses* do not follow the guidelines to the same extent as the general analyses. Amongst those matrixes included, three follow the structure of the guidelines, viz. Sri Lanka, Namibia, and Angola.
- The source references are in most cases not satisfactory. Continuous references, with varying accuracy, in the form of footnotes can be found in about half of the analyses. Angola is a good example of continuous references.
- When it comes to experience gained by other donors, Zambia, Angola and Kenya provide the reader with quite a good understanding of the donors that are active in the country and an overview of their main objectives, the focus of their work, the sectors they are active in, their activities, their experience and, in some cases, their results.
- A note on the reliability of the information, regardless of whether information is available or not, is preferable. The performance analyses for the Great Lakes Region and Sri Lanka include a note of this type.

If, despite the shortcomings mentioned above, we look at the reports and try to identify one report that is better than the others, we find the Angola performance analysis as the best report, relatively speaking. The reason for this is that in this report the author tries to provide as much analysis as possible whenever possible. The report is also very clear in pointing out areas where there is either a lack of information or no information at all, as well as areas where the information is not well-founded. Again, we must emphasise that we are probably not being fair to other reports due to differences in terms of reference and possibly differences in the time available to produce the reports etc.

Our assignment also included making a study of the special decision documents for the country strategies, in which the process for each strategy is established and formally decided on. Some of the differences in the process appear in these documents, for example

- whether a consultant or a Sida-employee is assigned the task of making the performance analysis
- to what extent Sida’s guidelines for performance analyses should guide the analysis

- the persons who are supposed to be involved in the different stages of the process
- the time schedule for each step of the process.

We have not found any correlation between the types of processes as they appear in these documents, and the quality of the performance analyses. After talking to Sida employees during our interviews, we have obtained the impression that the persons writing the performance reports, regardless of whether they are employed at the embassies or work as consultants, are quite free and independent in their work on their reports. Therefore, one reasonable conclusion that can be drawn is that the quality of the report depends to a fairly great extent on the skills of these persons. This does not exclude, however, the possibility that a report has been enhanced as a result of a good process. However, independence in writing the report is no guarantee against biased information. Independence can take different forms, for example a good balance between positive and negative findings or merely a presentation of some of the findings, negative or positive.

4 How are the conclusions of the performance analyses used in the country strategies?

The probability that a performance analysis will be used in a country strategy hopefully increases if the analysis has been properly done, and is relevant and reliable. This precondition can be seen as necessary but not sufficient. This means that a performance analysis can be *useful* but still not *used*, as well as useless and still used. There may be several explanations of why a performance analysis, properly done or not, is not used in a country strategy.

The purpose of the performance analyses is that they should be used as a basis for strategic considerations and decisions in the country strategies. Therefore, we have examined if the conclusions of the performance analyses are being used in the strategies, and in what way.

The questions we wish to answer are:

- *Are the conclusions included?*
- *In what way are they included?*
- *Have the conclusions of the analyses led to any consequences for the strategies?*

We wish to emphasize that, by reading the documents, we can only make general observations on the instrumental use of the analyses, i.e. what is visible in the documents. We cannot make any normative statements – that use in one strategy is “better” than use in another strategy.

4.1 The conclusions of the performance analyses are included in the country strategies

According to Sida’s guidelines for performance analyses, the conclusions of the general analysis and the sector analyses should be summarised in a section in the country strategy under the heading *Conclusions of the performance analysis*. The guidelines also include a list of the types of conclusions the performance analysis shall result in. For example, conclusions shall be drawn on

- factors that should be taken into consideration in the formulation/implementation/model/selection of channel, and
- factors/results of importance for the selection of future programmes of development cooperation.

An attempt should be made to answer the question “in what way should experience gained and lessons learned during the last three years influence policies, focus, content etc of development cooperation?”³¹

After reading through the documents, we have found that the conclusions of the performance analyses are indeed included in all of the country strategies studied, in the sense that there is a section entitled *Summary of the performance analysis*, *Conclusions from the performance analysis* or *Assessment of the Swedish Programmes* (or similar) in the strategies. These sections usually consist of 1–5 pages of a total of 20–30 pages for each country strategy.

4.2 The conclusions seem more or less integrated with the strategy and differ in quantity

As the structure and the contents of the original performance analyses differ somewhat, so does the way in which the conclusions appear in the country strategies. Our main observations on the conclusions of the performance analyses and how they appear in the strategy documents are:

The conclusions can be separate or fully integrated

The ease with which the reader can find – and grasp – the main conclusions of the performance analysis varies from case to case, both in the original documents and in the strategy documents. In most of the performance analyses studied, the conclusions are drawn and listed in connection with each sector analysis section (sometimes combined with a section that summarizes all of the main conclusions).

This structure makes it easier for the reader to find the main conclusions on cooperation in general and on each sector in the performance analysis document.

However, when the findings and conclusions are summarized in the country strategy, it can be somewhat more difficult to determine the different sources of information and conclusions and to see what actually happened to all the conclusions drawn in the performance analysis. The special section that summarises the performance analysis can either mainly contain the conclusions drawn in the analysis or information of all kinds from the performance analysis. In the latter case, the conclusions drawn in the analysis are sometimes presented instead in another section: a section on all conclusions based on different sources of information. There are also cases when information from the performance analysis can be found in sections entitled *Strategic considerations* or *Areas of cooperation*.

Of course, this is not necessarily a problem for the strategy itself. The strategy document reflects the strategy process, where different objectives, facts and conclusions taken from different sources of information have been used as a basis for strategic decisions. However, it can at times be quite difficult to see the underlying reason for a decision or what impact a certain statement should have on future work.

For us, the status or importance of each statement in the strategy is uncertain. What does it mean when the conclusions drawn in the performance analysis seem to be more or less integrated with the rest of the document? If the conclusions are only included in a special section (as the guidelines require) but are not very visible in the rest of the strategy, does this mean they are important enough to stand on their own or does it mean they were difficult to use as a basis for the main strategic considerations?

³¹ Sida's guidelines for performance analyses, April 9, 2002.

The types of conclusions one can find vary

Most of the performance analyses do include the type of conclusions that are listed in Sida's guidelines, but have an emphasis on

- *either* results of importance for the selection of future programmes of development cooperation,
- *or* recommendations, or even decision-like statements, on future development cooperation.

The difference between the first and the second type of conclusion is that only the latter makes a statement about *future* cooperation, the future choice of channels etc. This is the case in the performance analyses of Vietnam and Sri Lanka, as two examples. The other type of conclusion consists of a *judgement* of results and experience gained, but does not say – explicitly – how this should affect future work. An example of this is the performance analysis of Colombia, where the conclusions mostly consist of positive or negative judgments of activities or programmes. Implicitly, these judgements might very well intend to make recommendations about the future work but this is not stated very clearly.

Either all conclusions or a selection

The number of conclusions drawn in the performance analysis that are included in the country strategy varies from case to case. In some country strategies, all the conclusions of the performance analysis are included. Some examples of this are the strategies for Colombia, Vietnam and Sri Lanka. In the strategy for Colombia, the whole section is quoted word for word but is not commented on further after this. (In this case the section on conclusions only consists of one page.) In the cases of Vietnam and Sri Lanka, the sections on conclusions are summarized, but all conclusions/recommendations in respect of future work are repeated – sometimes word for word³² – in the country strategy. In these cases we have not found any discrepancies between the two documents when it comes to conclusions, but the same statements appear in the country strategies.

There are also examples of country strategies in which quite few of the conclusions of the performance analysis seem to appear. One example of this is the strategy for Kenya. Of at least three pages of conclusions – when summing up all sections on conclusions in the 45-page analysis – only about five conclusions appear in the section entitled *Conclusions* in the country strategy. However, other findings from the performance analysis are included in other sections, under the heading *Assessment of the Swedish programme*, which summarizes the performance analysis. When scrutinizing the strategy as a whole, some of the general findings from the analysis appear in connection with strategic considerations under the different sectors.

Likewise, in the strategy for South Africa, the section on conclusions from the performance analysis does not contain many of the large number of conclusions drawn in the original document. In the performance analysis the conclusions consist mostly of recommendations for the future. The summary in the country strategy does not contain many of these recommendations. Instead it is a summary of the entire performance analysis.

It is, of course, very difficult to draw any general conclusions from the fact that the number of conclusions appearing in the country strategy varies. We cannot know what considerations lay behind a certain case in which either all conclusions are included or just a selection of the conclusions. We have not been able to find any case where the text of the strategy document reveals why most of the conclusions, or just a certain selection, are included. From our point of view, the reason for including all the conclusions could either be because they have been considered important for the future strategy or they are included mechanically because the guidelines require it.

³² This particularly concerns the country strategy for Vietnam.

When just a few of the conclusions are included in the country strategy, it might be an indication that many of the conclusions were not considered very important for the strategy. One possible explanation of this, among many others, is that a large number of the conclusions in the performance analyses concern specific projects and programmes, and might therefore not be very useful for strategic considerations at a more general level.

When the conclusions are listed separately from the rest of the country strategy and do not appear in any other context in the strategy, this might be an indication that they were not very important for the strategy. On the other hand, as soon as a certain conclusion is included in the country strategy – without being contradicted in the text or simply left out – it has been made important enough to be part of the country strategy document and therefore possible to interpret as a recommendation or decision on future work. Then again, one might argue that there can be many reasons for including a conclusion in the country strategy document without intending that the particular conclusion should have any actual consequences for future work whatsoever.

4.3 Have the conclusions drawn in the analyses led to any consequences for the country strategies?

When reading the documents, we can, of course, only observe what is written in the texts. We cannot know what consequences the performance analyses have had in the sense of learning at Sida, discussions at Sida, seminars for strategic planning, Sida's considerations, political decisions etc. unless this is revealed in the texts. We can only make observations on the consequences of the performance analyses as they appear in the country strategy documents.

In many cases the texts in the country strategies reveal the reason or source of information that lay behind a certain consideration (even though this is not always so). When this is the case, we can examine whether the performance analyses and their conclusions are said to be of use, or whether other factors are said to be of importance.

After reading the documents, we have found that all country strategies include at least one consideration or decision that is said to be based on information from the performance analysis. The following examples are intended to show the variety in both types of information used and different kinds of strategic considerations:

- *Based on the performance analysis, it can be concluded that support to civil society has been strategically important. The impact is hard to quantify but equally hard to overestimate. The dual strategy to support civil society as well as efforts to strengthen and change the state apparatus from within has been successful³³.*
- *(...)However, despite the support provided, the ministry's capacity remains limited, primarily due to policy inconsistencies and structural deficiencies within the ministry. Despite the limited results achieved in terms of the policy support, this function is vital for the future of the agriculture sector in Zambia.³⁴*
- *The general opinion is that OCHA has played a very important role as a coordinator of the humanitarian aid during the period and gradually strengthened its capacity, both on central and local level. (—) OCHA has also contributed to the strengthening of the possibilities for the Social ministry to lead the humanitarian aid. However, the Angolan institutions involved are still very weak. OCHA will therefore be needed in Angola during several years.³⁵*

³³ Country strategy, Kenya, Conclusions, p. 13.

³⁴ Country strategy, Zambia, Sector specific conclusions, p. 9.

³⁵ Country strategy, Angola, Sector specific conclusions, p. 11.

Other factors of importance for country strategy considerations

The country strategies reveal that other factors – besides results achieved and experience of development cooperation – often lay behind the strategic considerations at the different levels of aggregation in the strategy. Some examples of these factors are:

- **The relevance of a sector and the need for support.** For example, in the strategy for Kenya, it is stated that further support should be given to those sectors considered relevant and in need of support, according to the country analysis.³⁶ As another example, in the strategy for Angola it is said that there is still a huge need for humanitarian assistance. Therefore, Sweden needs to provide significant humanitarian assistance at the beginning of the strategy period.³⁷
- **The ownership and responsibility of the government of the recipient country.** An example can be found in the strategy for Angola, where it is said that future development cooperation is dependent to a high degree on the type of politics the Angolan government pursues when the war ends.³⁸
- **Whether there are many other donors in a sector or not.** The strategy for Kenya shows an example of this. In this case it is suggested that Swedish support to the education sector should be phased out for this reason.³⁹
- **The contents of an existing plan, policy or goal for a sector.** As an example of this, in the country strategy for Namibia it is said that: “the development plans of the government form the basis for Swedish development cooperation with Namibia and provide the framework for dialogue and consultations”.⁴⁰
- **The guidelines given by the Swedish government.** In the strategy for South Africa, one can find the following example: *in the guidelines from the Swedish government, the point of departure for the country strategy for 2004–2008 is formulated as follows: “the present development cooperation shall be transformed into broader cooperation, based on mutuality and co-financing”*.⁴¹
- **The results of the negotiations between partners in cooperation.** In the strategy for South Africa it is stated that future areas for development cooperation will be decided by means of consultative negotiations between Sweden and South Africa.⁴²

5 A comprehensive analysis

What we have done hitherto is a desk study, i.e. we have looked at the content of the documents. We have found that some of the performance analyses comply with the guidelines, others not, that they differ in quality, and that the conclusions drawn in the performance analyses appear in different ways in the country strategies.

In this section there are two questions that we would like to discuss, viz. why the performance analyses differ and if this really matters. In a study of this character, however, we can do no more than indicate possible explanations.

³⁶ Country strategy, Kenya, Conclusions, p. 13.

³⁷ Country strategy, Angola, The future objectives of cooperation, p. 17.

³⁸ Country strategy, Angola, The future objectives of cooperation, p. 15.

³⁹ Country strategy, Kenya, Conclusions p. 13.

⁴⁰ Country strategy, Namibia, Strategic considerations, p. 12.

⁴¹ Country strategy, South Africa, Objectives for development cooperation, p. 19.

⁴² Country strategy, South Africa, Reconstruction of cooperation, p. 19.

5.1 Why do the performance analyses differ?

There are probably obvious reasons why the performance analyses differ in the sense we have discussed above in respect of quality. One reason can be lack of time. This is mentioned at least in one of the performance analyses. Another reason may be the skills of the persons making the performance analysis. We have no indication of this in our examples, but other examples were mentioned in the interviews. One possible reason, indicated in the assignment, is differences in processes. We have not found any correlation between type of process and quality of the performance report. This does not, however, exclude the possibility that each individual report could have had a different appearance with another type of process, i.e. a bad report could have been worse and a good report could have been even better.

Our impression is that the persons writing the performance analyses, regardless of whether they are employed at the embassies or work as consultants, are quite free and independent in their work on the analyses. One reasonable conclusion is therefore that the quality of the report depends to a fairly great extent on the skills of these persons. This impression is strengthened by the fact that the staff at Sida or at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs have usually not asked for more precise information, apart from the general guidelines.

However quality, it must be strongly stressed, is in the eye of the beholder. Our assessments are perhaps not the same as those made by the staff at Sida or the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. People working with these questions on a daily basis probably have other points of departure than we have.

But let us depict the views of the recipients of the performance analyses, both staff at Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs:

Sida:

The methodology in the reports sometimes feels shallow

Sida is generally not very good at seeing development in a broad perspective

The performance analyses focus too much on conclusions, not analyses

Sida is generally not very good at making analyses

The analyses are important for people outside the organisation. Internally there is a need to demarcate the content

The content of the analyses should be at a more general level and show overall tendencies

Independent evaluations should be commissioned before the process starts

Separate the processes and write the performance analysis separately

Some of the analyses were good but, at the same time, there was too much detail and a lack of general analysis

In my view the report was good

The report is necessary. It is important to show experience gained

Too much focus on projects, not results

I would prefer fewer reports but of higher quality

We are not so good at following up achieved results compared to planned results

We are not so good at preparing future follow-ups and evaluations

Ministry for Foreign Affairs:

The performance analyses are too ambitious

Problems ought to be highlighted to a greater extent

More information of a general character and on the results of other donors

The impression is that the performance analyses give a more positive view compared to reality. Out in the field you see a lot of frustration

I would prefer more independent consultants. The information today is too one-sided or biased

More analyses of goal attainment.

Do the imperfections in the performance analyses have any effect on their utilization in the country strategies? Let us present the opinions of those persons interviewed on the question of utilization.

5.2 Does the result matter?

Sida:

The country strategies take too much time but, in our experience, the performance analyses are read. In general, Sida writes too many documents, which affects activities negatively

The performance analyses have a very small effect on country strategies. The country analyses are more important. No surprises are revealed in the performance analyses. The performance analysis is a desk product

The performance analyses are internal material

The connection between the performance analyses and the country strategies is marginal

The performance analysis was, in my case, quite uninteresting, because it had already been decided that the strategy would be changed

The performance analyses are, in general, only of marginal significance for the country strategies, because the strategies have already been decided on in the assignment from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The performance analysis had, in my case, significance for the country strategy. New appointments at the embassy have been the result of the performance analysis

Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

Our point of departure when reading the performance analysis is to look for warning signals, to “control” the direction of development cooperation. We cannot look thoroughly into the reports to see if the analyses made are good or not

We do not want to be without the performance analyses, even though we think they should be more simplified and include more conclusions

My hypothesis is that there are other external factors affecting the country strategy. But I believe it would be difficult to formulate a new strategy without looking at the performance analysis

It is a question of time, which we do not have, to suggest changes after reading the performance analyses

5.3 What is the problem?

We have hitherto looked at the quality of the performance analyses and how the conclusions of the analyses are used in the country strategies. The underlying hypothesis in this study is that a well-performed performance analysis increases its prospects of being utilised. Utilization is a difficult term. The reason is that there are different forms of utilization. In this study we have concentrated on utilization in the country strategies, i.e. what used to be called *instrumental* use. There are, of course, other types of uses that are more difficult to see because they are not visible in the texts. A *conceptual use*, for example, is when you are not able to see directly the result of the information in the text, even though this information has been important for considerations.

We have the impression, which is partly confirmed by the interviews, that the use of the conclusions in the performance analyses in the country strategies sometimes has the character of *ritual* use rather than instrumental use. Ritual use means that something is being used only since it is stated that this type of information should be used, i.e. because the guidelines say so.⁴³ Is this a problem? Let us look at other experience of performance information and utilization.

Uses in other contexts

In the above we have talked about best practice as usefulness rather than use. In practice it is of course difficult to see the usefulness of the reports in isolation from their practical use, especially when one of the main tasks in this report is to see the use of performance information in the country strategies. Therefore, we are hesitant to talk about best practice when the performance information in the country strategies is not used to any great extent.

Is this specific to our cases? In an evaluation of the country strategy process of Laos the following remark was made: *“There is less evidence that the RA (Results Analysis) exercised much influence over the content of CSP. The brief summary of the RA conclusions provided in the CSP focuses mainly on Lao-side implementation constraints rather than observed strengths and weaknesses of previous Sida development co-operation activities. Without access to the original document, it is hard to tell if this summation is an accurate reflection of the focus of the RA. Certainly, the current (2001) Sida CS guidelines suggests that the RA should attempt to address Swedish as well as partner-side influences on development effectiveness in the country in question. This does not emerge as a strong theme in the CSP”*⁴⁴

In the literature on utilization, there has always been a debate on whether performance information is used or not. The “conflict” in the debate has to a certain degree been dependent on the level at which decision-making utilization is discussed. Evaluators working very closely to decision-makers and other stakeholders at the local level can certainly feel that the information is more extensively utilised than, for example, an evaluation submitted to the government or parliament. The discussion also concerns the kind of utilization we are talking about, as mentioned above. Utilization is a difficult term to operationalise. This probably explains why very few studies have actually been made on utilization.

One study that can easily be transferred intellectually and practically to the situation in this study is a study made by the Swedish National Financial Management Authority on the use of annual reports in the Government Offices.⁴⁵ What the interviewees said in this report was that the information in the annual reports only leads to a small extent to decisions on changes. Major changes depend on political normative positions rather than on performance information. Furthermore, the information provided in annual reports is only *one* of many sources of information on the activities performed by the agencies. That makes it difficult to see which information had which impact.

According to the people interviewed in the Swedish National Financial Management Authority study, annual reports are important in the public administration field, but are not of any political interest. In what is called the performance dialogue between the minister and each director general, the performance of agencies seems to be of secondary importance for future plans. One problem, seen as a quality aspect, is that some of the interviewees perceived annual reports as biased or “laundered”.

⁴³ Other types of use are interactive, legitimizing and tactical. The basis of political decisions consists normally of many different sources of information. The performance analysis can, in this perspective, be seen as one source of many. A political decision-maker possibly also has to consider aspects put forward by different stakeholders. An interactive use means that there is and must be an interactive process and discussions with many different parties and inclusion of many empirical sources. Using information for a legitimizing purpose means that the only reason for producing or ordering information is to strengthen a position already held. Other information, not confirming the position already held, is ignored or dismissed. When someone wants to delay a decision, one way is to say that the question is under scrutiny. This is what we can call a tactical use. See Vedung 1998, p. 209 ff.

⁴⁴ Sida Evaluation 02/36, p. 11.

⁴⁵ ESV 2003:4.

But this does not mean that the information is not visible. It is easy to find performance information from the annual reports in, for example, the budget bill or in Parliamentary documents. This is a world-wide phenomenon.⁴⁶ But this is not the same as use, i.e. for making major decisions. Is this a problem? Not necessarily. Performance analyses can be used in different decision-making processes.⁴⁷ We have to specify the levels at which the performance information makes a difference. Different levels of decision-making can, for example, be at the agency level, in the budgetary process and in major reviews. Quite obviously, the scope for normative elements increases when you leave the agency level for major reviews, on account of their larger political influence.

The analogy of this example to our study is quite clear. The country strategy is at a very high general level. This means, as we also have seen in our interviews and as a general reflection, that the performance analyses are too detailed for the country strategy process. However, this does not mean that performance analyses are unimportant for decisions at a lower level, and for the fulfilment of the quality aspects mentioned above.

At the project level, performance information is needed in order to fine-tune support. At the sector level, the information is needed to see the effectiveness of different projects as a basis for choosing between projects. At a general level, the choice is between sectors, i.e. what type of support is relevant according to the development cooperation policy? Even if projects are efficient in a sector, this is of no relevance if this kind of support is not politically appropriate. This applies to all political areas in general, i.e. it is a normative and not a factual matter. As we have seen above, what is lacking in general in the performance analyses is the synthesis or the generalizing element from the project level up to a higher level, which is relevant from the country strategy point of view.

To make the performance analyses more useful and hopefully more widely used in the country strategies, we think that Sida has to consider some of the questions normally raised in an evaluation: *Why* evaluate, for *whom*, *who* should evaluate, *what* should be evaluated and *when*? Some of these questions are highly integrated indeed, but can also be treated separately.

Why evaluate seems a relevant question since the use of evaluations, according to the interviews, does not appear to be particularly strong in the country strategy process; the input consists of something else than performance information. *Who* should evaluate is a question of legitimacy. It is difficult for us to say if the performance analysis is made in good time in relation to the country strategy process, i.e. *when*. For *whom* and *what* are important questions to ask in order to eliminate the risk, as we see it, that the performance information is merely a form of paying lip-service rather than useful information. Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs must have an active role in requesting performance information, or must at least have an idea of how to use it. We have the impression that it is difficult to find stakeholders that are making strong requests for or are using performance information. It would appear that the representatives of the sector departments do not play an active role although, as experts on the subjects, they can commission relevant information. Who in the final analysis has the ultimate or overall responsibility for the performance analysis?

⁴⁶ Furubo et al. 2003.

⁴⁷ Sandahl 1997.

6 Summary of main conclusions and recommendations

Our main conclusions in the study are:

- The guidelines for the *general analysis* are mainly followed but the occurrence of *corruption* is an item that is often left out.
- The *sector analyses* do not follow the requirements laid down in the guidelines to the same extent. Half of the analyses do not contain a *performance matrix*, for example.
- The *experience of other donors* is often treated quite sporadically in the performance analyses, which often report on their main activities rather than on their experience and results.
- The guidelines do not contain any special requirements in respect of the results of *budget support and sector programme support*, but allow a flexible approach. Some kinds of strategic considerations on the introduction of these forms of support appear in most analyses but, in general, the *results* of these forms of support are not specifically taken up.
- It is difficult to determine the *accuracy* of the analyses in this limited study, as this would mean scrutinizing the quality of the original sources and the ways in which they have been used. However, we have made the general observation that the performance analyses reveal a strong trust in evaluations, without questioning whether they are really true and reliable.
- The information in the analyses is not always very *well-founded* as, in most cases, the source references are not satisfactory and continuous references in the form of footnotes can only be found in about half of the analyses.
- The risk of *biased information* is great since the analyses are made by people in charge of the projects or by consultants who are possibly former employees of Sida. This general problem of objectivity in reporting information is ultimately a strategic problem and a question of legitimacy that concerns Sida as a whole.
- The important element of a discussion of relevance in the analyses, in respect of the role of the contributions in a sector or area, is missing. The support or programme may be relevant according to the need, but is it the most efficient tool to meet that need?
- The absence of cost effectiveness analyses is total.
- Many of the reports have the character of an enumeration of different projects rather than that of an interesting analysis. The highly detailed descriptions affect readability.
- It is difficult to see the correlation between the country strategy process and the quality of the performance analysis. Our impression is that the persons writing the performance analysis, regardless of whether they are employed at the embassies or work as consultants, are quite free and independent in their work. It seems difficult to find stakeholders that are strong in making requests for or using performance information.
- The conclusions drawn in the performance analyses have indeed been *included* in all the country strategies studied, but the degree to which they appear to be *integrated* with the rest of the strategy varies. In some cases the conclusions are totally separate from the rest of the strategy and it is difficult to see whether they have been of any importance to the strategy as a whole. In these cases it is possible that the conclusions have been included mechanically, since the guidelines require it.

In other strategies the conclusions seem to be more highly integrated with the rest of the strategy and they appear to have been used and developed more actively.

- Our impression is that the uses of the conclusions in the performance analyses in the country strategies sometimes have the character of *ritual* use rather than instrumental use.
- The country strategy is at a very high general level. This means that the performance analyses are too detailed for the country strategy process. However, this does not mean that performance analyses are unimportant for decisions at a lower level.
- It would seem that the input in the country strategy process mainly consists of something else than performance information.

Recommendations

The level of description is too detailed

If the performance analyses are to be more useful for the country strategy, it is important to keep them at a reasonable overall level. To make conclusions or to summarize experience from different projects, and not to provide a description of the projects per se, is more useful for those who are involved in the strategy process. What, in general, can be useful for further support in the sector or across sectors should be the starting point for this description.

Better commissioned performance analyses

Our general reflection, to exaggerate somewhat, is that Sida can never be sure what kind of performance analysis it will receive. The aspects that should be analysed are not made totally clear to the persons producing the reports. The writers, whoever they are, are “quite free” to produce what they think is relevant and hopefully Sida will get a useful report. The guidelines offer perhaps some help, but we would like to see a more active role for the terms of reference. The terms of reference could be better adjusted to the country itself and possibly be made more detailed in a few specific areas. The terms of reference can be drawn up by the regional and sector departments at Sida and by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Better coordination at Sida

This recommendation is merely a consequence of the recommendation above. As we understand it, the process for the work on the country strategy varies. Many members of staff at different sector departments in Sida participate in forming the country strategy. At the same time it is our impression that their contributions vary. To fulfil the recommendation above, i.e. for better commissioned reports, it is important, for example, that the representatives of the sector departments have an active role and, as experts in the subject matter, can commission relevant information. Sida is, as someone said, a place where the principle of consensus rules. But who in the final analysis has the ultimate or overall responsibility for the performance analysis?

Better quality in the analyses

The quality of the analyses varies even though it is difficult to make “fair” assessments by merely reading the documents. Our recommendation is that a group at Sida, consisting of staff with, among other things, methodological skills, discusses which of the above-mentioned quality aspects that are important. We surmise that all of these quality aspects are to be found somewhere in all guidelines at Sida. But who ensures that these aspects are taken into consideration? In our interviews no one mentioned lack of skills in making performance analyses, but we are not that certain.

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- Angola**
- Resultatanalys, November 2002
 - Landstrategi för utvecklingssamarbetet med Angola 2003–2005/regeringsbeslut 2003-04-03
- Kenya**
- Performance Analysis – Kenya 1999–2003
 - Country Strategy for Development Cooperation with Kenya 2004–2008, working draft
- Namibia**
- Namibia Performance Analysis 2003
 - Country Strategy for Swedish development cooperation with Namibia 2004–2008
- Great Lakes Region (Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda)**
- Performance Analysis 1999–2002 Great Lakes Region
- South Africa**
- Final Report on the Assessment of the Country Strategy Co-operation between Sweden and South Africa (1999–2003)
 - Landstrategi för det svenska utvecklingssamarbetet med Sydafrika 2004–2008
- Vietnam**
- Performance Analysis Vietnam
 - Co-operation Strategy Sweden-Vietnam 2004–2008 (Version 4, 2003-10-01)

Sri Lanka

- Result Analysis 1998 – 2001
- Landstrategi Sri Lanka 2003 – 2007

Colombia and Bolivia

- Resultatredovisning och resultatanalys 1998 – 2002 Colombia
- Result Analysis 1997–2002 Bolivia
- Landstrategi Colombia 2003–2007/Regeringsbeslut 2002-12-19
- Landstrategi Bolivia 2003–2007/Regeringsbeslut 2002–
- Regionstrategi för utvecklingssamarbetet med Sydamerika, 2003–2007

Interviews

Sida:

Samuel Egerö, Asienavdelningen

Lars-Olov Jansson, Afrikaavdelningen/Syd

Annika Lysén, Afrikaavdelningen Öst/Väst

Mats Svensson, Afrikaavdelningen/Syd

Pernilla Trädgård, Avdelningen för Latinamerika

Åsa Wallton, Avdelningen för Latinamerika

Ministry of Foreign affairs:

Rolf Andréen, Afrikaenheten

Maria Gartner, Amerikaenheten, Latinamerika och Karibien

Robert Keller, Enheten för global utveckling/Policy och Projekt

Lars Ronnås, Afrikaenheten

Appendix

To what extent do the individual performance analyses comply with the guidelines?

Angola:

Follows the structure of the guidelines and consistently seeks to meet the requirements of the guidelines. Poverty aspects are not directly treated in the general analysis due to lack of direct poverty support.

Sri Lanka:

Follows the structure of the guidelines on the whole and partly meets the requirements of the guidelines. Includes no section entitled general analysis, although a general analysis is provided in the beginning. Other parts generally missing are the occurrence of corruption in the general analysis and an analysis of goal fulfilment in the sector analysis as well as whether the relevance analysis made in the planning stage still applies.

Kenya:

The guideline requirements are completely fulfilled in the general analysis and to a great extent in the sector analysis. Parts sometimes lacking or incomplete are reports on whether the relevance analysis made in the planning stage still applies, an analysis of the implementing capacity of the recipient and a description of the strength of the programme. Performance matrices are included for all programmes except one. Cost outcome is lacking in all matrices.

Vietnam:

The performance analysis for Vietnam follows the same disposition as the guidelines, but the requirements are only partly fulfilled. Corruption is not mentioned in the general analysis. The sector analyses generally do not mention whether the relevance analysis made in the planning stage still applies. Factors that have affected the outputs, implementing capacity of the recipient, an analysis of goal fulfilment and the strength of the programmes are included for some programmes, but not for all. Achievements are seldom compared to plans. No performance matrix is included.

Zambia:

The performance analysis of Zambia fulfils the guidelines' requirements to a great extent. No discussion on corruption was found in the general analysis. The sector analysis does not reveal whether the relevance analysis made in the planning stage still applies and seldom reports on changes in composition of donors.

Bolivia:

The performance analysis of Bolivia does not follow the guidelines, although some parts are taken up. The disposition of the analysis diverges from the disposition according to guidelines. Includes no performance matrix.

Colombia:

The performance analysis of Colombia does not follow the guidelines; instead it is divided into two parts: performance report and performance analysis. Achieved outputs are not compared to planned outputs. Includes no performance matrix.

Namibia:

The guideline requirements are to a great extent fulfilled in the general performance analysis of Namibia. The sector analyses follow the same disposition as the guidelines, but some of the different

aspects are not always brought up. Examples of these are whether the relevance analysis made in the planning stage still applies and the implementing capacity of the recipient. Presented achievements are not always, or only implicitly or vaguely, compared to plans. A performance matrix in accordance with the guidelines is included.

Great Lakes Region:

The requirements of the guidelines are to a great extent not met. In the general analysis the aspects of experience gained by other donors, implementing capacity of the recipient, and corruption were not found. Effects of development cooperation were also hard to find in the text. The sector analyses mostly do not include sections on goal fulfilment and conclusions for the future. Achieved outputs are not always compared to plans. Includes a thorough performance matrix in accordance with guidelines.

South Africa:

The analysis does not fulfil the requirements of the guidelines and does not follow the disposition. However it takes up some of the aspects that should be brought up according to guidelines.

Terms of Reference

1. Study of performance analyses in Sida's work on country strategies

A formal decision of Sida's Director General (140/99) instructs the regional departments, principally through the field controller function, make a follow-up study of performance analyses in country strategies every second year. This decision was a consequence of two studies made by Sida's Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit (UTV) in 1996 and 1998. However, no study has been made after the Director General's decision.

Since then the regional departments' methods group has produced new guidelines for the work on performance analyses. These guidelines were formally approved in April 2002 and now form the basis of the production of performance analyses. In order to make an examination of the performance analyses that have been produced since then, the regional department's methods group, in cooperation with the field controller, has produced these terms of reference.

2. Goals and aim of the assignment

The goal of the assignment is to make an assessment of the quality and usefulness of a sample of Sida's performance analyses produced after the new guidelines were adopted. In this context quality refers to a comprehensive analysis of the documents' general reliability, merits, shortcomings and overall usefulness as a basis for Sida's country and regional strategies. A reconciliation should be made with the recommendations presented in the studies made by UTV in 1996 and 1998 and with the management response which was written in 1999.

The aim of the study is that it should provide a basis for improving the regional departments' production of performance analyses in their work on the country strategies and thereby enhance the usefulness of the performance analyses.

3. The assignment

The study shall contain the following sections:

1. the documents
2. the processes
3. identification of best practices
4. conclusions and recommendations

The study shall include the performance analyses produced in the country strategy work for the following countries/regions:

- Zambia
- Angola
- Kenya
- Namibia
- Great Lakes Region
- South Africa
- Vietnam

- Sri Lanka
- Colombia
- Bolivia

3.1 The documents

The study of the documents shall include the following:

- A review in to determine the extent to which the performance analyses follow the guidelines.
- A review that shows whether the conclusions drawn in the performance analyses have had consequences in the country/regional strategies.
- An assessment of whether the quality of the performance analyses has improved, based on the studies made by UTV in 1996 and 1998.

The following questions should be considered:

In respect of the quality of the performance analyses:

- Which results are analysed?
- How are the results analysed?
- Are the analyses useful?
- Are the analyses reliable?
- How has the general analysis been handled?
- To what extent have the results achieved by other donors been included in the analyses?
- How have the results of sector programme support and budget support been dealt with?

In respect of the use of the performance analyses:

- How are the performance analyses used in the country strategies?
- What are the most serious obstacles to the use of the performance analyses?
- Can these obstacles be eliminated? If so, how?

The consultant shall discuss as far as possible what can be said to be relevant lessons in respect of the use of the performance analyses, with the experience gained by Swedish and international organisations as his/her starting point. The discussion should not be based on new information that has been specially collected for the assignment, but merely on the knowledge and experience possessed by the consultant. If there are few lessons that can be regarded as relevant, this should be clearly stated in the report.

The last three questions above on the usefulness and actual use of the performance analyses as a basis (at least in part) for results-based country strategies probably touch upon one of the most difficult aspects to deal with in performance management of programmes of development cooperation. It is therefore important that the consultant approaches and discusses these questions in a reflective and practically-oriented manner, and that reasonable limits for the use of the performance analyses are identified and acknowledged. Theoretical discussions and models that are difficult for Sida to transform into practice shall be avoided under all circumstances.

It is also necessary that the questions on the use of the performance analyses are studied on the basis of a small number of case studies. Vietnam, Kenya and Bolivia can be three special case studies of this type.

3.2 The processes

A study shall be made of the planning for the implementation of the performance analyses in the decisions made by the regional departments for each country strategy process. In cases where consultants have been used to produce the performance analyses, their terms of reference should be studied. If there are any obvious differences between the performance analyses that have been made by consultants and those made by Sida, this should be described.

3.3 Two case studies/best practices

As a suggestion two “best practices” should be made from the material which can be used in the future as models in the work of producing performance analyses. An in-depth study shall be made of the production of these documents. Important lessons learned from these processes should be presented.

3.4 Conclusions and recommendations

On the basis of the study the consultant should present conclusions and recommendations for Sida.

4. Method

The study is a desk-study of documents produced, i.e. performance analyses, country strategies and decisions for each country strategy process. The consultant should take into consideration the methods used in the studies made by UTV in 1996 and 1998.

In the matter of the two case studies/best practices, it may be necessary to conduct interviews or to contact representatives of sector departments, regional departments, embassies and, should the occasion arise, consultants.

5. Report and time schedule

A first synopsis shall be presented to Sida no later than December 17, 2003.

The invoice should be received by Sida no later than December 17, addressed to Mona Himmelstrand, POLICY.

A written report shall be produced containing the four sections presented under point 3 above. The report shall be written in English and not exceed 25 pages. The consultant shall present his/her results at a seminar directed towards all staff working in Sida's regional departments, heads of sector departments, and Sida's methods unit. This seminar shall be arranged in cooperation with the regional departments' methods group.

A draft version of the written report shall be presented to the regional departments' methods group no later than January 20, 2004. Comments on the report shall be received by the consultant no later than three weeks after the submission of the report. The consultant shall then present the final report in connection with the seminar. It is expected that the seminar will be held in mid February.

The time required to complete the assignment has been estimated at 39 working days.

Sida Studies in Evaluation

- 00/4 Poverty Reduction, Sustainability and Learning.**
An evaluability assessment of seven area development projects.
Anders Rudqvist, Ian Christoplos, Anna Liljelund
Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit
- 00/5 Ownership in Focus? Discussion paper for a Planned Evaluation.**
Stefan Molund
Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit
- 01/01 The Management of Results Information at Sida.**
Proposals for agency routines and priorities in the information age.
Göran Schill
Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit
- 01/02 HIV/AIDS-Related Support through Sida – A Base Study.**
Preparation for an evaluation of the implementation of the strategy
“Investing for Future Generations – Sweden’s response to HIV/AIDS”.
Lennart Peck, Karin Dahlström, Mikael Hammarskjöld, Lise Munck
Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit
- 02/01 Aid, Incentives, and Sustainability.**
An Institutional Analysis of Development Cooperation. Main Report.
Elinor Ostrom, Clark Gibson, Sujai Shivakumar, Krister Andersson
Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit
- 02/01:1 Aid, Incentives, and Sustainability.**
An Institutional Analysis of Development Cooperation. Summary Report.
Elinor Ostrom, Clark Gibson, Sujai Shivakumar, Krister Andersson
Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit
- 03/01 Reflection on Experiences of Evaluating Gender Equality.**
Ted Freeman, Britha Mikkelsen
Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit
- 03/02 Environmental Considerations in Sida's Evaluations Revised:**
A follow-up and analysis six years.
Tom Alberts, Jessica Andersson, with assistance from:
Inger Årnsfast, Susana Dougnac
Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit
- 03/03 Donorship, Ownership and Partnership:**
Issues arising from four Sida studies of donor-recipient relations.
Gus Edgren
Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit
- 03/04 Institutional Perspectives on the Road and Forestry Sectors in Laos: Institutional Development and Sida Support in the 1990s.**
Pernilla Sjöquist Rafiqui
Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit
- 03/05 Support for Private Sector Development:**
Summary and Synthesis of Three Sida Evaluations
Anders Danielson
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- 04/01 Stronger Evaluation Partnerships. The Way to Keep Practice Relevant**
Gus Edgren
Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit
- 04/02 Sida's Performance Analyses – Quality and Use**
Jane Backström, Carolina Malmerius, Rolf Sandahl
Department for Policy and Methodology



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