



2014:5

Sida Decentralised Evaluation

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Evaluation of Sida's Core Support to the Euro-Burma Office (EBO): Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in the Union Burma/Myanmar

Final Report

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**Final Report
December 2013**

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The views and interpretations expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.

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Commissioned by the Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok

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Date of final report: December 2013

Published by Citat 2014

Art. no. Sida61705en

urn:nbn:se:sida-61705en

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

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADDB	Associates to Develop Democratic Burma Inc.
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EBO	Euro-Burma Office
EUR	Euro
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
IPSG	International Peace Support Group
KESAN	Karen Environmental and Social Action Network
KIO	Kachin Independence Organization
KWAT	Kachin Women's Association Thailand
MPC	Myanmar Peace Centre
MPSI	Myanmar Peace Support Initiative
NBF	Nationalities Brotherhood Federation
NCCT	Nationwide Ceasefire Coordinating Team
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NRP	National Reconciliation Programme
PAST	Project Achievement StudyTeam
PDSG	Peace Donors Support Group
PIPD	Pyidaungsu Institute for Peace and Dialogue
PWC	Pricewaterhouse Coopers
SEK	Swedish Kronor
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
ToR	Terms of Reference
WGEC	Working Group for Ethnic Coordination

Preface

This report presents the Evaluation of “Sida’s Core Support to the Euro-Burma Office (EBO): Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in the Union Burma/Myanmar”.

The Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok commissioned Indevelop to undertake the evaluation in the fall 2013 through Sida's Framework Agreement for Reviews, Evaluations and Advisory services on Results Frameworks.

The independent evaluation team consisted of:

- Mr. Kevin Kelpin as Team Leader, a member of Indevelop’s Core Team of professional evaluators
- Mr. Henrik Alffram, Evaluation Specialist

Sida’s Evaluation Manager was David Holmertz. Indevelop’s Project Manager for the assignment was Jessica Rothman, who was responsible for coordination and management of the evaluation process. Ian Christoplos provided external quality assurance to the methods and reports.

Executive Summary

The Euro-Burma Office (EBO) was established in 1997 for the purpose of assisting the Burmese democracy movement to prepare for a transition to democracy and to keep the international community informed about Burma. Since 2008, EBO is officially registered as a branch of the Canadian not-for-profit cooperation Associates to Develop Democratic Burma Inc. (ADDB). Although democratisation, peace, reconciliation and good governance remain EBO's main focus, the organisation sees itself as a bridge between those working to promote democracy and human rights, on the one hand, and the development world, on the other. In light of this, EBO works in two main areas; it occupies a central mediating role in the ongoing peace process, working especially with the ethnic armed groups and their interactions with the government and the military, as well as operating as a small donor by sub-granting limited funds to individuals and organisations who see civil society capacity strengthening as a developmental goal.

Sida has supported EBO since 2005. Initially, Sida funds were channelled through the Olof Palme International Centre; but in 2009 Sida and EBO entered into a three-year agreement that was subsequently extended until December 31, 2013. Over the past five years Sida has been EBO's main donor and has contributed a total of MSEK 42. EBO has regularly received support from other donors, including the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and the European Commission. During the past years EBO has also been supported by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy of Denmark, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

EBO's total budget during 2012 was nearly EUR 2.1 million. Of this amount, 40 per cent was categorised as civil society related, 24 per cent as related to the peace process, 17 per cent as support to political organisations and 7 per cent as pertaining to EBO's strategic analysis work. The remaining 12 per cent was categorised as administration and internal restructuring costs.

The major **conclusions** of the evaluation of EBO are:

- The work of EBO is highly relevant to the current peace process in Burma. EBO and its Executive Director play a central role in mediating this highly complex and fluid situation. The EBO role has been especially critical in mediating the involvement of the ethnic armed groups, and has assisted them in coming to consensus positions in advance of their meetings with other actors who are involved in the peace process.
- EBO's programming work in support of the growth and deepening of civil society and civil society organisations within Burma has been relevant to this

goal. While its programming approach has been somewhat unstructured and broad, it has produced measurable outcomes among both individuals and organisations inside Burma and in trans-border communities and organisations in exile. Using an approach of multiple small grants to various organisations, EBO has been able to support many ‘possibilities’ for the strengthening of civil society through innovative capacity strengthening projects. EBO’s role as a sub-granting ‘donor’ fills a particular niche that would be difficult for larger donors to fill, due to administrative barriers or restrictions in funding partners. EBO continues to bring an organisational ability to this role that is responsive to the fast-changing environment in which it works. However, EBO will need to respond to the changing nature of civil society in Burma through its programming support. This in turn will need a much improved understanding of its strategic objectives, the linkages between these objectives and its programming activities and, finally, a monitoring system that can help EBO understand if it is working with the right organisations to accomplish its objectives as a small funding organisation.

- There can be little doubt that EBO’s programme, with its focus on civil society support and the peace process, provides support to a pluralistic civil society among ethnic minorities, often with a focus on rights issues and policy dialogue. A process of facilitated communication between, and strategy development among, the various ethnic minorities has always been a central part of EBO’s work, as has its focus on promoting the involvement of women in public life and decision making processes. In recent years, as political developments have opened up new opportunities, EBO has also successfully contributed to increased dialogue between the government and the ethnic armed groups.
- While EBO continues to have some visibility as an organisation working in both the peace process and in civil society strengthening, those external voices that are familiar with it have a high degree of praise for its innovative approach and focus on support to civil society. The role of its Executive Director has a higher level of visibility and is well respected and trusted by individuals in the government, the army and among the ethnic armed groups. He is in a unique mediating position that could only be filled by very few individuals in Burma and is frequently sought out by both internal and external actors to provide information.
- While some strategic planning activities have been undertaken, especially in 2012 when a new results framework was produced, the intentional use of these structures and/or processes to assist in the planning process for the implementation of programme activities is minimal. While a results framework with basic outcomes and some indicators does exist, it is safe to say that there has been a limited belief in, and commitment to, attempting to assess and learn from results in a structured manner within EBO.

- EBO's annual reports are little more than a descriptive listing of the activities that have been undertaken by EBO or its partners – they do not include evidence-based reporting of outcomes associated with its implementation activities. In an organisation that is so focused on influencing social change in a number of different social groups, the lack of an effective monitoring system hampers both EBO's internal learning as to what is working and what is not, as well as being able to tell the 'story' of its successes to external audiences. This is a serious gap in its programming implementation.
- An overview of EBO's entire programme also shows that the direct beneficiaries of its programme are, to a great extent, ethnic minorities, women, youth and other marginalised groups. However, even though many of the organisations supported by EBO are actively working to promote key aspects of a human rights-based approach, EBO lacks a structured methodology for encouraging its partner organisations to apply the principles of a human rights-based approach to their own internal governance structures. EBO makes no structured organisational assessments of partners and has no written criteria relating to partners' governance systems that could provide guidance as to which organisations are eligible for support.
- The 2009 appraisal recommended that EBO should develop and adopt its own by-laws, independent of ADDDB, and have its own Board of Directors, to be made up of relevant key actors in the Burmese democracy movement. While no separate Board of Directors has been established, the previously dormant ADDDB board was revived in late 2012 and has since taken an active interest in the affairs of EBO. An indication of this lies in the amendments that were made to the organisation's statutes in 2012 and 2013, which create a clearer separation of the powers of the Board and the EBO executive.
- EBO has an open funding procedure, with applicants being allowed to submit their proposals for consideration at any time. EBO, however, has no detailed criteria to guide its decisions and help it prioritise among competing demands. In practice, EBO prefers to reduce the funds that have been requested by an applicant rather than to completely reject a funding proposal. In light of this, almost no proposals are rejected outright. While EBO uses its networks to obtain information about applicants before approving applications, neither systematic efforts to assess applicants' abilities to obtain planned results nor in-depth organisational assessments are made.
- Apart from organising and promoting direct contacts, EBO disseminates information on political developments and the peace process through its daily compilation of Burma-related articles from a range of different newspapers, magazines and its weekly newsletter the Political Monitor, which includes EBO's independent analysis. The organisation has about 1 000 people on its mailing list and those interviewed by the Evaluation Team are generally of the view that the news summary and the Political Monitor contribute to keeping people informed of developments in Burma.

The key **recommendations** of the evaluation to EBO are:

- EBO needs to develop a more in-depth results framework that can assist EBO in producing a cohesive strategic plan for its civil society strengthening activities.
- EBO, in connection with an improved strategic planning process, needs to establish an effective monitoring system that allows it to collect data on the outputs and outcomes associated with its programming activities. This would also substantially improve its ability to produce evidence-based reporting on an ongoing basis. Re-establishing mechanisms, such as its PAST (Project Achievement Study Team) system, should be explored and supported internally with adequate funding.
- EBO needs to develop a more in-depth selection process for proposals, which responds to detailed criteria to guide its decisions and help it prioritise among competing demands. These criteria should be transparent and accessible to all.
- EBO should develop a tool to help it assess the strength of a proposal from human rights, democracy and gender perspectives. It should also develop an organisational assessment tool to help it assess the extent to which the organisational setup of potential partner organisations lives up to the fundamental principles of human rights and internal good governance.
- EBO needs to close its Brussels office and move its operations to Southeast Asia. In advance of this move, it should assess how other Europe- or North America-based organisations have managed to transfer their headquarters and operations to Burma or to the region. EBO should also put together a business case that outlines the economic benefits and/or limitations of moving its office inside Burma.
- EBO, for the time being, should maintain its office in Chiang Mai to support those communities and trans-border organisations that continue to operate in exile.
- The EBO Board of Directors should continue to enhance its capacity to provide strategic direction. It should also consider including more members of the Burmese democracy movement.
- EBO should follow through on its intention to revise and update its accounting system.
- EBO needs to establish a regular rotation of its auditor.

1 Introduction

The Euro-Burma Office (EBO) was established in 1997 for the purpose of assisting the Burmese democracy movement to prepare for a transition to democracy and to keep the international community informed about Burma. Since 2008, EBO is officially registered as a branch of the Canadian not-for-profit cooperation Associates to Develop Democratic Burma Inc. (ADDB). Although democratisation, peace, reconciliation and good governance remain EBO's main focus, the organisation sees itself as a bridge between those working to promote democracy and human rights, on the one hand, and the development world, on the other. In light of this, EBO works in two main areas; it occupies a central mediating role in the ongoing peace process working especially with the ethnic armed groups and their interactions with the government and the military, as well as operating as a small donor sub-granting limited funds to individuals and organisations who see civil society capacity strengthening as a developmental goal.

Sida has supported EBO since 2005. Initially, Sida funds were channelled through the Olof Palme International Centre; but in 2009 Sida and EBO entered into a three-year agreement that was subsequently extended until December 31, 2013. Over the past five years Sida has been EBO's main donor and has contributed a total of MSEK 42. EBO has regularly received support from other donors, including the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and the European Commission. During the past years EBO has also been supported by the Finish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy of Denmark, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

EBO's total budget during 2012 was nearly EUR 2.1 million. Of this amount, 40 per cent was categorised as civil society related, 24 per cent as related to the peace process, 17 per cent as support to political organisations and 7 per cent as pertaining to EBO's strategic analysis work. The remaining 12 per cent was categorised as administration and internal restructuring costs.

2 Findings

2.1 RELEVANCE

2.1.1 Are current EBO activities the most useful form of interaction with Burmese civil society?

Burma has experienced substantial internal social and political change within the last two years. With monumental shifts in the public political sphere and in the less visible relations between the army, government and ethnic armed combatant groups, EBO's interactional approach through its programming activities has remained both relevant and useful. As specific aspects of the programme EBO had planned in 2009 were never implemented and other parts have been phased out, its programme has, during the past couple of years, had a fairly clear focus on what can be described as the organisation's traditional core activities.

As mentioned above, EBO's approach was recently adjusted to focus on four main social actor groups. EBO's interaction with each of these social groups (or combinations of the groups) has been critical to their current levels of success. EBO's activities are focused through two main 'streams' of social interaction – i) its involvement as a central facilitator or mediator in the current activities taking place within the peace process, and ii) the strengthening of civilians and civil society organisations both 'inside' Burma and through trans-border communities. While the last year has seen EBO focus more intensely on activities related to the peace process consultations, many civil society and political party support interventions have also continued.

Given the current status of the peace process, EBO's work, especially its facilitation and support to the ethnic armed groups to come to consensus positions in their dialogue with the army and government, seems particularly relevant and timely. Its work has been instrumental in bringing the ethnic armed groups together to establish consensus (or near consensus) positions, with which they can then enter into discussions with the other parties. The recent establishment of structures like the (still to proven useful) Pyidaungsu Institute for Peace and Dialogue (PIPD) (with EBO as its sole funder) and the operations of the WGEC (Working Group for Ethnic Coordination) through which Harn Yawngkhwe and EBO provide main facilitating roles, have been central to recent movement forward in the peace process and in meetings between the government, army and the ethnic armed groups. While there has been some criticism among other donors as to why there should be another 'Peace Centre' (i.e.. Myanmar Peace Centre), the function of the PIPD centre is seen by EBO as a place for the 'ethnic voice' as well as a place for internal mediator/facilitator functions to provide the ethnic groups with both information (19 topics have been prepared in advance to be shared with the ethnic groups) on the peace process and

preparation among these groups in advance of summits with the government and army representatives.

In relation to EBO's civil society strengthening work, its approach is somewhat scattered (more on this in sections below); however EBO's support to the general strengthening of a nascent civil society inside Burma goes hand in hand in with its role in the facilitation and strengthening of the political, rather than military, role assumed by the ethnic armed groups. A growing and able civil society in the ethnic states will be critical to the sustainability of the peace process and the benefits that will flow from this to local communities. However, the existence of an informed civil society that can inform its leaders of the priorities and needs of the community at large is equally important. EBO's general approach, in many ways, is one that is supporting innovation in the process leading to democracy. Traditional capacity building activities are supported by EBO, however its ability to provide an acceptable channel to get funds out to high risk, often small, partners to help incubate these first steps in a longer and often successful capacity strengthening process for individuals and organisations is especially important. This may not be the model for the future of EBO, but it has been relevant and useful until now. This point will be discussed at length later in the evaluation report.

2.1.2 To what extent are the EBO supported social actors satisfied with the support from EBO and how has it contributed to their internal development? Have these activities strengthened them in terms of their own external work with local communities?

In a 2009 appraisal of EBO and its planned three-year programme¹, it was noted that EBO was extending its activities beyond the organisation's traditional focus on advocacy and funding of political organisations and civil society groups. It also stated that EBO's comparative advantages in working with groups such as Burmese immigrants in neighbouring countries and with internally displaced persons on community organising was not obvious and appeared to have grown out of particular donor interests rather than EBO's own priorities.² The 2009 appraisal also concluded that a potential added value of EBO was its ability to provide small grants to organisations with little capacity to raise support from other donors. In practice, however, most of the organisations supported by EBO had other sources of funding

¹ Alffram, Henrik. Mid-Term Review of the project "Promoting the Development of Democracy in Burma". 2007.

² It is stated in the proposal that the project on internally displaced persons in the ethnic states will mainly be supported through the European Commission's Stability and Democracy & Human Rights projects.

and some were well-established organisations with large budgets and the capacity to raise support directly from international donor agencies. While EBO still provides support to some such organisations, the vast majority of its recipients are now fairly small organisations that receive modest financial support.³

The evaluation team interviewed many individuals from these small organisations. These interviewees expressed a high degree of satisfaction with EBO support. Almost without exception, the evaluators were struck by the influence these small amounts of funding could have on the lives of individuals, often-young adults, who spoke of the opportunities that this funding had provided them. While these opportunities often consisted of simple skills building, the levels of awareness-raising that were experienced and expressed by many of these individuals is perhaps what was most impressive. EBO provides funds both to organisations working ‘inside’ as well as to organisations that operate in a trans-border mode. In most cases, individuals participating in CSO-organised activities come from ethnic areas where the level of these CSO interactions with local populations remains in a nascent stage within Burma. These participants however, continually referred to their wish to return to their local communities to help ‘inform’ and ‘teach’ others about democracy and the opportunities offered by a successful peace process. There seems to be an acceptably small number of Burmese participants who do not return home from activities, after having travelled to Thailand and India to engage in a range of funded activities from internships, scholarships at universities and youth capacity building and empowerment programmes like that held by KWAT (Kachin Women’s Association Thailand).

Another example of this awareness raising ‘inside’ Burma was demonstrated during a site visit by the evaluators to a project run by ‘Youth Circle’ – “Strengthening the Networking and Civil Society of Ethnic People”. Established by activist youths who had met when studying in different colleges and universities in Yangon, the focus of this project is to set up networking activities for youth from different areas and to provide trainings on environmental awareness, civic education and participation and various capacity strengthening activities. With EBO support, they have been able to proceed with this goal. A comment was made to the evaluation team that was particularly telling, and indicative of the current environment within which these young adults work. While discussing the processes that Youth Circle currently uses in discussions with local communities and youth, one of the Youth Circle workers

³ As strictly a rough estimate (as exact figures were not available from EBO) the average sub-grant amount for 87 projects in 2012 was euro 12,816 . Likewise, in 2013, and its 133 sub-grants (till present), this average amount was euro 11,278.

commented that ‘even one year ago I could not have talked to you without being in danger – now I can and we must take advantage of this in many ways’. Support from EBO has increased the likelihood of this happening.

Interviewees, in particular, expressed appreciation of the fact that EBO provided support:

- i) At early stages of the organisations’ existence and before anyone else was prepared to support them;
- ii) Even though the intervention in question was high risk in terms of the likelihood of attaining stated objectives;
- iii) Even though the intervention in question was politically sensitive (e.g. Mizzima’s support to legal and other assistance to so-called freedom fighters imprisoned in India, and various forms of support to the ethnic armies); and
- iv) The plans, ideas and perspectives of the recipient organisation were respected instead of simply imposing EBO’s views and requirements. This allowed for a high degree of local ownership.

2.1.3 How is the programme (EBO) perceived and accepted within civil society as a whole? Do other donors and organisations see it as a viable actor in the democracy movement?

With the recent ‘opening up’ of Burma, there has been a flood of organisations rushing in to set up in Burma. As a result of this, Yangon is awash with representatives of donors, CSOs and interest groups, both new and old. The evaluation team felt that it was important that the evaluation contained the perspectives from ‘external voices’ (external to funding or direct sustained connection to EBO) that could share their views on the approach and work of EBO and its members. Special effort, however, was made to speak with individuals who had a long history with Burma and deep knowledge about the path that it had travelled. These voices included independent observers, representatives from donors, CSOs and private organisations that could offer a long-term perspective on the past and current work of EBO and its contributions to civil society and to the democracy movement.

The confidential nature of EBO’s activities and support means that few outside observers have a comprehensive picture of EBO’s programme. However, interviewed observers who are familiar with at least parts of the programme are of the view that EBO has been, and still remains, an important actor in the democracy movement. As one external voice commented “EBO started when no one thought you could do anything inside”. A major reason for EBO’s current high level of involvement is the broad and well-developed contacts it has with a wide range of civil society organisations, political parties and ethnic armed groups. EBO continues to maintain a high level of ‘trust’ with these different social actors, and often operates as a ‘trusted insider’ with all groups, thus allowing it to act as a mediator between groups that mistrust each other. EBO is also considered to be a well-established channel through which international donors can provide support to actors which they would otherwise not be able to reach; that the donor would find difficult to directly support for political or other reasons (e.g. armed groups, trans-border support); or for which the

donor has not yet managed to ‘find their way’ to these groups by establishing the necessary levels of trust to work directly together.

EBO is also seen to provide an alternative to the ‘big event’ approach that some external voices describe as being popular with other donors. As stated to the evaluation team by an ‘external voice’ that has lived and worked in Burma for decades, donors can be very hesitant to ‘sign up’ with cash for a peace process that moves through a series of smaller events that is less ‘results-driven’. As an organisation with a recognised history of involvement in Burma, and with the ability to respond quickly with the flexible release of funds that pinpoint strategic interventions that are timely, EBO remains central to the peace process. Equally, there is a general criticism that many donors wish to respond only to the government and its agenda, which in many ways represents a peace process driven by economic development. As stated by one external voice – “for the government it is all about economic transformation... people will forget about arms when they are wealthy”. Most of the external persons spoken to comment that EBO is seen to offer a different path. Focusing on dialogue, EBO’s goal is seen to represent one that encourages dialogue and the facilitation of decisions between the major social actors involved in the peace process, with no hidden agenda outside of this process.

There are, however, somewhat different opinions as to whether EBO will play an equally important role in the future when direct contact has been established between the government and the ethnic armed groups. Nevertheless, EBO’s support to the establishment of the ethnic armed groups military liaison offices seems to have broad support among observers as a fairly inexpensive way of trying to build trust and avoid cease fire violations. A number of these liaison offices were visited by the evaluation team in Mon, Karen and Shan state. The potential impact of these liaison offices could be substantial, especially if linked (as outlined in the ToR for all liaison offices) to capacity strengthening activities undertaken through EBO funding. The liaison offices are well placed to operate as both ‘eyes and ears’ to preserve and implement the outcomes of the agreements signed at the State and Union levels on cease fire talks, as well as providing a possible focal point for consultation and capacity building activities in support of the local population and its educational, health and civic needs.

The fact that EBO has historically managed to maintain a dialogue with the government while also promoting coordination among the ethnic nationalities has been of importance for the peace process in Burma. There appears to be a strong consensus, however, that EBO’s political importance/ability to play a role in the peace process is, to a very great extent, linked to the personal influence and high profile of the Executive Director rather than to the organisation as such. Through specific circumstances of history and family, the Executive Director is uniquely placed for his current role within the peace process. His approach to the peace process has been characterised by other external actors as one that is ‘less cautious’ and, in the need to finalise the ceasefire agreement, could “leave those who do not sign up to catch up later”. This is seen as a sacrifice of process that could split the cohesiveness

of the ethnic armed groups. Even in discussion with the evaluation team, the Executive Director recognised this possibility but spoke of the need to ‘move quickly’ while the opportunity for dialogue is possible. These criticisms are minor, however, when compared to the general words of praise held, regarding the work of the Executive Director, by most that have deep knowledge of the peace process. He maintains a ferocious schedule that included close to 200 meetings in 2013 with various representatives of donors, governments, INGOs and others (including evaluators...). He is often asked to regularly brief ambassadors and special envoys from a host of interested countries; this, in and of itself indicates the respect for his opinion that is held by both external and internal authorities.

With this singular importance, however, comes increased dependence and in the event that the Executive Director would retire or otherwise be unable play the role that he has played in the past, EBO’s ability to influence the peace process would be significantly reduced. As recognised by EBO, it can be discussed if the organisation in the future can effectively combine the roles of peace broker and donor.

2.1.4 Is EBO’s programme in alignment with relevant Swedish strategies, policies and priorities, including the rights perspective and the perspective of people living in poverty?

In July 2013, the Swedish government issued the *Results strategy for Sweden’s international development cooperation in Myanmar, 2013 – 2017*. The strategy lays down three expected results for Sweden’s development cooperation:

- Increased respect for human rights, freedom of expression and accountability
- Broad participation in peace processes
- Improved health for women and children, focusing particularly on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In relation to the first result, *Increased respect for human rights, freedom of expression and accountability*, the strategy further states that “Supporting a vibrant, pluralistic and accountable civil society is to continue to be a priority” and that “Civil society organisations are important for supporting ethnic minorities in their pursuit of rights issues and the conduct of policy dialogue.” In relation to the strategy’s second expected result of *Broad participation in peace processes*, it is said that “Possible support in the area may include initiatives that strengthen or build trust between the government and ethnic groups, and between different ethnic groups. It may also involve “skills enhancement initiatives to increase the participation of discriminated

groups.” The active participation of women at all levels of the peace processes is, under the strategy, also a priority issue.⁴

As discussed in other sections of this report, there can be little doubt that EBO’s programme, with its focus on civil society support and the peace process, is well aligned with both the first and the second results area. To support a pluralistic civil society among ethnic minorities, often with a focus on rights issues and policy dialogue, and to facilitate communication between, and strategy development among, the various ethnic minorities, has always been a central part of EBO’s work, as has its focus on promoting the involvement of women in public life and decision making processes. In recent years, as political developments have opened up new opportunities, EBO has also successfully contributed to increased dialogue between the government and the ethnic armed groups.

As with all Swedish development cooperation, the support to Burma should also contribute to making it possible for poor people to improve their living conditions. Furthermore, the support should be guided by the poor people’s perspective on development and a rights perspective. These two perspectives have been operationalised by Sida into the principles of:

- “*non-discrimination* of excluded and marginalised groups;
- citizens’ direct or indirect *participation* in decision making processes and political life;
- *transparency* of public institutions, i.e. access to and availability of public information; and
- *accountability* of those in power towards the citizens based on the human rights framework.”

In line with the principle of non-discrimination, EBO’s focus on work with the ethnic armed groups is a critical element of the overall peace process and is perhaps a role that others that lack the personal history working ‘inside’ Burma would not be able to accomplish. Negotiating the ceasefire agreement with the ethnic armed groups has been a primary activity of EBO. Working through the WGEC, EBO has been central to the facilitation of a consensus agreement among the ethnic armed groups in order for them to approach the government as a unified group.

⁴ Government Offices of Sweden, Results strategy for Sweden’s international development cooperation in Myanmar, 2013-2017.

Working to support the second and third principles, above, of participation by civilians and access to and availability of public information, EBO's second area of programme support is in the strengthening of civil society to become, as stated in EBO's results framework, "a more aware and self-sufficient civil society". As stated by an interviewee, EBO's approach to this capacity strengthening approach is that of 'supporting a thousand flowers to bloom'. EBO funds many activities and organisations. At first glance, it seems like a very chaotic and unplanned approach with no real selection guidelines for proposals beyond the requirement that the proposals fall within one of the four EBO activity areas. After discussions with EBO staff, a somewhat clearer picture has emerged. While there is agreement that EBO rarely rejects any proposal, the purpose behind this approach is to help build a foundation for civil society that establishes 'common ground' within ethnic communities and between these communities in different areas. Using the approach of multiple small grants to various organisations, EBO feels that it can support many 'possibilities' for the strengthening of civil society through innovative capacity strengthening projects. The creation of this 'common ground' is also connected by EBO (at least theoretically) with the work it is undertaking with the ethnic armed groups leadership. The need for a growing and self-reliant civil society, where individual citizens can enter into dialogue with community leaders and government officials, will be important in each of the ethnic states as the peace process moves forward.

2.2 EFFECTIVENESS

2.2.1 What is the level of interaction between EBO supported individuals, groups and organisations? Are there effective networking mechanisms for EBO supported individuals, groups or organisations both internally within the sphere of EBO's programme and externally to the wider civil society?

As the peace process gains momentum, there have been a number of initiatives started to deal directly with the complexity of a multitude of national stakeholders.⁵

As a trusted insider, EBO was asked to convene the first meeting of 19 armed ethnic nationalist groups to coordinate their negotiations strategy in February 2012. From this meeting, EBO was asked to act as the secretariat for their monthly meetings. Out of this grew the WGEC, an organising body through to strategise towards a common

⁵ There are currently two domestic and three international coordination mechanisms: the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC), International Peace Support Group (IPSG), Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI), Peace Donors Support Group (PDSG), and Working Group For Ethnic Coordination (WGEC).

goal. There are also representatives from ethnic civil society (women groups and issue-based organisations). A recent success of the coordination work was the Ethnic Armed Organisations Conference held in Laiza, Kachin State from 30 October to 2 November 2013 with 102 delegates and observers from 17 organisations attending. While adopting a 6-step Road Map and the ‘Framework for a Political Dialogue’ drafted previously by the WGEC, a Nationwide Ceasefire Coordinating Team (NCCT) was also formed to discuss the proposed Nationwide Ceasefire with the government. Thirteen of the 17 organisations present were able to immediately nominate representatives to the NCCT. The remaining four, and at least three other organisations not present, will be able to nominate members at a later date.⁶ The fact that the Government of Myanmar agreed to and facilitated the conference underlines the highly unusual nature of the conference, especially because the Kachin Independence Organisation, which organised the conference, does not have a formal ceasefire agreement with the government.

Other interactional activities include the Nationalities Brotherhood Federation (coalition of ethnic political parties), Youth Forum (bringing together different youth organisations), and Kachin-Naga Dialogue. EBO, over the past few years, has also funded a number of conferences and similar initiatives of limited duration that have served to bring together a broad range of actors. Some examples in 2012 were the ‘International Conference in India’ and the ‘Shan Conference – Trust Building for Peace’.

The military liaison offices supported by EBO also serve to facilitate contact between the ethnic armed groups, on the one hand, and the government and the military (Tatmadaw), on the other. While these offices may have played a limited role so far, most observers are of the view that they may play an essential role in the future peace process. Even though the support to this initiative can be regarded as a “high risk” endeavour, considering the potential and long-term importance of these liaison offices, the amounts spent can be seen as fairly negligible.

2.2.2 Are the planning, monitoring, evaluative and reporting structures within EBO adequate? What barriers exist for EBO in collecting and reporting on results?

While some strategic planning activities have been undertaken, especially in 2012 when a new results framework was produced, the intentional use of these structures and/or processes to assist in the planning process for the implementation of

⁶ EBO Briefing Paper. Ethnic Armed Organizations Conference. October 2013

programme activities is minimal. While a results framework with basic outcomes and some indicators does exist, it is safe to say that there has been a very limited belief in, and commitment to, attempting to assess and learn from results in a structured manner within EBO. Some attempt has been made within EBO to nominally follow the results framework when reporting, but this is often without substance as it pertains to ‘outcomes’.

Unfortunately, EBO’s annual reports are little more than a descriptive listing of the activities undertaken by EBO or its partners – they do not include evidence-based reporting of outcomes associated with its implementation activities. In an organisation that is so focused on influencing social change in a number of different social groups, the lack of an effective monitoring system hampers both EBO’s internal learning as to what is working and what is not, as well as being able to tell the ‘story’ of its successes to external audiences. While the evaluation team was able to confirm many of the ‘outcomes’ associated with EBO’s work through face-to-face interviews and project site visits, little information was provided through the use of monitoring reports assembled by EBO. This is a serious gap.

When this lack of an adequate monitoring process was mentioned to EBO by the evaluation team, a number of reasons were mentioned to explain its absence. First, until around 2011, EBO had few opportunities to visit project sites and attend project activities carried out inside Burma. Monitoring was thus basically limited to written reports from project partners, meetings with project partners and beneficiaries based in exile, and occasional meetings with project partners and beneficiaries traveling from Burma to Thailand or India. There were also security issues with the ‘reporting’ of activities that took place ‘inside’ Burma and the possible identification from monitoring reports of those who were involved in these events. Finally, while EBO has developed a special template for ‘end of project’ reports to be submitted by partners, they often fail to do so even when continually prompted by EBO staff members.

One of the few encouraging attempts by EBO in putting in place an effective monitoring process was with its establishment of the Project Achievement Study Team (PAST) in 2012. The PAST team was comprised of ten young men and women, employed on a part-time basis and tasked with visiting and following up on projects in various parts of the country. For each project funded by EBO, the PAST members were requested to complete an outcome journal.⁷ This journaling process

⁷ Completion of these outcome journals was also required by EBO staff members after site or project

was actually an innovative attempt to institutionalise a monitoring system. The evaluation team viewed some examples of the monitoring reports or ‘outcome journals’ that had been completed by the PAST teams (overall about 20 journals were produced). While the PAST teams had minimal training and were paid a minimal wage, some of the reports were surprisingly well done and contained information that would be both useful for reporting and in helping to improve the implementation of current EBO activities. EBO decided in mid-2013 to discontinue with the PAST initiative. This was due to the uncertain nature of the availability of the PAST teams. Due to the very small payment for their services, all of the PAST team members had to hold other jobs at the same time, thus severely limiting their availability to respond to the monitoring process when needed.

In 2013, the board requested that one of EBO’s most senior staff members be specifically tasked with monitoring and evaluation. This has now been established under the ‘Systems and Procedures Director’. Since being appointed, he has managed to visit some partners in different parts of the country. As he is not permanently based in Burma, there seem to be plans to appoint a staff member in the Yangon office with particular responsibility for monitoring. EBO is committed to addressing the issue (coordination of the monitoring function), but has, so far, had difficulties finding suitable candidates to fill this Yangon-based position.

Reporting on EBO’s activities and results at the level of political or policy influence is much better than reporting on its implementation work with field level civil society groups. The reporting from EBO’s Executive Director is extensive and provides commentary on his multiple meetings held with a range of social actors. This is important, as his role is central to the work of EBO in the peace process and documentation of these achievements is critical.

2.2.3 Are there effective programme structures that ensure adequate work is being done regarding gender equality and human rights-based approaches?

In practice, much of EBO’s work and support has focused on human rights, democratic transition and empowerment of youth and women. But there seems to be little in terms of structures that actually ensure that there is such a focus.

Organisations applying for funding from EBO are informed that EBO only supports projects that uphold democratic values and human rights. They are also informed that this includes non-discriminatory policies and practices, age and gender sensitivity, and the promotion of disenfranchised communities. While EBO assesses that most

visits.

applications received meet these requirements, there are examples of EBO rejecting proposals on the basis of insufficient guarantees that the non-discriminatory clause will be respected.

An overview of EBO's entire programme also shows that the direct beneficiaries of its programme are, to a great extent, ethnic minorities, women, youth and other marginalised groups. In EBO's reporting, data is usually disaggregated by gender and to, some extent, by ethnicity and age. In EBO's annual report for 2012, for instance, it was stated that 48 per cent of all civil society members attending EBO-supported trainings were women and that the training attended by women was usually longer in length than those attended by men. EBO recognises that gender concerns socially constructed relations between men and women, and believe that any meaningful gender discourse must engage both men and women. Several women who had participated in EBO-supported training programmes told the evaluation team that the trainings had given them the confidence to take part in public life and make their voices heard. It should be noted that EBO was among the very first donors to support some of the largest and most well respected of the women's groups among ethnic minorities. Its focus on promoting women's rights and participation is generally well understood by its partners. It should also be noted that EBO has engaged a gender consultant who, among other things, has worked on the peace process.

EBO has promoted transparency and accountability (for instance through its support to DVB and other media groups) and participation and non-discrimination (for instance through its inclusive approach in facilitating the ethnic nationalities consultation process and in its support to empowerment initiatives for women). However, even though many of the organisations supported by EBO are actively working to promote key aspects of a human rights-based approach, EBO lacks a structured methodology for encouraging its partner organisations to apply the principles of a human rights-based approach to their own internal governance structures. EBO makes no structured organisational assessments of partners and has no written criteria relating to the partners governance systems that could provide guidance as to which organisations are eligible for support. Neither is EBO providing capacity building support with the aim of assisting organisations to put in place a governance structure and culture characterised by democratic decision-making, participation, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability.

2.2.4 How does EBO make its decisions on which individuals, groups or organisations receive support?

When applications are received, each is reviewed through a two-step process. First, the 'project committee' reviews the proposal. The proposal can be rejected at this stage, with either a reason given for its rejection or questions of clarification for resubmission. If the proposal is approved at this first stage, it then moves on to the Management committee who have final say on its approval and forwarding to administration for MOU and contract negotiations. The management committee includes all members of the project committee except for the EBO project

coordinator, admin officer and accountant. It also additionally includes the ‘Donor Relations Director’ (located in Brussels) and the ‘Executive Director’.

EBO has an open application process, with applicants being allowed to apply at any time. There is a lack of any specific criteria beyond that of the four activity areas as outlined by EBO. There is also no clear thematic or geographical focus that was ascertained by the evaluation team and no tool or procedure for assessing whether an organisation’s commitment to human rights, gender equality or a poverty focus. When questioned by the evaluation team, EBO staff commented that there are very few applications that are turned down for funding. The general philosophy seems to be to try to support all requests received, providing potential agents of change a platform from which they can operate (even though the actual amount provided will usually be significantly less than the organisations have applied for). The rejection of a proposal at the level of the ‘management committee’ is usually based on ‘content’ and it being judged to not fall within one of the four activity areas promoted by EBO.

2.3 IMPACT

2.3.1 Is EBO’s programming work likely to produce expected ‘impacts’ (or, has there been measurable ‘progress towards high level outcomes’)?

While there are significant dangers associated with speculating about future impact in a fluid context, such as presently exists in Burma, in EBO’s work as a facilitating organisation in the peace process, it seems that there is a strong likelihood that it will contribute to expected impacts – the transition to a democratic process shared by all citizens within Burma. EBO, especially through the work of its Executive Director, continues to be central to the process of involving the ethnic armed groups in both negotiating a ceasefire agreement and the following dialogue on the creation of a federation. The fact that EBO has no direct control over the peace process means that its ability to achieve results is, to a very great degree, dependent on issues outside of its **control**. It must be noted, however, that many of the strategies used by EBO to **influence** this process (as noted in above sections) have been effective in moving the general peace process forward.

The measurable impact of EBO’s work, as a small donor-like organisation supporting/funding political parties, civil society organisations and individuals in capacity strengthening activities, is less certain. While there was acknowledgement by funded organisations and individuals alike of the ‘measurable’ impact that this funding had on their lives or the work of their organisations, any systematic documentation of these outcomes has not been undertaken by EBO, thus limiting the claims it can make on achieving progress towards a strong, informed and active Burmese civil society (as noted in EBO’s results framework). While the evaluation team generally received only positive comments in its direct interactions with individuals and organisations visited, it was a limited sample.

In whatever form, EBO’s capacity strengthening approach is likely to retain an institutional agility that many larger donors do not have when handling small grants.

In 2012 EBO provided financial support to about 87 initiatives and has, so far, funded more than 130 initiatives during 2013. During 2012, a total of about €1.1 million was sub-granted to civil society organisations, political parties, armed groups and individuals that received support for such activities as conferences, consultations, study visits, trainings, internships, academic studies, advocacy or research trips and printing and publication. During 2013 roughly €1.5 million has, so far, been sub-granted. The amounts handed out vary from a few thousand Euro to €165 000 in 2013 for the Burma Centre for Ethnic Studies and €271 000 to thirty liaison offices of the ethnic armed combatant groups .

While this approach does have merit, it is perhaps an approach that was right for its time. Confronted with an almost non-existent civil society inside Burma, the need to find many points of entrance was understandable. Presently, however, with the opening up of space within Burma's political and civil society arenas and the ability to undertake focused and sustained civil society strengthening of organisations, this approach may no longer be equally effective or appropriate.

EBO's support is often catalytic in nature by helping nascent organisations develop into well-established NGOs with extensive activities, a broad funding base and, in some cases, helping partner organisations to develop their own networks. EBO provides some capacity building support on organisational and/or operational matters. However, many organisations expressed to the evaluation team a need and desire for guidance and training on how to draft proposals, make financial budgets and improve their skills related to reporting procedures to donors.

2.4 SUSTAINABILITY

2.4.1 Is the level of activities supported by EBO adequate for the programme to achieve its objectives (too few or too many)?

Given the changing nature of the social and political climate within which EBO works in Burma, its current approach to civil society programming activities is not the most effective way to achieve its intended objectives. As discussed in other sections of this report, EBO's approach of dispersing multiple small grants to many, many organisations and individuals, as a way to establish multiple points of entry within civil society, may not be appropriate in the future. While suitable for its time, a more focused approach is more likely to be effective in building and sustaining change in specifically selected organisations. This could lead to a much stronger foundation for civil society and the growth of local civil society organisations, especially in ethnic rural areas where sustained support is frequently unavailable.

Concerning the work of EBO in the ongoing peace process, the level of activities supported by EBO seems to be adequate to achieve its objectives. It must be noted, however, that while EBO seems to have considerable ability to 'influence' change in the actions, practices and relationships of others – all of which are needed to achieve EBO's overall objectives – it does not have control over these changes and, as such, it remains difficult to draw firm conclusions in this report.

2.5 ORGANISATIONAL ASSESSMENT

2.5.1 How has EBO's management structure changed over time? Has this change supported its programming work in a positive way?

Board of directors

The 2009 appraisal recommended that EBO should develop and adopt its own by-laws, independent of ADDDB, and have its own Board of Directors made up of relevant key actors in the Burmese democracy movement. While no separate board of directors has been established, the previously dormant ADDDB board was revived in late 2012 and has since taken an active interest in the affairs of EBO. An indication of this lies in the amendments that were made to the organisation's statutes in 2012 and 2013, which create a clearer separation between the powers of the Board and the EBO executive.

The Board has also set up a number of task teams, usually made up of both staff and board members, dealing with such issues as: strategy development, communications, membership and development of a code of conduct. Among its other strategic decisions is the establishment of a Systems & Procedures Director position to enhance the internal monitoring and evaluation capacity of the organisation.

The seven members of the board of directors are all based on North America or Europe.

Staff structure

Compared with the situation a few years ago, EBO has managed to put in place a more stable staff structure. Currently, the organisation has 11 staff members that work either from the organisation's office in Chiang Mai, the Brussels office, the Yangon office or from their individual home bases in North America.

However there seems to be a consensus, among EBO staff, donors and others interviewed in connection with this evaluation, that EBO needs to establish a stronger presence inside Burma. Currently, the only employee that is permanently based in the Yangon office is a recently-recruited office manager, although more senior staff members also spend considerable time in-country. Without a more significant permanent presence in the country, it will be difficult for EBO to maintain and further develop its contacts with government, civil society representatives and international organisations and donors in the rapidly changing context.

The current setup, under which most staff members have their base in either North America or Europe, also means that the organisation's salary level is considerably higher than for most other NGOs whose staff members are based in either Burma or in the region. Even though salary levels are by no means excessive, according to a European or North American context – and the Board of Directors has in fact recently decided that they have to be adjusted upwards – the organisation's salary costs amount to roughly EUR 420 000, or 20 per cent of the organisation's

total budget for 2012. The current setup also necessarily means that the international travel costs for staff members are rather high. In 2012, about EUR 55 000 were spent on international air travel and accommodation and hotels in connection with such travel. It should be noted that the 2009 appraisal recommended, "EBO should consider if it can reduce the number of staff members based in Europe and North America and instead increase its personnel in Asia."

As mentioned above, the EBO Brussels office currently has two staff members. Despite the changing environment in Burma, EBO has opted to keep the office open for the purpose of banking and international money transfers and to facilitate contacts with key EU actors and donors. Sida staff, and others interviewed in connection with this assessment, see little value in EBO maintaining an office in Europe and are concerned about its associated costs. Considering the fact that other donor-funded exile organisations have moved their operations to Burma, or the region, and that donor decisions about funding are generally not made in Belgium, but rather in Yangon, Bangkok, and perhaps other European or North American capitals, there seem to be few compelling arguments regarding why EBO still needs to maintain a Europe office as well as having all senior staff members based in Europe or North America.

A general movement of offices and personnel to Thailand and Burma would pose a significant life-changing move for many EBO staff members and should not be taken lightly or quickly. It does seem, however, that a move is likely to be necessary if EBO plans to continue to play an integral role in the peace process and in strengthening the role of civil society in Burma.

The question is not about the actual location of the bank accounts but whether, in this day and age, it is necessary for someone to physically be in Brussels to access the funds – this can be done remotely. EBO currently moves funds to Thailand and then into Burma from Brussels. With the bank accounts remaining in Brussels but accessed remotely, there are no security issues (as claimed by EBO that having bank accounts in Thailand and/or Burma might present at the present time).⁸ Equally, EBO's statement of the need to be in Brussels to access donors and to assist 'visiting delegations to the EU' is becoming less and less critical as, increasingly, donors, big and small, are moving inside Burma or travelling to their offices there. Access to

⁸ The evaluation team has been told by EBO staff that there are 'restrictions' on the funds that can be moved into Thailand. Although the evaluation team has asked repeatedly about what these restrictions are – legal or otherwise – we have still not been informed as to what these might represent.

these individuals and organisations could be accomplished as easily if EBO had an established presence inside Burma.

There are few other reasons why EBO should not locate its main office, and much of its staff, within Burma. There seems to be general recognition, even among EBO members, that this is coming – the question is when and how quickly it should be done. It should be noted that EBO's Board of Directors has expressed its intention to pursue national registration of the organisation in Burma following the 2015 elections. It has also stated that the Canada-registered ADDDB may not be needed in the future and that it might be possible to close down the Brussels and Chiang Mai offices.

While recognising that this would be an extensive (and intensive) change for most of the staff and their families, who currently live outside of Asia and more specifically outside of Burma, EBO needs to begin actively planning how this move will take place. The evaluation team did not perform an in-depth or formal investigation of current rental or living costs for individuals working within Yangon. Through informal channels, however, current residents expressed to the evaluation team that these costs were quite high (especially rental costs). The need for EBO to move its operations and presence 'inside' Burma, however, even if it is a zero-sum gain economically in comparison to operating externally, could still be seen as necessary to maintain its position, both in terms of the perception of EBO's involvement 'inside' Burma by others and in its actual ability to access and respond to individuals, groups and organisations in a fast-changing political environment (peace process) that, more and more, has its locus inside Burma.

Finally, in terms of project management, the Brussels office is handling 14 projects in 2013. There are, however, no specific criteria for determining which projects should be handled by Chiang Mai and which should be handled by Brussels. Brussels, up until now, has typically dealt with those projects that relate to Europe and projects that are particularly sensitive (such as the support to political parties). Among the projects handled by Brussels is a translation project, publication of books, DVB and the support to NBF (a coalition of ethnic political parties). This management could also be performed through the Chiang Mai office.

Financial management

In March 2013, PWC (Pricewaterhouse Coopers) Sweden issued its audit report and comments relating to EBO's finances for 2012. The audit report stated that EBO's

“financial reports corresponds, in all material aspects, with EBO’s accounts and has otherwise been prepared in accordance with the agreement with Sida.”⁹ The auditor recommended, however, among other things, that EBO should introduce quality assurance routines to ensure that agreement requirements are complied with and that the role and responsibilities of the internal auditor be clarified. Notable from the audit is its acknowledgement that most of EBO’s operations in Thailand take place without the formal knowledge of the Thai authorities. This is, however, something that has existed for many years and should be well known to EBO’s donors.

In its management response, EBO stated that the internal audit function was being modified to a new project monitoring and evaluation function. It may be argued that the size of EBO’s operations, both in terms of the number of staff and overall budget, is such that the establishment of a genuinely independent internal audit function may not necessarily be the most efficient way of assuring quality in organisational and project management matters. EBO’s intention was, in any case, never to give the internal audit function the independent status that is normally associated with such functions, but to closely connect it to the work of the Management Committee.

Considering EBO’s finance reports, audit reports and the Evaluation Team’s interactions with the Finance Director, it appears that EBO has put in place the human resource capacity necessary for effective financial management. However, the organisation does recognise that there is a need to update the financial management system. EBO staff state that a new system and chart of accounts will be implemented in 2014.

The financial reports submitted to Sida show how EBO’s total expenses are divided among its four activity areas, as well as for administration and internal restructuring.¹⁰ However, the economic report does not provide a comprehensive picture of how much of the total budget pertains to EBO’s own operations and how much EBO is sub-granting to other organisations. A reason for this is that payroll expenses and staff travel are allocated to activities such as direct project costs.

The current chart of accounts does not appear to be sufficiently developed to facilitate transparency and the needs of the organisation. Even though EBO eventually provided

⁹ PWC, Independent Auditor’s Report: To Euro-Burma Offices, Associates to Develop Democratic Burma (EBO), 28 March 2013.

¹⁰ During 2012, 41% of all expenses related to the civil society category, 24% to the peace process, 17% to political organisations, 8% to administration, 7% to strategic analysis, and 3% to internal restructuring.

the Evaluation Team with the financial data it requested, the chart of account that is used does not allow for ready production of reports about, for instance, international travel costs or staff costs over the past year. EBO recognises these shortcomings and intends to introduce a new chart of accounts during 2014.

EBO's audits have, at least since 2005, been carried out by the same Authorised Public Accountant. To have the same auditor for such a long period of time seems to be in conflict with what Sida normally recommends regarding auditor rotation.¹¹

2.5.2 Are there appropriate systems in place for the sub-granting assignment including the assessment and approval of applications, reviewing financial and narrative reports and determining partner's capacity to achieve expected results?

EBO has, over the past few years, sub-granted roughly 55% of its total budget to civil society organisations, political parties and other actors who are involved in projects falling within EBO activity areas. In the 2009 appraisal, it was indicated that EBO lacked firmly established sub-granting procedures and that the organisation was recruiting new staff members to, among other things, ensure better project monitoring. Since then, a process has been established through which applications for funding, which can be submitted at any time of the year, are initially assessed by a Project Committee that has to "review and take decisions on new proposals and allocate funds".¹² The Project Committee, which meets every two weeks, is made up of EBO's Director for Systems and Procedures, the Finance Director, the Operations Director and the Chiang Mai Office Manager.

The decisions made by the Project Committee have to be endorsed by EBO's Management Committee before any funds are disbursed. The Management Committee – which is made up of the Executive Director, Europe Director and three of the Project Committee members – is supposed to meet on a weekly basis. As the Committee members travel frequently, weekly meetings are not always possible in practice.

¹¹ See for instance SIPU, Organisational Assessment of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in view of possible qualification as Sida framework and/or strategic partner organisation: The Assessment Frameworks, April 2013.

¹² EBO, Terms of Reference: Euro-Burma Office – Project Committee (EBO PC), July/August 2013 (revised).

The Project Committee has to assess whether applications for funding are in line with EBO's four activity areas. Apart from these areas, the evaluation team was not presented with any criteria by EBO staff when asked at the time of the evaluation visit. The organisation did not seem to have detailed criteria to guide its decisions and help it prioritise among competing demands. In practice, EBO prefers to reduce the funds that have been requested by an applicant rather than to completely reject a funding proposal. While EBO uses its networks to obtain information about applicants before approving applications, neither systematic efforts to assess applicants' abilities to obtain planned results nor in-depth organisational assessments are made. Among the few projects denied funding in 2013, were those that were assessed to potentially create more harm than good. As an example, EBO did not fund an Arakan conference because it was afraid that could turn into an anti-Rohinga event.

EBO's staff members are of the view that the current funding system works reasonably well. Even though EBO is generally known for being able to provide funding on short notice, having each funding decision reviewed by two separate committees, especially as a majority of the members sit on both committees, seems to provide little obvious added value.

Responsibility for following up on projects primarily rests with the Chiang Mai office. Projects relating to activities outside of Burma and activities that are of a particularly sensitive nature are handled by the Brussels office. While EBO staff has to spend considerable amounts of time ensuring that grantees submit their financial and narrative reports, EBO staff has little time to provide constructive feedback on the reports received. In general, EBO struggles with the fact that the narrative reports received are activity focused and provide little information about the extent to which project objectives are attained.

Subsequently, in its response to the first draft of this report, EBO states that "budgets are also not reduced as a matter of policy". Proposed costs are checked against established unit costs. When proposed budgets are out of line, they are reduced or re-negotiated with the project partner to reflect more realistic costs.

The Project Committee reviews all proposals along a set of criteria.

- i) Does the proposal fall within the four activity areas?
- ii) What is the organisational history of the organisation?
- iii) Has it been funded before?
- iv) What is its capacity to implement the project?
- v) Are the budget items in line with established unit costs?
- vi) Will the project promote discrimination?
- vii) Are women or youth involved?
- viii) What is the organisation's history of reporting in time?

The weakness is that the review process is often not documented.

More recently, new project partners have emerged as EBO has begun to function more inside of Myanmar. They are very diverse and EBO has had to turn some project proposals down. It has also required more intensive background checks and a detailed examination of their project activities and cost estimates.

The evaluation team, however, was not apprised of these criteria when EBO staff were asked during the evaluation; and it has still not received any documentation from EBO that would demonstrate the existence of the procedures or actions listed above.

2.5.3 How are the principles of non-discrimination, participation, transparency and accountability materialised in the organisational set up of EBO?

Swedish development cooperation's core principles of non-discrimination, participation, transparency and accountability are, to varying extents, integrated in EBO's own operations and setup. EBO's programmes give special attention to improving the situation and enhancing the capacity of ethnic minorities, women and youth to participate in public life. In its reporting, data is usually disaggregated by gender and, to some extent, by ethnicity and age. In EBO's annual report for 2012 for instance, it was stated that 48 per cent of all civil society members attending EBO-supported trainings were women and that the training attended by women was usually longer in length than those attended by men.

Indications of the EBO's commitment to non-discrimination are also demonstrated by the fact that EBO works with, and that its support reaches, most ethnic groups in Burma. It strives to facilitate a dialogue between different ethnic groups and it pays close attention to, and reports on, the serious problem of religiously motivated violence and vilification. During 2012, 70 per cent of the participants in its civil society support belonged to ethnic minorities.

EBO has for many years been working with the Rohingya community in Burma, and Rohingya representatives used to participate in the EBO-affiliated National Reconciliation Programme as representatives who were equal to other ethnic groups. EBO has, during the past few years, also supported the Arakan Project, a human rights organisation monitoring and documenting the situation of the Rohingya Muslims. Among the Arakan Project activities funded by EBO are human rights field research, production of human rights reports, and advocacy at the UN Human Rights Council, UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), ILO (International Labour Organisations) and with various foreign governments.

EBO has also supported various initiatives to encourage unity among the Rohingya community and to advocate with the Burmese government. In 2010 and 2011 EBO worked with the Organization of Islamic Conference, with which it co-hosted two consultations to promote a political solution to the problems facing the Rohingya people. All major Rohingya political groups participated. EBO has also advocated

directly with the Burmese government to take action to stop violence in Arakan state and discrimination against the Rohingya.

It should also be noted that EBO's own staff includes members from several different ethnic groups, practicing different religions. Among its 13 staff members, 4, or about 30 per cent, are women. Of the organisation's five directors, two are women. The Board of Directors currently comprises four men and three women.

In the past, EBO, through the affiliated National Reconciliation Programme, had a mechanism in place, through which ethnic minorities' civil society organisations, political parties and armed groups jointly decided which initiatives that should benefit from financial support. Since the National Reconciliation Programme was closed down in 2010 due to a lack of donor support, no similar methodology of ensuring participation and democratic decision-making has been developed.

Considering the political situation in Burma in the past, and the sensitive nature of much of EBO's work, part of the organisation's work has been treated with a high degree of confidentiality. Today, certain aspects of its work remain highly sensitive, such as the support that, in contravention of the Constitution, is provided to political parties. Given the recent shifts in the social and political culture within Burma, EBO currently practices of openness may need to change, for instance by publishing an annual narrative and financial report. Some important steps, in terms of ensuring a level of transparency and accountability, have, however, already been taken. One such step is the establishment of the Board of Directors and the efforts made to ensure that the Board is well informed of the affairs of the organisation.

It should also be mentioned that the 2009 appraisal recommended, among other things, that EBO should make its funding criteria publicly available and that the organisation should publicly announce when and how eligible organisations and individuals could apply for support. These recommendations have been followed. Today, EBO publishes its guidelines for funding applications on its website. These guidelines underline the organisation's commitment to human rights principles and state that EBO "welcomes proposals from any organisations working towards the promotion of democracy in Burma" and that "all projects must uphold and promote democratic values and human rights", "reflect gender and age-sensitive approaches to programming" and promote "participation of disenfranchised communities." The guidelines also list EBO's four activity areas and clarify that supported projects must show relevance in relation to at least one of these.

2.5.4 Does EBO have an adequate process for sharing its 'wisdom' (communication/dissemination) with other external individuals, groups and organisations?

EBO uses a range of different communication channels to disseminate information and opinions. The organisation has, since its establishment, spent a considerable amount of time and resources on briefings concerning developments in Burma for

NGOs, diplomats, politicians and other decision-makers in Asia, Europe and North America. Through various fora created or supported by EBO, the organisation has also had close communication with a broad range of actors among the ethnic nationalities. It has, at the same time, facilitated a dialogue between these actors.

Apart from organising and promoting direct contacts, EBO disseminates information on political developments and the peace process through its daily compilation of Burma-related articles, from a range of different newspapers and magazines and its weekly newsletter the Political Monitor, which includes EBO's independent analysis. The organisation has about 1 000 people on its mailing list and those interviewed by the Evaluation Team are generally of the view that the news summary and the Political Monitor contribute to keeping people informed of developments in Burma. However, as EBO is not the only organisation producing daily news summaries, the Political Monitor and EBO's own analysis might be of particular importance.

The number of visitors to EBO's website increased significantly between 2011 and 2012, during which it had, on average, over 2 000 unique hits per months. During 2013 EBO has worked on developing a new website that will be launched by the end of the year. The idea is that the new website should be more user friendly and contribute to increased transparency.

In terms of providing more in-depth analysis, EBO's research department could potentially have played an essential role. However, its productivity was for a number of internal reasons, more limited than could have been expected. In 2012, it was decided that EBO should support two staff members of the research department to establish an independent research organisation, the Burma Centre for Ethnic Studies. The Centre, which is so far exclusively funded by EBO, has, since its establishment, produced an impressive number of briefing papers, analysis papers, working papers and books which have been printed and disseminated in large numbers and which generally appear to be in very high demand. Among its book titles are "The Principles of Democracy", "Federalism and Ethnic Issues in Burma", and "Peace Process & Framework for Political Dialogue". The Centre also organises trainings and workshops for ethnic armed groups, civil society organisations and political parties on issues such as democracy, conflict resolution and peace building.

2.5.5 What is the nature of EBOs ability to 'network' at all levels'? Does this ability exist throughout the organisation? Is the network adequate to EBO's programme objectives?

EBO has, since its establishment, developed contacts and built extensive networks at both the national and international level. During 2012, EBO held nearly 200 consultations with members of the international community, including the UN, regional organisations, governments and civil society representatives. In addition to the individual meetings, EBO has, with various international actors, also been involved in organising or facilitating a number of networking initiatives, including acting as co-coordinator of the International Peace Support Group made up of

international NGOs that build the capacity of domestic actors involved in the peace process.

In many ways, EBO's networking capacity, in regards to the 'peace process', is highly dependent on the Executive Director. There is consensus among those interviewed in connection with this evaluation that it is unlikely that EBO would have played a significant role in the peace process without the Executive Director. Only the Executive Director is considered to have the required trust among the ethnic nationalities' armed groups, generally, as well as within the national government. The Executive Director has also played an essential role in EBO's contact with representatives of the international community.

EBO has an extensive network among the political parties which is not dependent on the Executive Director – in some cases, political parties see him as a potential rival. EBO's civil society network is even more independent from the Executive Director. More and more, except for the peace process, EBO's ethnic armed groups network – liaison offices, coordination meetings, staff training, etc. function independently of the Executive Director. Even the international community is now often briefed by the Operations Director or the Executive Assistant.

3 Conclusions

- The work of EBO is highly relevant to the current peace process in Burma. EBO and its Executive Director play a central role in mediating this highly complex and fluid situation. The EBO role has been especially critical in mediating the involvement of the ethnic armed groups and has assisted them in coming to consensus positions in advance of their meetings with other actors who are involved in the peace process.
- EBO's programming work in support of the growth and deepening of civil society and civil society organisations within Burma has been relevant to this goal. While its programming approach has been somewhat unstructured and broad, it has produced measurable outcomes among both individuals and organisations inside Burma and in trans-border communities and organisations in exile. Using an approach of multiple small grants to various organisations, EBO has been able to support many 'possibilities' for the strengthening of civil society through innovative capacity strengthening projects. EBO's role as a sub-granting 'donor' fills a particular niche that would be difficult for larger donors to fill, due to administrative barriers or restrictions in funding partners. EBO continues to bring an organisation ability to this role that is responsive to the fast-changing environment in which it works. However, EBO will need to respond to the changing nature of civil society in Burma through its programming support. This, in turn, will need a much improved understanding of its strategic objectives, the linkages between these objectives and its programming activities and, finally, a monitoring system that can help EBO understand if it is working with the right organisations to accomplish its objectives as a small funding organisation.
- There can be little doubt that EBO's programme, with its focus on civil society support and the peace process, provides support to a pluralistic civil society among ethnic minorities, often with a focus on rights issues and policy dialogue. A process of facilitated communication between, and strategy development among, the various ethnic minorities has always been a central part of EBO's work, as has its focus on promoting the involvement of women in public life and decision making processes. In recent years, as political developments have opened up new opportunities, EBO has also successfully contributed to increased dialogue between the government and the ethnic armed groups.
- While EBO continues to have some visibility as an organisation working in both the peace process and in civil society strengthening, those external voices that are familiar with it have a high degree of praise for its innovative approach and focus on support to civil society. The role of its Executive Director has a higher level of visibility and is well respected and trusted by

individuals in the government, the army and among the ethnic armed groups. He is in a unique mediating position that could only be filled by very few individuals in Burma and is frequently sought out by both internal and external actors to provide information.

- While some strategic planning activities have been undertaken, especially in 2012 when a new results framework was produced, the intentional use of these structures and/or processes to assist in the planning process for the implementation of programme activities is minimal. While a results framework with basic outcomes and some indicators does exist, it is safe to say that there has been a limited belief in, and commitment to, attempting to assess and learn from results in a structured manner within EBO.
- EBO's annual reports are little more than a descriptive listing of the activities that have been undertaken by EBO or its partners – they do not include evidence-based reporting of outcomes associated with its implementation activities. In an organisation that is so focused on influencing social change in a number of different social groups, the lack of an effective monitoring system hampers both EBO's internal learning as to what is working and what is not, as well as being able to tell the 'story' of its successes to external audiences. This is a serious gap in its programming implementation.
- An overview of EBO's entire programme also shows that the direct beneficiaries of its programme are, to a great extent, ethnic minorities, women, youth and other marginalised groups. However, even though many of the organisations supported by EBO are actively working to promote key aspects of a human rights-based approach, EBO lacks a structured methodology for encouraging its partner organisations to apply the principles of a human rights-based approach to their own internal governance structures. EBO makes no structured organisational assessments of partners and has no written criteria relating to the partners governance systems that could provide guidance as to which organisations are eligible for support.
- The 2009 appraisal recommended that EBO should develop and adopt its own by-laws, independent of ADDDB, and have its own Board of Directors made up of relevant key actors in the Burmese democracy movement. While no separate board of directors has been established, the previously dormant ADDDB board was revived in late 2012 and has since taken an active interest in the affairs of EBO. An indication of this lies in the amendments that were made to the organisation's statutes in 2012 and 2013, which create a clearer separation of the powers of the Board and the EBO executive.
- EBO has an open funding procedure, with applicants being allowed to submit their proposals for consideration at any time. EBO, however, has no detailed criteria to guide its decisions and help it prioritise among competing demands. In practice, EBO prefers to reduce the funds that have been requested by an applicant rather than to completely reject a funding proposal. In light of this, almost no proposals are rejected outright. While EBO uses its networks to obtain information about applicants before approving applications, neither

systematic efforts to assess applicants' abilities to obtain planned results nor in-depth organisational assessments are made.

- Apart from organising and promoting direct contacts, EBO disseminates information on political developments and the peace process through its daily compilation of Burma-related articles from a range of different newspapers, magazines and its weekly newsletter the Political Monitor, which includes EBO's independent analysis. The organisation has about 1 000 people on its mailing list and those interviewed by the Evaluation Team have generally been of the view that the news summary and the Political Monitor contribute to keeping people informed of developments in Burma.

4 Recommendations

Recommendations for EBO:

- EBO needs to develop a more in-depth results framework that can assist EBO in producing a cohesive strategic plan for its civil society strengthening activities.
- EBO, in connection with an improved strategic planning process, needs to establish an effective monitoring system that allows it to collect data on the outputs and outcomes associated with its programming activities. This would also substantially improve its ability to produce evidence-based reporting on an ongoing basis. Re-establishing mechanisms, such as its PAST system, should be explored and supported internally with adequate funding.
- EBO needs to develop a more in-depth selection process for proposals, which responds to detailed criteria to guide its decisions and help it prioritise among competing demands. These criteria should be transparent and accessible to all.
- EBO should develop a tool to help it assess the strength of a proposal from human rights, democracy and gender perspectives. It should also develop an organisational assessment tool to help it assess the extent to which the organisational setup of potential partner organisations lives up to the fundamental principles of human rights and internal good governance.
- EBO needs to close its Brussels office and move its operations to Southeast Asia. In advance of this move, it should assess how other Europe or North America-based organisations have managed to transfer their headquarters and operations to Burma or to the region. EBO should also put together a business case that outlines both the positive and/or negative economic benefits and/or limitations of moving its office inside Burma.
- EBO, for the time being, should maintain its office in Chiang Mai to support those communities and trans-border organisations that continue to operate in exile.
- The EBO Board of Directors should continue to enhance its capacity to provide strategic direction. It should also consider including more members of the Burmese democracy movement.
- EBO should follow through with its intention to revise and update its accounting system.
- EBO needs to establish a regular rotation of its auditor.

Recommendations for Sida:

The evaluation team recommends that Sida continue to fund EBO and its current programming and involvement in both the peace process in Burma and in the strengthening of individuals, groups and organisations in Burmese civil society. The following recommendations, however, should be acted upon by Sida to ensure the best possible use of Sida funding by EBO.

- Sida needs to ensure that EBO partakes in the design and implementation of a results framework that responds directly to the four social actor groups it has identified in 2012. This process would involve a dedicated strategic planning process, the development of a detailed results framework (beyond the basic format already used by EBO), the design and implementation of a monitoring plan and a realistic process for data collection, on an ongoing basis, of its programming activities in all areas of its work.

The design, development AND implementation of these elements should be understood to be critical to continued Sida funding for EBO. EBO needs to have a much better idea of what it hopes to achieve at immediate and intermediate outcome levels concerning its four primary social actor groups. By understanding exactly what it hopes to achieve, who it will achieve this through (by using its influence), and finally, by having a simple but not simplistic monitoring process which will bring in information to it on a regular basis, EBO will be able to better respond to both the fluid nature of the Burmese social and political environment, while also being able to better share its ‘wisdom’ and successes with other organisations and donors.

- Sida needs to ensure that EBO has an organisational assessment tool that allows it to base its selection of individuals and organisations for funding on criteria that respond to the extent to which these organisations ‘live up’ to the fundamental principles of human rights-based approaches and internal good governance standards.
- Sida needs to ensure that EBO begin the transformation of its organisational setup in order to be represented by core staff in Burma. While there is still a need and purpose for the office in Chiang Mai to remain operational, the ‘presence’ of EBO within Burma needs to be more firmly established. While recognising that the situation in Burma could change quickly, the evaluation team is of the view that Sida should require a high degree of pre-planning by EBO for a move that would see a step-wise process, whereby some EBO staff and management activities are located ‘inside’ Burma by EBO. While there are still security concerns that could be problematic regarding a larger scale move of EBO functions into Burma, there seems to be less reason to not move management functions within Burma. In the case that EBO disagrees with this approach (based solely on an economic cost analysis), Sida should require a ‘business case’ from EBO that shows the economic benefits of NOT locating its main office in Yangon if it believes this to still be the best approach.
- Sida should require EBO to immediately produce documentation that demonstrates the ‘restrictions’ that it will encounter if its banking operations

are removed from the Brussels office to Thailand or, eventually into Burma (with the establishment of legal status as an organisation for EBO in Burma).

The evaluation team, even after multiple attempts with different EBO staff members, was unable to obtain, from EBO, a concrete description and explanation of the ‘financial restrictions’ that were often referred to by EBO as the reasons for the existence of the Brussels office. It is still unclear if these are actual ‘legal restrictions’ or if these processes and financial procedures that are used by EBO are seen by the organisation as necessary precautions to a perceived, but not legal barrier.

Annex 1 – Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for Evaluation of Sida's Core Support to the Euro-Burma Office (EBO): Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in the Union Burma/Myanmar

Date: 12 September 2013

Case number: 13/000670

1. Evaluation Purpose

Sida is evaluating relevant parts of its Myanmar programme portfolio in order to get a deeper understanding of its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact.

The first purpose of this review is to provide an objective assessment of the design, implementation and results of EBO's programme. Sida would like to verify development results and draw conclusions from EBO's experience, to be used in future portfolio analysis as well as in Sida's reporting to the Swedish government.

The second purpose is to obtain a deeper understanding of how EBO can proceed in its aspiration to help the Burmese democracy movement prepare for a transition to democracy and to keep the international community informed about the situation in Burma.

It is expected that the findings and recommendations of the evaluation will be used as an input to decision-making concerning a possible continued Swedish support to EBO.

2. Intervention Background

Between 2005 and 2008, Sida provided funding to EBO through the Olof Palme International Centre. In 2009, Sida commissioned an Appraisal of EBO in order to ascertain if it would be viable to fund EBO directly. In 2009, EBO was funded directly by Sida, for an initial contract period of 3 years, which was subsequently extended until 31 December 2013.

Sida's contribution 2009-2013 amounts to a total of 42 000 000 SEK (2009-2011: 24 000 000 SEK and 2012-2013: 18 000 000 SEK).

The 2009-2011 period, the EBO project foresaw 10 Priority Activities, each with objectives. EBO Priority activity areas 2009-2011:

1. Strategic analyses, policy recommendations, briefings and news to the Burmese democracy movement and the international community (mainly by EBO Brussels).
2. Support for the development of political parties based on democratic principles in Burma (mainly through the Civil Society Project)

3. Support for the development and empowerment of civil society in Burma (mainly through the Civil Society Project) through the provision of basic democracy and human rights education, and support to civilian empowerment programmes.
4. Support for ‘Internally Displaced Persons’ - in ethnic states to complement the support to civil society and political actors, particularly those caught in conflict (mainly through the Stability Project).
5. Support for Burmese migrant workers in neighbouring countries, and overseas (mainly by EBO Brussels).
6. Support for intra- and inter-ethnic consultations to broaden and deepen the political consensus on a future democratic Burma, and how this can be achieved (mainly through the National Reconciliation Programme).
7. Support for the development of broad-based political institutional infrastructures in Burma with the mandate to develop strategies and priorities to implement the consensus, as well as to communicate this consensus to the international community (mainly through the National Reconciliation Programme).
8. Support for the development of a primary database on agriculture, health, education, local resources, and environmental impacts using GPS-based digital mapping technology to enable the institutions to develop a comprehensive human resources development programme (mainly through the National Reconciliation Programme).
9. Support for internships and capacity building programmes for civil administrators and civil society actors especially women and youth and the disenfranchised (mainly through the National Reconciliation Programme but not exclusively).
10. Support for independent ethnic media, as a way to include these smaller communities in the democracy movement and also help them to preserve their languages and cultures (mainly by EBO Brussels).

The objectives of these activities were further developed in the overall project logframe.

For the sake of clarity and in an attempt to simplify the project activities, the activities for 2012-2013 were restructured into four sections. These four sections are now organised by our four priority target groups:

- 1) Policy analysts: both domestic actors and actors from the international community especially the United Nations and relevant governments (Activity 1)
- 2) Political parties, political activists and organisations (Activity 2)
- 3) Civil society and community-based organisations (Activity 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d)
- 4) Armed combatants and other groups not included in the current political process set up by the Myanmar government (Activity 4)

Two activity areas from the 2009-2011 project were discontinued in 2012. The specific support to Burmese migrant workers programme and support to IDP programme have been discontinued as funding EBO had hoped to receive to support

these programmes did not come through. However, both of these groups have continued to receive capacity building training through the civil society programme.

The four activity areas were later further clarified and defined into a results based framework, with support from Sida employed consultants.

At least two external evaluations of EBO's operations have been carried out since 2002. They have confirmed that EBO has played a significant role in strengthening the capacity of the democracy movement and increasing grass-root participation.

3. Evaluation Objective and Scope

The evaluation shall:

1. Make an overall independent assessment about the performance of the project (2009-2013), paying particularly attention to the impact of the project actions against its objectives set out in the results based 'theory of change' document (approved in September 2012);
2. In particular assess EBO's contribution to the Myanmar peace process, and implementation of its reform agenda for a more democratic, accountable and transparent governance structure;
3. Summarise and list the most important results achieved (positive and negative, with focus on outcome level and to the extent possible impact level), provide an analysis on why these results have been achieved, and assess whether EBO has successfully managed its operations by and for these results.
4. Identify key lessons learned and propose practical recommendations for follow-up actions to EBO, in order to promote effectiveness and impact.
5. Provide an assessment of EBO's added value in the present situation and assessment of the longer term robustness of the organisation and the risks connected to possible future staff changes.

4. Organisation, management and stakeholders

The evaluation is managed by David Holmertz on behalf of Sida, with the assistance of a reference group consisting of members of EBO and the Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok. Stakeholders of the evaluation are:

- Sida, Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok and EBO.
- Final beneficiaries and target groups of the EBO activities.
- Other donors of EBO activities.

5. Evaluation Questions and Criteria

The evaluation questions should be set by the evaluating team, with the input and approval of the evaluation reference group. The gender dimension and the ethnicity dimension shall be integrated in the evaluation questions.

The evaluators will take necessary measures to ensure adequate contact and consultation with, and involvement of the different stakeholders.

The consultants will use the most reliable and appropriate sources of information and will harmonise data from different sources to allow ready interpretation.

6. Recommendations and Lessons Learned

Sida assesses EBO to have played and continues to play a significant role in the democratisation and peace processes in Myanmar. The present funding agreement comes to an end in 2013, but it is envisaged that EBO will submit a request for continued funding. The evaluation will provide important input in EBO's formulation of such proposal as well as in Sida's appraisal and decision about continued support. The recommendations shall therefore be forward looking and take account of the Burmese context, which has changed fundamentally since 2009 or even 2012, when previous Sida/EBO agreements were framed.

Also, in order to facilitate Sida's decision process, the recommendations shall refer to key issues in appraisal process where Sida has increased the level of ambition (results reporting and management, internal control and risk management).

7. Methodology

It is up to the evaluation team to suggest appropriate research methods. The chosen methods shall be described and justified in relation to possible alternatives in the final report. It is required that the evaluation reflects the views and voices the stakeholders as well as gender and ethnicity dimensions of development.

EBO's own monitoring & evaluation framework shall be assessed and used as a basis for the evaluation. Since early 2012, EBO has been using an integrated guide on monitoring for building capacity of staff and project partners in monitoring projects and results <http://www.inprogressweb.com/resource-library/monitoring-evaluation/>.

The evaluation shall apply to OECD/DAC quality standards (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact)

8. Work plan and Schedule

The evaluation shall be conducted in two phases.

The inception phase of the evaluation will be a desk phase,

- To aggregate and summarise the views of EBO, Sida and other funding partners.
- To ensure that the evaluation team has access to and has consulted all relevant information sources and documents related to the project.
- To draw up and validate the Evaluation Questions, which should include the OECD DAC criteria (effectiveness, efficiency, impact, relevance and sustainability).
- To discuss and comment on notes and reports and documents received.
- To draw up a workplan for the field visits.

The second phase will be the field phase, which should start after completion of the first phase and involve visits to Brussels and Myanmar. The evaluation team should submit its work plan with an indicative list of people to be interviewed, surveys to be undertaken, dates of visit, itinerary, and name of team members in charge. The

evaluation team should ideally hold a briefing meeting with EBO and Sida/Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok in the first days of the field phase, preferably in Bangkok or Yangon.

9. Time schedule and Reporting

The final report shall be written in the English language and should not exceed 20 pages, including an executive summary, but excluding annexes.

The consultant shall adhere to the terminological conventions of the OECD/DAC Glossary on Evaluation and Results-Based Management as far as possible. The consultant shall consider the report format presented in Annex B of Sida's manual for evaluation of development interventions *Looking Back, Moving Forward*.

A draft report shall not later than 15 November 2013 be submitted to Sida and EBO for comments. The draft report shall be presented and discussed at a meeting at a location to be agreed upon. After having received comments in writing a final report shall be submitted to Sida and the Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok, with copies to, not later than 30 November 2011.

Field visits (Brussels, Thailand and Myanmar) will ideally take place throughout October 2013 in line with the workprogramme to be defined by the evaluation team.

10. Budget

Sida has allocated a maximum amount of SEK 500 000 for this evaluation. This amount shall embrace the fees and reimbursable costs, including costs for e.g. interpretation, translation and publishing of the report.

11. Evaluation Team Qualification

Members of the evaluation team should be able to demonstrate:

- Solid and diversified experience in peace and human rights and democracy programming, including experience in evaluation of projects (preferably in Myanmar);
- Solid knowledge of and practical experience with gender equality and gender integration analysis.
- Strong knowledge and experience of the Myanmar/Burma context, including (but not limited to) that of the democracy movement operating from exile;
- Full working knowledge of the English language and excellent report writing skills;
- Strong communication skills, particularly ability to work with stakeholders from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds;
- Fully conversant with the principles and working methods of results based management, and 'theory of change' principles.

Due to the sensitive nature of EBO's work a Declaration of Impartiality and Confidentiality is to be signed by the evaluation team.

12. References

To be provided by EBO:

- EBO by-laws.
- EBO proposal and final agreement 2009-2011.
- EBO proposal and final agreement extension 2012-2013.
- EBO annual narrative and financial/audit reports.
- Individual project reports on request.
- EBO website.
- EBO analysis papers and background documents.

To be provided by Sida:

- Report from mid-term review of the project "Promoting the Development of Democracy in Burma" 2005-2008, SPM Consultants, April 27, 2007.
- Report from appraisal of the EBO's proposal for 2009-2011, Rightshouse, February 28, 2009.
- Sida/Embassy decisions, including assessment memoranda (Sida decision on core support 2009-2011, dated April 29, 2009 and Embassy decision on extension 2012-13, dated March 2, 2012).

Annex 2 – Inception Report

1. Executive Summary

The EBO was established in 1997 with support from the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and the Burmese democracy movement. “Although the focus of EBO’s work is on democratisation, peace and reconciliation and good governance, it recognises the importance of creating policy that is coherent with those working towards poverty alleviation in Burma. Therefore EBO sees itself as a bridge between the development world and actors working towards democracy and human rights, knowing that both parties are essential to the achievement of a long terms transition to democracy in Burma...”¹³

Sida’s support to EBO began in 2005 with funding provided through the Olof Palme International Centre. Since 2009 EBO has been funded directly by Sida for an initial contract period of 3 years, which was subsequently extended until December 31, 2013. Sida’s contribution 2009-213 amounts to a total of 42 000 000. SEK (2009-2011: 24 000 000. SEK and 2012-2013: 18 000 000. SEK)

This evaluation of Sida’s Core Support to the Euro-Burma Office (EBO) has two main purposes. The first purpose is to provide “an objective assessment of the design, implementation and results of EBO’s programme.” The second purpose “is to obtain a deeper understanding of how EBO can proceed in its aspiration to help the Burmese democracy movement prepare for a transition to democracy and to keep the international community informed” of this process. With these two purposes in mind, this evaluation will contribute to and provide input for decision-making concerning a possible continued Swedish support to EBO.

The overall analysis of the EBO programme will be addressed through several specific areas of inquiry:

- Determine the programme’s **effectiveness** regarding achieving results at the **outcome** level as well as to determine the programme’s **relevance** and potential for **impact**;
- Assess the **sustainability** of the programme;

¹³ EBO. EBO Proposal for a 2 year Contract Extension (2012-2013) of the Current Project. 2011; p.5.

- Provide an **organisational assessment** of EBO in its current role and in its ability to meet future demands in support of the democracy movement;
- Evaluative information needed to provide a basis for decisions on continued Swedish support.

The overall objective of the EBO programme is to contribute to building and supporting a strong vibrant society in Burma that participates in and influences democratic processes, contributing to more accountable governance, deepened democracy, gender equality and human rights. The opportunity to achievement this objective has improved as the social and political climate within which EBO works has experienced significant positive change in the last two years. The EBO programme continues to follow a broad capacity strengthening process that uses a wide array of activities focused on strengthening the ability of specific individuals, groups and organisations to contribute to the growth of a democratic process in Burma. Prior to 2012, EBO used an activity-based framework to plan for and undertake its programming work. In 2012 EBO, in an effort to ‘simplify’ project activities, undertook a restructuring process that resulted in all activities each falling under one of four (4) ‘priority target groups’. These four activity areas have since been further clarified and defined and make up the current results based framework. The four (4) priority target groups are:

- Policy Analysts (both domestic and international)
- Political Parties, political activists and organisations
- Civil society and community-based organisations
- Armed combatants and other groups not included in the current political process set up by the Myanmar government.

The EBO programme’s general ‘theory of change’ is that by undertaking activities that includes or focus on these priority target groups there will be the opportunity to both strengthen the capacity of these social actors and to influence them to in turn support the development of a democratic culture within Burma. This will lead to the overall EBO (and Sida) objective of increasing the positive impact on democracy and government transparency and accountability, citizen’s participation in democratic structures and access to information and the respect for human rights, including gender equality.

Crucial to documenting the outcomes associated with the EBO programme will be establishing the ‘pathways of change’ that run through these different spheres of influence. There can be, for example, many spheres between a donor, the organisation it supports (like EBO), the local civil society, democratic and political partners with whom it works and/or supports, and then finally the individuals (stakeholders) of the broader society that is influenced by the work of the programme. Tracing how capacity strengthening processes and activities have influenced certain actors in their actions with others is dependent on understanding how these linkages cross these social boundaries. In EBOs current results framework, with its explicit reference to the need to regroup its activities under four target priority groups, it has acknowledged that its activities need to pay special attention to the social boundaries

which separate these target priority groups from each other. Activities organised to influence (through capacity strengthening, training, sensitisation etc.) the members of each group is important for EBO programming. However, activities undertaken in one of EBOs spheres of influence may influence individuals, groups or organisations in another. Understanding the nature of these cascading levels of actors and the spheres of influence that each represent (both vertically within target priority groups and horizontally across target priority groups) is important.

By documenting the linkages between these spheres of influence – essentially the ‘pathways of change’ through which influence happens – we will be able to identify and document outcomes (both immediate and intermediate) achieved through the support of the EBO programme. As stated by Patton, “Interacting elements and agents respond and adapt to each other, and to their environment, so that what emerges is a function of ongoing adaptation both among interacting elements and the responsive relationships interacting agents have with their environment”¹⁴ (Understanding how these various social actors interact and influence each other (CSO partners, civil society communities, political agents) is critical for an evaluative assessment on the EBO programme’s contribution to intended outputs, outcomes that provide the foundation for long term impacts.

Milestones and deliverables

- Start of the inception work: 14 October 2013
- Submission of the Inception Report: 17 October
- Feedback/approval of Inception Report: 19 October
- Begin Fieldwork in Burma and Thailand: 21 October
- Presentation of Preliminary Findings in Bangkok, Swedish Embassy: First week of November (tentatively the 5th or 6th)
- **Submission of the Draft Report: 28 November**
- Written feedback/comments on the Draft Report: 5 December
- **Submission of the Final Report: 13 December**
- Presentation in Brussels or Bangkok: mid-December (TBA)

2. Assessment of scope of the evaluation

2.1 Background to the Assignment

Burma has for more than 50 years been ruled by a succession of repressive military regimes with very poor human rights records. Since 2010 the country has been

¹⁴ Patton MQ (2011). “Developmental Evaluation; Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use”. The Guilford Press, New York. P.131.

nominally governed by a civilian regime. The government is, however, made up of former army officers and the military maintains considerable political power both constitutionally and in practice.

Nevertheless, over the past few years there have been a number of important changes from a human rights and democracy perspective. These changes include a relaxation of restrictions on media and political activity. Many political prisoners have been released and the main opposition party under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi has gone from being an illegal organisation to participating and winning seats in parliamentary by-elections. For civil society organisations the possibilities of operating and implementing their activities openly has significantly increased.

Equally important is that over the past few years there have been peace-talks between the regime and several of the armed forces of the ethnic minorities where cease-fire agreements have been reached. At the same time however, the regime has launched military offensives that, much like in the past, have been accompanied by grave human rights abuses. Despite this constant flux, the central question is, as stated by Benedict Rogers, “... not whether Burma is changing, but how deep, how substantial and how long-lasting the changes are.”¹⁵

“The Euro-Burma Office (EBO) is the Brussels-based banking and operations centre of the Associates to develop Democratic Burma, Inc. (ADDDB) – a Canadian not-for-profit corporation. The ADDDB was founded in 1990 and incorporated in 1994 in Canada. The objectives of the ADDDB are:

- To restore democracy and respect for human rights in Burma.
- To encourage and enable all in Burma to participate in the democratic process.
- To facilitate the development of democratic values and traditions in Burma.
- To monitor and continue to promote democracy in Burma in the post-dictatorship era.
- To help future governments and the Burmese public consider, analyse and formulate social, economic and other policies critical to a democracy.”¹⁶

The EBO was established in 1997 with support from the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and the Burmese democracy movement. “Although the focus of EBO’s work is on democratisation, peace and reconciliation and good governance, it recognises the importance of

¹⁵ Benedict Rodgers. *Burma: A Nation at the Crossroads*, 2012,p.xxxii.

¹⁶ EBO. EBO Proposal for a 2 year Contract Extension (2012-2013) of the Current Project. 2011; p.4.

creating policy that is coherent with those working towards poverty alleviation in Burma. Therefore EBO sees itself as a bridge between the development world and actors working towards democracy and human rights, knowing that both parties are essential to the achievement of a long terms transition to democracy in Burma...”¹⁷

Sida’s support to EBO began in 2005 with funding provided through the Olof Palme International Centre. Since 2009 EBO has been funded directly by Sida for an initial contract period of 3 years, which was subsequently extended until December 31, 2013. Sida’s contribution 2009-213 amounts to a total of 42 000 000. SEK (2009-2011: 24 000 000. SEK and 2012-2013: 18 000 000. SEK)

2.2 The Terms of Reference

This evaluation of Sida’s Core Support to the Euro-Burma Office (EBO) has two main purposes. The first purpose is to provide “an objective assessment of the design, implementation and results of EBO’s programme.” The second purpose “is to obtain a deeper understanding of how EBO can proceed in its aspiration to help the Burmese democracy movement prepare for a transition to democracy and to keep the international community informed” of this process. With these two purposes in mind, this evaluation will contribute to and provide input for decision-making concerning a possible continued Swedish support to EBO. Critical attention will be made within the evaluation to areas in which Sida has “increased levels of ambition for EBO (results reporting and management, internal control and risk management)”. The evaluation will also provide important input to any subsequent proposals submitted by EBO to Sida for continued support beyond the current agreement with Sida. Using a utilisation focused approach, recommendations from this evaluation will be forward-looking and take into account the current state within the Burmese context which while still resulting in human rights abuses, seems to also offer opportunities for change and openness.

The overall analysis of the EBO programme will be addressed through several specific areas of inquiry:

- Determine the programme’s **effectiveness** regarding achieving results at the **outcome** level as well as to determine the programme’s **relevance** and potential for **impact**;
- Assess the **sustainability** of the programme;
- Provide an **organisational assessment** of EBO in its current role and in its ability to meet future demands in support of the democracy movement;

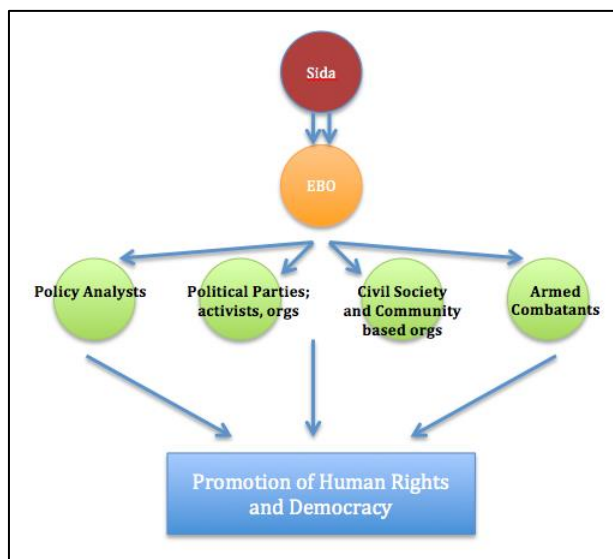
¹⁷ EBO. EBO Proposal for a 2 year Contract Extension (2012-2013) of the Current Project. 2011; p.5.

- Evaluative information needed to provide a basis for decisions on continued Swedish support;

2.3 Assessment of the Terms of Reference

The overall objective of the EBO programme is to contribute to building and supporting a strong vibrant society in Burma that participates in and influences democratic processes, contributing to more accountable governance, deepened democracy, gender equality and human rights. The opportunity to achievement this objective has improved as the social and political climate within which EBO works has experienced significant positive change in the last two years. The EBO programme continues to follow a broad capacity strengthening process that uses a wide array of activities focused on strengthening the ability of specific individuals, groups and organisations to contribute to the growth of a democratic process in Burma. Prior to 2012, EBO used an activity-based framework to plan for and undertake its programming work. In 2012 EBO, in an effort to ‘simplify’ project activities, undertook a restructuring process that resulted in all activities each falling under one of four (4) ‘priority target groups’. These four activity areas have since been further clarified and defined and make up the current results based framework. The four (4) priority target groups are:

- Policy Analysts (both domestic and international)
- Political Parties, political activists and organisations
- Civil society and community-based organisations
- Armed combatants and other groups not included in the current political process set up by the Myanmar government.



The EBO programme’s general ‘theory of change’ is that by undertaking activities that includes or focus on these priority target groups there will be the opportunity to both strengthen the capacity of these social actors and to influence them to in turn support the development of a democratic culture within Burma. This will lead to the overall EBO (and Sida) objective of increasing the positive impact on democracy and government transparency and accountability, citizen’s

participation in democratic structures and access to information and the respect for human rights, including gender equality.

The EBO programme channels funds to and helps to arrange activities with a large range of partners within these four (4) priority target groups. Given the current structure of the EBO programme and its focus on these main social actor groups, a

clear understanding of the different ‘spheres of influence’ within the EBO programme – how the programme interacts with each of the four (4) priority groups through these activities - is necessary to identify and assess outcomes related to the overall programme approach. Understanding the different levels of interaction and how different social actors fall within the various ‘spheres of influence’ of the programme (see above diagram) is critical both to an understanding of the resulting outputs and outcomes related to the implementation of the programme, as well as to the sustainable implementation of programme strategies (how each level of social actor interacts with both the programme’s activities and with each other).

Crucial to documenting the outcomes associated with the EBO programme will be establishing the ‘pathways of change’ that run through these different spheres of influence. There can be, for example, many spheres between a donor, the organisation it supports (like EBO), the local civil society, democratic and political partners with whom it works and/or supports, and then finally the individuals (stakeholders) of the broader society that is influenced by the work of the programme. Tracing how capacity strengthening processes and activities have influenced certain actors in their actions with others is dependent on understanding how these linkages cross these social boundaries. In EBOs current results framework, with its explicit reference to the need to regroup its activities under four target priority groups, it has acknowledged that its activities need to pay special attention to the social boundaries which separate these target priority groups from each other. Activities organised to influence (through capacity strengthening, training, sensitisation etc.) the members of each group is important for EBO programming. However, activities undertaken in one of EBOs spheres of influence may influence individuals, groups or organisations in another. Understanding the nature of these cascading levels of actors and the spheres of influence that each represent (both vertically within target priority groups and horizontally across target priority groups) is important.

By documenting the linkages between these spheres of influence – essentially the ‘pathways of change’ through which influence happens – we will be able to identify and document outcomes (both immediate and intermediate) achieved through the support of the EBO programme. As stated by Patton, “Interacting elements and agents respond and adapt to each other, and to their environment, so that what emerges is a function of ongoing adaptation both among interacting elements and the responsive relationships interacting agents have with their environment”¹⁸ (Understanding how

¹⁸ Patton MQ (2011). “Developmental Evaluation; Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use”. The Guilford Press, New York. P.131.

these various social actors interact and influence each other (CSO partners, civil society communities, political agents) is critical for an evaluative assessment on the EBO programme's contribution to intended outputs, outcomes that provide the foundation for long term impacts.

2.4 Recommendations Concerning the Evaluative Scope

The scope of the evaluation needs to be considered both in terms of the period of Sida support to be assessed and concerning the range of the programme components to be examined.

Time Period

Sida has directly funded EBO from 2009 to present day. The initial direct funding from Sida began in 2009 for a contract period of 3 years, which has been subsequently extended until December 31, 2013. It will be within this time period that the evaluation will focus its assessment of EBO activities.

EBO however, has been in 'operation' for a much longer period and has received indirect funding from Sida as early as 2005. With both these elements in mind, there is the real possibility that intended but long-term 'outcomes' (or impact) of the capacity strengthening processes undertaken by EBO (through financial support to others or through direct organisation training) may be linked to pre-2009 support. Where necessary the evaluation will attempt to follow these pathways where possible to link with EBO outcomes with external support to the organisation. Therefore a focus on identifying and assessing outcomes at the **immediate and intermediate level** of this capacity development process will be the focus.

Programme Components and Evaluative Focus

Programme Activities

This evaluative assessment of EBO will have a primary focus on the assessing the broad range of activities that are directly financed, or supported through other means, by EBO and the links to identified outputs, outcomes and results. A key component of this evaluative focus (outside of documentation of resulting 'outputs' or related 'outcomes') will be an assessment of the partnership strategies used by the EBO in establishing and maintaining these ties. Examining these strategies will be critical to assessing the sustainability of the programme and the ability of these EBO supported individuals, associations, organisations or political actors to continue this work on their own. With EBOs restructuring of its results framework understanding who makes up these four (4) priority target groups; what EBO supported activities each are involved in (or under), and how this critical '**network**' of interactions supports the overall objectives of the EBO programme results framework will be critical. While elaborated in more depth below under methodology, preliminary discussions with EBO have assured that the evaluation team will meet and assess a representative number of individuals, groups or organisations involved in activities falling within (or under) each of the four (4) priority target groups.

An additional focus of the evaluation will be on assessing the critical balance between the **quantity and quality** of the numerous activities that are supported by EBO. The evaluation will assess this balance and offer recommendations on the breadth of activities undertaken by EBO. The evaluation will question if the large number of EBO capacity strengthening and support activities undertaken is appropriate to its goals or if this large number of activities compromises EBO's abilities to achieve its stated mission? What happens if EBO capacity strengthening and support becomes too mechanical and structured? Is there a danger of dampening the process of participating in and creating a vibrant democracy movement if the programme is 'spread to thin'? Is a more limited yet dynamic and focused approach necessary with support processes oriented and tailored in accordance with the specific level of capacity and local circumstances surrounding an individual, organisation, or association? Or, has EBO got it right recognising that a broad spread and array of activities with multiple partners is more appropriate given the constantly shifting and changing political, social and cultural nature of current Burmese society.

Monitoring and Evaluative Processes

As stated in the ToRs, one of the priority areas of this evaluation will be the assessment of EBO's ability to adequately monitor, collect and report on results associated with its programme work. With its extensive focus on 'engagement' strategies (with individuals, CSOs, communities, levels of government, political parties, armed combatants), the EBO programme needs evaluative processes that can deal with complex contextual environments and yet are flexible and adaptive enough to respond to constantly changing and often-unexpected social conditions. With its restructuring in 2012 to what initially sees to be a more 'actor-focused' approach to its results framework, EBO has begun to change its evaluative gaze to focus on outcomes linked to the change in actions and practices and relationships of those social actors (individuals, groups, organisations) who are central to the downstream outcomes that EBO hopes to achieve. While EBO has articulated some of these programme adjustments within its documentation, the evaluation will further probe to identify and understand the design and operation of any systematic monitoring process that is in place that includes 'indicators' useful for determining 'progress towards' or the 'achievement of outcomes' related to changes in the relationships, actions and practices of the people, groups, and organisations with whom EBO works directly or supports.

The evaluation will assess the level to which EBO can understand its contributions to changes that are planned and assessed based on its influence on these social actors (target priority groups) with whom it is working to bring about this change. There are challenges inherent in this approach as it must be recognised that those social actors with whom a programme such as EBO works control this change and that as external agents, organisations such as EBO only facilitate the process by providing support and access to resources and ideas. The challenge for any programme then rests on its ability to realistically and reliably document change in the practices, actions and relationships of its priority target groups. Individuals do not merely respond to

situations, but interpret, anticipate, act, assess and adjust to the socially meaningful situations in which they find themselves. Does EBO have a way into this world of socially constructed meanings in the effort to understand what behaviours have taken place, by who and why.

From an initial reading of programme documentation and some of the results framework training already completed by EBO (through Indvelop and Inprogress – consulting agencies), it seems to have made the first steps on a framework based on a ‘actor-focused’ approach. This approach differs from the more traditional approach used by other results frameworks as it shifts away from assessing only the ultimate long-term impact of a programme or organisation’s work (defined as a change in state e.g. poverty alleviation, or reduced conflict) towards a process that attempts to offer a more continuous monitoring of changes in behaviour, relationships, actions or activities of the people, groups, and organisations with whom the a programme works directly. The shift within the results framework in 2012 by EBO to a focus on these target priority groups ((i) Policy Analysts; (ii) Political Parties and Political Activists; (iii) Civil Society and Community-Based Organisations; (iv) Armed Combatants and others not included in current political process) – an actor focused approach - means a significant shift in the way a programme or project understands its goals and assesses its ongoing performance. The evaluation will assess whether this shift has been accompanied by the necessary management and monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure its continued use and appropriate focus.

Organisational Fitness

As noted in the ToR, Sida is also interested in an assessment and recommendations related to risk and internal management of EBO. While elaborated in more depth in the methodology section, the evaluation will also examine the organisational robustness of EBO and its ability to undertake the programme activities it has set for itself. A critical question in this evaluative process, and in response to the often unsettled and insecure nature of its funding, will be a thorough understanding of the sustainability of EBO as an organisation (not just a programme) and how this helps or hinders it in its programming work. There are a number of key areas that will be examined. These are: (i) financial management in relation to the use of funds for programming activities. Sida, while recognising the fluid nature of the current situation in Burma, has called attention to the over-expenditures which have occurred on separate occasions that exceed (sometimes drastically) acceptable overuse of funds for budget activity line items. The evaluation team will explore this area to ascertain if this is a needed response to the programming context within which EBO works or is simply a managerial oversight. The need to manage such a diverse activity portfolio poses significant managerial challenges for EBO (as it would for any organisation). The evaluation team will assess the managerial capacities that exist in EBO to handle this difficult task.

A critical element of good management practices is having a good monitoring and evaluation system that can; (i) provide a regular flow of information to provide ongoing improvements to its interventions, (ii) meets programme reporting

requirements, (iii) supply information for evaluative work and processes, (iv) reduce risks associated with programme implementation, (v) help other external actors understand and learn from the work of the programme, (vi) promote a culture of evaluative reflection and analysis within the organisation – not simply a reporting on results process. EBO’s current M+E system will be examined using these criteria.

Perhaps most important in the type of policy influence and knowledge brokering work that EBO is attempting to undertake, is the organisational depth and ability of its staff to implement these intensive activities on a broad scale. The evaluation team will assess this organisational depth and the response by the organisation in the very specific political context of Burma that may well limit the use of a broader interaction approach by EBO.

EBO continues to ‘operate’ in a relatively unstable funding environment that has often-undesirable impacts on its ability to fully implement its operations. While EBO seems to be surprisingly agile in its ability to respond to these current funding fluctuations, much of this agility comes from its reliance on Sida core funding and the flexibility allowed by Sida in the use of this funding (core infrastructure support vs. activity based support). The evaluation team will examine the formal and informal mechanisms used by EBO in its partnership strategy (at a donor or funding level) to increase the stability of its financial foundation for operations.

3. Relevance and Evaluability of Evaluation Questions

3.1 Recommendations Concerning Evaluation Questions

In the ToRs for the Evaluation of Sida’s Core Support to the Euro-Burma Office (EBO) Sida has proposed no evaluative questions leaving the setting of these questions to the discretion of the evaluation team. The following section lists the evaluation teams evaluation questions that will guide the team in its assessment process (evaluation framework, foundation for interview protocols, sampling strategy).

Earlier in this Inception report it was stated that ‘the overall analysis of the EBO programme will be addressed through several specific areas of inquiry’.

- Determine the programme’s **effectiveness** regarding achieving results at the **outcome** level as well as to determine the programme’s **relevance** and potential for **impact**;
- Assess the **sustainability** of the programme;
- Provide an **organisational** assessment of EBO in its current role and in its ability to meet future demands in support of the democracy movement;

All evaluation questions will respond to these specific areas of inquiry. The following questions take into account issues of capacity strengthening, partnership development, monitoring and reporting processes, and effectiveness of the programme in meeting or exceeding its planned for results (outputs, outcomes, progress toward impact) and, finally organisational fitness (sustainability). The areas

will be addressed using the evaluative criteria of relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and impact (or progress towards impact).

Relevance

Five (5) questions are proposed in relation to relevance and are to be addressed within this evaluative process. The questions are:

- i) To what extent are the EBO supported social actors satisfied with the support from EBO and how has it contributed to their internal development? Have these activities strengthened them in terms of their own external work with local communities?
- ii) Are current EBO activities the most useful form of interaction with Burmese civil society?
- iii) How is the programme (EBO) perceived and accepted within civil society as a whole? Do other donors and organisations see it as a viable actor in the democracy movement?
- iv) Is EBO's programme in alignment with relevant Swedish strategies, policies and priorities, including the rights perspective and the perspective of people living in poverty?
- v) Are the current capacity strengthening activities undertaken or supported by EBO adequate to achieve its stated programme objectives?

Effectiveness

Nine (9) questions are proposed in relation to effectiveness and are to be addressed within this evaluation. The questions are:

- i) How effectively is the EBO's programming being implemented and what recommended improvements would help in its future implementation?
- ii) Is the general functioning of the programme (in relations to scope, size, frequency of activities) in line with its results framework and adequate to achieve stated objectives?
- iii) What is the level of interaction between EBO and individuals, groups and organisations supported by EBO?
- iv) What is the level of interaction between EBO supported individuals, groups and organisations? How are synergies being sought and achieved?
- v) Are there effective networking mechanisms for EBO supported individuals, groups or organisations both internally within the sphere of EBO's programme and externally to the wider civil society?
- vi) Are the planning, monitoring, evaluative and reporting structures within EBO adequate? Do these structures/mechanisms assess all levels of results from outputs to immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes? If needed, do baselines exist? Is there a tendency to report on activities rather than results?
- vii) How are programme results being evaluated throughout the programme? (i.e. at various levels from community to high level political or policy influence)? What barriers exist for EBO in collecting and reporting on results?
- viii) Are there effective programme structures that ensure adequate work is being done regarding gender equality and human rights?

- ix) Are there effective programme structures that ensure effective contribution to HRBA – in terms of participation, transparency, accountability and non-discrimination respectively – among partner organisations?
- x) How does EBO make its decisions on which individuals, groups or organisations receive support?

Impact

Seven (7) questions are proposed in relation to impact and are to be addressed within this evaluative review. The questions are:

- i) Is EBO and its programming work having its intended outcome(s) – and, if not, why?
- ii) Is EBO's programming work likely to produce expected 'impacts' (or, has there been measurable 'progress towards high level outcomes')?
- iii) Are there interesting examples of unexpected outcomes?
- iv) What improvements to EBO programming will make the programme more likely to achieve expected outcomes (at all levels – immediate, intermediate, long-term)?
- v) What is the relationship between output activities and more transformative social change outcomes? Are EBO supported organisations changing attitudes and practices related to human rights and gender equality in other individuals, groups and organisations with which they work?
- vi) Are there 'content' areas that are more problematic to work in for EBO, thereby proving more difficult to achieve results?
- vii) What outcomes have resulted within EBO's programming that can be specifically linked to its work in gender equality and human-rights? Are these outcomes unique or unexpected?; and if not, can EBO demonstrate a systematic and linked process their achievement through its programming ?

Sustainability

Three (3) questions are proposed in relation to sustainability and are to be addressed within this evaluative review. The questions are:

- i) Is the level of activities supported by EBO adequate for the programme to achieve its objectives (too few or too many)?
- ii) Is the current level of activities sustainable in terms of EBO support? If not why?
- iii) Can EBO as an organisation continue to operate effectively at its current programming levels with the staff it has?

Organisational Assessment

Six (6) questions are proposed in relation to Organisational Assessment and are to be addressed within this evaluative review. The questions are:

- i) How has EBO's management structure changed over time? Has this change supported its programming work in a positive way?
- ii) How are the principles of non-discrimination, participation, transparency and accountability materialised in the organisational set up of EBO?

- iii) Are there appropriate systems in place for the sub-granting assignment including the assessment and approval of applications, reviewing financial and narrative reports and determining partner's capacity to achieve expected results?
- iv) How does EBO prospect for new ideas, opportunities and resources to be used in its operation and programming?
- v) Does EBO have an adequate process for sharing its 'wisdom' (communication/dissemination) with other external individuals, groups and organisations?
- vi) Does EBO regularly assess, and redesign output products, services, systems and procedures where necessary?
- vii) What is the nature of EBO's ability to 'network' at all levels? Does this ability exist throughout the organisation? Is the network adequate to EBO's programme objectives?
- viii) How does EBO remain innovative in its programming work with others?

4. Proposed approach and methodology

4.1 Evaluation Approach

A central perspective taken by this evaluation is that there are multiple 'spheres of influence' within which EBO operates and undertakes its programming activities. These spheres of influence are often linked through relationships between donors, EBO, and the identified four (4) target priority groups. These priority target groups are linked in-turn to other social, cultural, political and economic groups within the wider society. Identifying and understanding these different spheres of influence and the linkages between each through a relevant theory of change will be necessary to produce a strong evidence-based narrative that plausibly links the contributions of EBO to downstream outcomes at the level of civil society and the emergence of a society based on democratic principles. As mentioned earlier, documenting these outcome pathways (linked to the four target priority groups) and the linkages between outputs, outcomes and impact will be central to understanding the progress to date of EBO and its programming. The existence of these outcome pathways as a result of EBO programming is critical to sustain progress in the near and long-term future.

4.2 Evaluation Methodology

The methodology used in this evaluation will follow a series of seven (7) iterative steps:

The **first step** will be to agree on the usable questions that have been set to guide the evaluation. These evaluation questions have been set forth by the evaluation team in the inception report to be fine-tuned through discussions with both EBO and Sida concerning the focus and areas. The objective of this step is to agree on what information is to be collected; what is/was the change in the target priority groups the

EBO wished to influence; and how did this change come about (as seen through outcomes of the process). As outlined in the ToRs, EBOs current results framework, approved in 2012, will be the basis against which ‘progress towards’ and identifiable ‘results’ will be assessed.

In the **second step**, the evaluation team will collect evaluative information through document review, past evaluations, press releases, and publications to construct ‘outcome descriptions’ that identify or describe outcomes that have occurred in the EBO programme or with social actors with whom EBO interacts or supports.

In the **third step**, the evaluation team will undertake extensive interviews with EBO staff in Myanmar and Thailand. Using the initial **outcome descriptions** from step two, each further elaborated including other dimensions such as the contribution of the change agent (EBO). Each of these outcome descriptions describes a change in a social actor that the change agent has influenced and can be identified as an outcome of EBO programming. In essence this outcome description defines “who changed what, when and where it took place, and how the change agent contributed to that outcome”. While it is a complex and broad environment within which EBO works, the evaluation team will attempt to identify the pathways tracing the linkages between activities and outputs to outcomes and how these findings generate results as planned through the results framework. An additional analysis will focus on the Human Rights and Gender dimensions of these pathways – who are the social actors on the path and do their actions reflect values related to participation, transparency, accountability and non-discrimination?

Intensive fieldwork will also be undertaken with the conducting of semi-structured interviews with individuals, groups and organisations with whom EBO has worked. Through interviews and project site visits with selected key actors additional information on significant outcomes associated with the work of EBO can be confirmed. Preliminary discussions have already been undertaken with EBO on the selection and planning of these field visits. The evaluation team will use a technique of ‘purposeful sampling’ in the selection of EBO supported individuals, groups or organisations with whom it will meet and interview. The evaluation team asked for, and EBO has agreed to provide, a list of contacts EBO feels represents its work with or support for individuals, groups or organisations in the **four priority target groups**. Interviewees will be selected from this master list to be interviewed by the evaluation team. The evaluation team realises the importance of accessing informants both inside and outside of Burma, especially since until recently much of the work in organisation and the management of EBO’s programme took place in Thailand. In light of this, the evaluation team will be undertaking fieldwork visits to programme partners in both Burma and Thailand.

The **fourth step** of the evaluative approach methodology will involve the validation of these initial outcome descriptions with the EBO and if required, Sida. The goal is to produce robust outcome descriptions that can be supported by evidence on results

associated with the work of EBO. This outcome description then becomes the basis for follow-up investigation and analysis by the evaluators.

The **fifth step** in the evaluative approach to be utilised in this evaluation aims to enhance the reliability of data and data analysis and enrich the understanding of the change and its other dimensions (for example, significance, the collaboration of others, and the contribution of the change agent). In this process of substantiating the outcome descriptions, the evaluators obtain the opinions and feedback from independent third parties who have knowledge of the area in question but no relationship with the change agents. The independent substantiators are positioned outside of the sphere of influence of the change agents but are well-informed about the outcome and the change agent's contribution. While the purpose of seeking third party substantiation of the outcome descriptions is to establish a measure of truth and accuracy in their construction, these testimonies also provide an opportunity to enhance and deepen the understanding of the outcome and the contribution of the change agent. These third parties may be suggested by the change agent (Sida or EBO) or are contacted based on the evaluator's selection of knowledgeable sources.

The **sixth step** involves organising the outcomes so that they can be employed to answer the usable questions that were identified in step one. The interpretation of the outcomes will depend on what the users of the evaluation find most useful – this can be from a practical or theoretical standpoint as defined by the user of the evaluation. Based on this particular standpoint, the analysis will involve the identification of patterns and processes among the clusters of outcomes, often focusing on the underlying theories of change that drive the programme and its common change objectives. Using the initial evaluation questions as the interpretive framework, analysis can focus on understanding i) How do the outcomes add up?, ii) Are processes of change revealed?, iii) Do the outcomes combine to synergistically create broader and deeper changes at the system or policy level?

The **seventh and final step** involves the supported use (**utilisation**) of findings. In this process reasonable conclusions will be drawn from the evidence collected through the use of the outcome description. This interpretive process by the evaluation team will lead to the offering of conclusions, recommendations, and issues for consideration within the final report all supported by the use of evidence collected through the steps outlined above. In this step, the evaluation team plans to hold in-person presentations on preliminary findings for both EBO in Burma or Thailand and for the Swedish Embassy in Bangkok. These presentations will happen around the 5th or 6th of November.

In all cases, the relevant evaluation questions outlined in this inception report will be used to focus and structure the interviews and final analysis. Examining both **internal** and **external** capacity of EBO is crucial to understanding the linkages and the influence of EBO at the level of activities and civil society outreach ('*reach*' to the general public, other CSOs, all levels of government, international actors). The assessment of each EBO's 'internal' organisational capacity to undertake its work

externally with others and its relationship to noted outcomes related to the work of its numerous activities would be examined.

At a broader methodological (evaluative) level, it will be important for the evaluation to demonstrate a clear understanding of the different ‘spheres of influence’ through which EBO must work. As mentioned above, understanding the ‘pathways of change’ exhibited by others (individuals, organisations, government, private sector) as they exhibit changes in their knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and policy construction processes that are influenced by EBO, will be central to this review. Assessing these downstream outcomes will mean identifying and understanding the different spheres of influence through which EBO must work. As an example, EBO may only work directly with specific advocacy organisations offering training and support. Outcomes achieved by these partner organisations (or through a project/activity) can be tracked back to the support of EBO, but only with a solid understanding of the linkages that join EBO with its partner social actors and the beneficiaries of the partner social actors through multiple spheres of influence (EBO-partner social actor-beneficiary). Demonstrating this linked influence will be necessary to produce a strong evidence-based narrative that plausibly links the contribution of the EBO to downstream outcomes. This is key to the contribution analysis through which planned for or ‘intended contributions’ concerning programme ‘outcomes’ can be linked to the work of the EBO.

Milestones and deliverables

- Start of the inception work: 14 October 2013
- Submission of the Inception Report: 17 October
- Feedback/approval of Inception Report: 19 October
- Begin Fieldwork in Burma and Thailand: 21 October
- Presentation of Preliminary Findings in Bangkok, Swedish Embassy: First week of November (tentatively the 5th or 6th)
- **Submission of the Draft Report: 28 November**
- Written feedback/comments on the Draft Report: 5 December
- **Submission of the Final Report: 13 December**
- Presentation in Brussels or Bangkok: mid-December (TBA)

5. Other issues and recommendations

There are no other issues or recommendations at this time.

Annex 3 – List of Documents Consulted

- Alffram, Henrik. Mid-Term Review of the project “Promoting the Development of Democracy in Burma”. 2007
- Alffram, Henrik and Ulrika Modeer. An appraisal of the Euro-Burma Office’s proposal for 2009-2011. 2009.
- EBO. Proposal, Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in the Union of Burma/Myanmar. 2009
- EBO. EBO Proposal for a Two Year Contract Extension (2012-2013) of the current project. Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in the Union of Burma/Myanmar. 2011.
- EBO. Report on 2012 Activities. Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in the Union of Burma/Mynamar 2009-2011. 2012
- EBO. Report on 2011 Activities. Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in the Union of Burma/Mynamar 2009-2011. 2011
- EBO. Report on 2010 Activities. Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in the Union of Burma/Mynamar 2009-2011. 2010
- Jeshurun, Chandran and Florence Burban. Evaluation Promoting Democratic Development in Burma Project: B7-7070/T-2000/274. 2002.
- Modeer, Pontus. Mission Report Results Framework Assignment (2 days).2012
- Sida. Terms of Reference for Evaluation of Sida’s Core Support to the Euro-Burma Office (EBO): Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in the Union Burma/Myanmar.

Annex 4 – List of Informants

	Name	Organisation
1	Aung Latt Waje	EBO
2	Aung Naing Oo	Myanmar Peace Center
3	Aung Naing Soe	Nationalities Youth Forum/Arakan Youth Network Group
4	Aung Zaw Win	Maggin Development Consultancy Group
5	Aye Myat Myat Maung	White Holding Hands
6	Beaudee Zawmin	EBO
7	Cissy Yim	EBO
8	Cormier, Tom	IDEA
9	Dang Hseng Tzam	Kaw Dai
10	Eain Da	Sustainable Development Center
11	Ekman, Bengt	Sida
12	Ferber, Herald Apony	PIPD
13	Godman, Sarah	EBO (former staff)
14	Gohlert, Tanja	EBO
15	Harn Yawngghwe	EBO
16	Holmertz, David	Sida
17	Horsey, Richard	Independent Consultant
18	Khin Maung Win	DVB Multimedia Group
19	Khun Minn Mein	Pa-O National Liberation Organization
20	Khun Thomas	Pa-O National Liberation Organization
21	Khunsai Jaiyen	Pyidaungsu Institute for Peace and Dialogue
22	Kyaw Hin	ComReg
23	Lian H. Sakhong	Burma Centre for Ethnic Studies
24	List, Andreas	European Commission
25	Lum Ze	Shalom
26	Lundström, Tomas	Sida
27	Mwe Hseng	Scholarship recipient
28	Naing Oo	ComReg
29	Nang Haeo Hseng	Kaw Dai
30	Nang Kham Hleng	Kaw Dai
31	Nang Kham Lay	Pa-O Women's Union
32	Nang Lin Lat	Pa-O Women's Union
33	Nang Lao Liang Won (Tay Tay)	Shan Women's Action Network

34	Nang Raw	Shalom Foundation
35	Nang Yin Twe	Pa-O Women's Union
36	Naw Rebecca Htin	Myanmar Peace Centre
37	Phyu Ei Thein	White Holding Hands
38	Phi Phonnthip	EBO Board Member
39	Pu Zozam,	Nationalities Brotherhood Federation /Chin National Party
40	Sai Hsam P. Hseng	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy
41	Sai Lao Korn Khuy	Kaw Dai
42	Sai Loung	Scholarship recipient
43	Sai Ood	Restoration Council of the Shan State
44	Sao Than Myint	Nationalities Brotherhood Federation
45	Saw Lin Aung	Karen State Development Project
46	Schönning, Jörgen	Sida
47	Sein Twa, Paul	Kesan
48	Seik Chan Dung	Scholarship recipient
49	Si Thi Maung	White Holding Hands
50	Smith, Alan	Ethnic Peace resources Project Office
51	Soe Myint	Mizzima News
52	Soi His Ris	Kaw Dai
53	Tegenfeldt, David	Hope International Development Agency
54	Thin Yu Mon	Chin Human Rights Organization
55	Thuzar Thant	EBO
56	Toe Zaw Latt	DVB Multimedia Group
57	Tzai Aung Hleng Khur	Kaw Dai
58	Tzai Laong Moun	Kaw Dai
59	Victor Biak Lian	EBO
60	ZA Uk Ling	Chin Human Rights Organization
61	Zwe Hto	Pa-O National Liberation Organization



Evaluation of Sida's Core Support to the Euro-Burma Office (EBO): Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in the Union Burma/Myanmar

The Euro Burma Office (EBO) has since 1997 worked on assisting the Burmese democracy movement to prepare for a transition to democracy and to keep the international community informed about Burma. The evaluation, which has assessed EBO's performance over the past five years, concludes that the organization has occupied a central mediating role in the on-going peace process and that it has successfully supported the emergence of a pluralistic civil society among the ethnic minorities. At the same time, it argues that EBO would benefit from a more structured sub-granting process, a stronger commitment to assess and learn from results and a stronger and more permanent presence inside Burma.

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