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Lessons and Reflections from 84 Sida Decentralised Evaluations 2013 – a Synthesis Review

Final Report

Sida

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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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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HUM	Sida's Humanitarian Unit
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MENA	Middle East North Africa Region
MTR	Mid-term Review
PME	Sida's Unit for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluations (formerly UTV)
RBM	Results Based Management
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UTV	Sida's Unit for Monitoring and Evaluations (now PME)

Preface

This report presents synthesised findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations of 84 of Sida's decentralised evaluations undertaken during 2013 which are of relevance for Swedish development cooperation.

Sida's Unit for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation commissioned Indevelop to undertake this review in August 2014, through the framework agreement for evaluations and reviews.

This review builds on the findings from the report *Swedish Development Cooperation in Transition? Lessons and Reflections from 71 Sida Decentralised Evaluations* (published 2013), and provides deeper analysis into certain focus questions.

The review was undertaken between August – October by Indevelop's management team of Sida's framework agreement for reviews and evaluations, consisting of:

- Ian Christoplos: Project Director
- Anna Liljelund Hedqvist: Evaluator
- Jessica Rothman: Evaluator

Sarah Gharbi at Indevelop assisted in reading the evaluation reports in French. Quality assurance was provided by Adam Pain, a member of Indevelop's Core Team of Professional Evaluators.

Foreword

Evaluations play a central role in results-based management and for learning at Sida. Each year, units and embassies commission so-called decentralised evaluations within their respective field of responsibility. Sida also finances evaluations commissioned by partners. The purpose is often to ensure accountability for achievement of results within a specific project, or to contribute to learning from support to a sector or a thematic area. While these evaluations are important in the contribution management cycle, they also contain conclusions that are potentially valuable outside of their immediate context. Synthesising conclusions and recommendations from these decentralised evaluations gives us the opportunity to detect general trends in Swedish development cooperation and to reflect on recurring challenges as well as success factors. This is the purpose of the current report.

Based on the conclusions drawn in a similar report from 2013, Sida's Unit for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) identified a few issues that would be given particular attention in the current report, namely: The use of theories of change, the focus on poverty and the efficiency of Sida supported projects and programmes. Apart from these focus questions, the report would summarise general conclusions and lessons learned from the evaluation reports.

Sida's Evaluation Process recognises the international quality standards of credibility, impartiality and utility. With this report, we want to emphasise utility. The report and the dissemination activities that follow its publication are part of PME's contribution to the use of decentralised evaluations. We want to encourage Sida units, embassies as well as partners in development cooperation to use it as a basis for reflection on longstanding challenges in Swedish development cooperation as well as how planning, monitoring and evaluation can be strengthened. Although it is admittedly difficult to draw firm conclusions and generalise from such a diverse material, we hope that the report provides an opportunity to discuss and share experiences that can guide us forward in meeting those challenges.

Madeleine Hägg-Liljeström
Head of Sida's Unit for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME)
Stockholm, October 2014

Executive Summary

Evaluations provide an essential evidence base for informed understanding of progress and obstacles towards achieving results and also of the relevance of programming in relation to policies and local contexts. This report is based on a review of 84 decentralised evaluations commissioned or supported by Sida and Swedish Foreign Missions during 2013. The objective of the review is to analyse and summarise general conclusions and lessons learned from the evaluations, with a special focus on findings related to application of theories of change, poverty reduction and efficiency analysis. The primary intended users of the review are Sida managers and staff, however it is expected that the results will also be of interest to Sweden's partners in development cooperation.

Methodology: This review is based on a purposive sample of 84 evaluation reports from 2013, covering all of Sida's country categories and thematic sectors (although some cooperation countries are not represented). It has not been possible to verify whether they constitute a representative sample of Swedish development cooperation. The methodology was developed during an inception phase based on the terms of reference. A data collection tool was developed with 28 questions where qualitative and quantitative data was recorded and collated from the reviewed reports. The review team analysed the data jointly, discussed emerging findings, triangulated the evidence and verified any potential bias in the interpretation of the data.

Limitations: The following aspects posed some limitations to the review:

- The quality of the evaluation reports varied to a great degree. Some reports merely documented project activities and lacked evidence or analysis.
- It is difficult to determine if the (lack of) attention to the issues being analysed in this review is due to the scope of the evaluation or the intervention itself.
- The data used to draw conclusions comes from the evaluators' interpretations; as such the extent to which the review has been able to draw verifiable conclusions about the content of the evaluated interventions themselves has often been limited.
- Only a relatively small portion of the evaluations explicitly addressed the questions included in the review.
- Even where the review questions have been addressed in some form in the reports, the frame of reference for these judgements seldom reflects standard definitions. As such the review has had to apply 'flexible' interpretations of what in the data 'might' relate to poverty, efficiency and theories of change.

Overall Success Factors: This review has identified some specific factors that have contributed to the success of certain interventions and development results. The review did not specifically pursue success factors in the evaluation reports reviewed, but rather captured those that were explicitly identified, which include:

- A coherent and unified Swedish approach to development goals, using both political and development cooperation efforts to achieve change, often driven by Sida and Embassy staff.
- Selection of strategic partners with the 'right' approach, capacity, networks and credibility, including partnerships with the 'right' government structures, civil society institutions, researchers and/or private sector actors.
- Strong and committed leadership of cooperation partners including Sida, and development partners, government structures and local civil society.

Summary of Main Lessons, Conclusions and Recommendations from the Evaluation Sample:

The review has synthesised the lessons, conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation reports. The summary below largely reflects long established conclusions and generally points to categories of good practice and mistakes that have been recognised many times in the past. As such, a meta conclusion of this report is that *we have yet to overcome institutional hurdles and develop sufficient mechanisms to learn from experience in general and evaluations in particular.* The review team has synthesised and interpreted the overall lessons, conclusions and recommendations from the evaluations as indicating the following:

On capacity development

- Outputs achieved and capacities developed have created a solid foundation for eventual outcomes, but in many interventions it is unclear if they are sufficient for achieving changes in attitudes, norms and practices.
- Capacity development is the most common result noted, but the reports stress that capacities are still insufficient to attain intended outcomes.

Which right holders?

- Insufficient attention is given to how the capacities that are being developed will be used to ensure voice among appropriate rights holders and enhance the capacities of duty bearers to fulfil their responsibilities.

Sustainability

- Increased attention to sustainability in programme design and in the institutional anchoring is often mentioned as necessary to continue to generate results.

Changing partners and partnerships

- Criteria for assessment of potential partners is not transparent and there seems to be a tendency to work with those organisations with which the embassy has well-established relations, and many cooperation partners continue collaboration with mature organisations with whom they have history.

- Greater attention to dialogue and communication is needed among the different implementing organisations, with other outside stakeholders, and with Sida and the embassies.

Lessons about time frames, management and ownership

- Sida should have more realistic expectations about what can be achieved in terms of long-term change and poverty reduction from limited and short-term projects, or (alternatively) reinforce commitments to long-term processes.

Risk management and the political economy of development cooperation

- Acceptance of significant levels of risk has usually led to desired results, but risk-taking requires a clearer overall vision of what is to be achieved.
- Interventions need to adapt and respond to political changes. Political economy analysis is particularly important as part of the design to determine what risks exist, how they can be managed and how to balance the need to accept a high degree of risk and the need to manage those risks.

Findings in relation to theories of change: In recent years there has been rapidly increasing attention to theories of change in development cooperation. This review has assessed the extent to which the theory of change concept is influencing both the design of development efforts, and the way development cooperation is monitored, evaluated and learned from. A majority of interventions appear to lack an overall logic in their design and implementation. This often stems from a focus on activities. Many interventions (and evaluations) merely speculate on contribution to outcomes. Other related findings include:

- There is generally a failure to look critically at assumptions behind programming, especially as related to the broader political context.
- It is often not clear whom the targeted direct and indirect beneficiaries and partners are, and how they are expected to benefit from the intervention.
- Evaluations find that some programmes are far too ambitious in terms of geographic spread, complexity and number of intended outcomes to constitute a realistic or verifiable theory of change.
- There are insufficient clear and relevant indicators for intended change, and where these exist they are often not used for monitoring and programme learning.
- The paths to sustainability are often weakly integrated into the theories of change, and little attention has been given to exit strategies.

Recommendations in relation to theories of change

- A theory of change approach can draw attention to weak connections within results chains and aid in analysing assumptions behind programming. In order to take advantage of these tools, Sida and its partners must be prepared to embrace more critical and flexible approaches to development cooperation.
- Sida and its partners should pay greater attention to defining the range of partners that it seeks to support and influence in relation to strategic goals, and what changes are expected in their attitudes, practices, skills and performance.

- Theories of change should be used to better identify realistic levels of ambition in terms of geographic spread, complexity and number of intended outcomes, especially in relatively small programmes.

Findings in relation to poverty reduction: Less than half of the evaluation reports looked at the contribution of the interventions to poverty reduction, and most of those only analysed poverty reduction to a limited extent. When poverty is discussed, very little rigorous evidence is presented and poverty is mostly assessed in relation to the relevance. This suggests cause for concern with regard to Sweden's commitments to core policy objectives of poverty reduction. Other related findings include:

- Poverty reduction is often included in the end programme objective, but is missing from outputs and outcomes, including indicators.
- Attention to poverty is in many cases related to assessment of potential relevance of the initiatives for poverty reduction and is often based on assumptions rather than anchored in evidence.
- When evaluations and programme monitoring look at poverty reduction they often emphasise skills development, but this is rarely accompanied by questions about whether the training is relevant or targeted to the poor.
- Contexts and causes of poverty are not well analysed (in both the interventions and the evaluations), nor is attention paid to the extent to which political and economic factors determine if and how growth generates benefits for the poor.
- The overall perspectives of the poor are rarely highlighted or described in either evaluations or programmes.

Recommendations in relation to poverty reduction

- To increase the focus on poverty reduction it is not enough to limit reference to it as an end programme objective; actions that are intended to contribute to poverty reduction must be monitored through relevant output and outcome indicators.
- Evaluations and programme monitoring focused on capacity development should investigate the extent to which the capacities are targeted to the poor, or if the capacities will lead to services, institutional reforms and policy formation that are relevant in relation to the challenges perceived by poor people themselves.
- Particular attention is needed to regularly question conventional and ideologically anchored narratives about relevance of a given development model for addressing the root causes of poverty and vulnerability.

Findings in relation to efficiency: This review has found that there is little consensus about what is meant by 'efficiency'. The efficiency related questions in the terms of reference of the evaluations provide little guidance regarding what is expected (efficiency questions were included in only 44 per cent of the ToRs). Other related findings include:

- 'Efficiency' is assessed in relation to mainly four categories: 1) *Transaction costs* in programme implementation, 2) *Overhead costs,* including staffing, administration, capacity development and operational costs, 3) *Level of ambition of the initiative in relation to resources,* 4) *Unit cost* of specific inputs and activities.
- Benchmarking is difficult due to uncertainties about what might constitute a similar enough initiatives and commensurate data upon which to make comparisons.

- There is no common definition of ‘overhead’ and it appears that norms for what overheads are acceptable vary enormously.

Recommendations in relation to efficiency

- Sida should first undertake further analysis and then prepare and provide guidance regarding what the organisation needs to know about efficiency.
- Sida should take steps to define and openly discuss some comparable measures of overhead costs.
- An important aspect of efficiency that can be addressed in conjunction with the greater application of theories of change is that of ensuring more realistic levels of ambition in relation to resources, e.g., by looking at the relative efficiencies that can be achieved by limiting the scope of a given programme.

1 Introduction

Evaluations provide an essential evidence base for informed understanding of progress and obstacles towards achieving results and also of the relevance of programming in relation to policies. Evaluations can support learning in the Foreign Ministry, within Sida and Swedish embassies, and among Sweden's many development cooperation partners. Evaluations of specific projects, programmes, country programming and themes are important, but there is also a need for synthesis of broader evaluation findings in order to distil lessons from a wider evidence base, particularly for judging overall policy related achievements and strategic direction. This review was commissioned in order to provide such an overview of conclusions from decentralised evaluations and synthesised findings and to facilitate learning from evidence about how Sida works towards Swedish policies and priorities in development cooperation.

This report presents synthesised findings and lessons learned from 84 decentralised evaluations commissioned or supported by Sida and Foreign Missions during 2013. The report seeks to build on the momentum that was gained from the report *Swedish Development Cooperation in Transition? Lessons and Reflections from 71 Sida Decentralised Evaluations (April 2011-April 2013)*[1], which reviewed 71 decentralised evaluations conducted by Indevelop.[2] The synthesised conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations from this earlier report have been used widely by Sida managers and staff, and have been quoted by the Director-General.[3] Some of Sida's partners have also found the report useful.

The primary intended users of the current review are Sida managers and staff, however it is expected that the results will also be of interest to Sweden's partners in development cooperation.

The objective of the review, according to the terms of reference (ToR), is to analyse and summarise conclusions and lessons learnt from decentralised evaluations, with a special focus on the following:

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[1] Sida Studies in Evaluation 2013:1, Unit for Monitoring and Evaluation in cooperation with Indevelop

[2] Under Sida's current Framework Agreement for Evaluations and Reviews

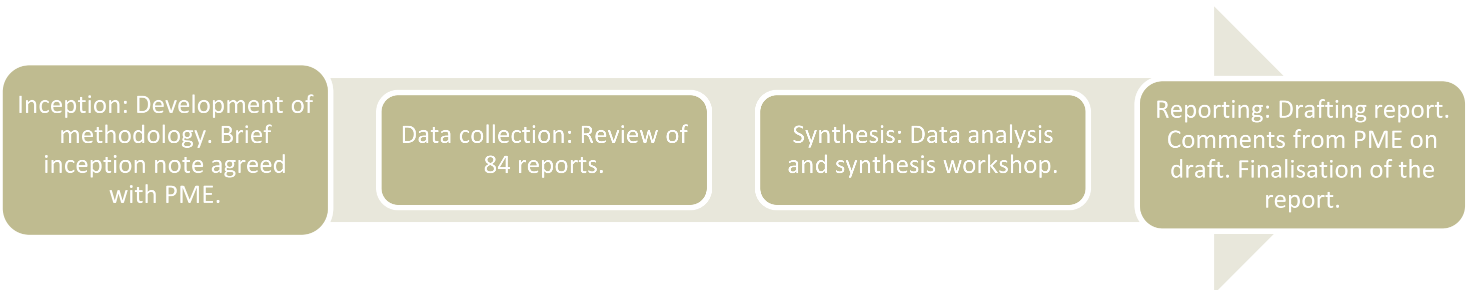
[3] http://www.sida.se/Svenska/aktuellt-och-press/For-medier/pressmeddelanden/2014/arkiv/sidachef-i-skane-vi-fortsatter-driva-jamstalldhetsfragor-i-motvind/

1. If the objects of evaluation have contributed to poverty reduction and created the conditions for improved living conditions for people facing poverty and oppression. If so; how? If not; why not?
2. If the objects of evaluation have had an explicit intervention logic/theory of change and any conclusions in relation to these.
3. If efficiency in Sida strategies and contributions are included in the evaluations and any conclusions in relation to efficiency.
4. Conclusions or lessons learnt in relation to the findings of the evaluations.
5. Provide recommendations to Sida.

2 Methodology

2.1 APPROACH

This study was undertaken during August – September 2014, and is based on the review of 84 evaluation reports of Sida funded interventions worldwide. The review team consisted of three evaluators at Indevelop, Ian Christoplos, Anna Liljelund Hedqvist and Jessica Rothman. Quality assurance of the inception and draft report was provided by Adam Pain. A total of 35 working days was allocated to the review. The work process was divided into the following four steps:



A data collection matrix[4] was developed with 28 questions divided into five main categories to capture findings from the evaluation reports related to:

1. Basic statistics (country/region, type of partner organisation, type of evaluation)
2. Efficiency
3. Poverty reduction
4. Theory of change/intervention logic
5. Conclusions and lessons learned

The reports were reviewed with particular attention given to the three pre-determined themes of the review, i.e., efficiency, poverty reduction and theory of change/intervention logic. Additionally, the team extrapolated overall key conclusions and recommendations. The latter were initially identified by the team members when reviewing the reports. These were then jointly discussed within the team in order to judge what findings were notable in terms of being recurrent or (in a few instances) outstanding.

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[4] See Annex 4

The reports were primarily divided between the three team members[5] who reviewed them and recorded relevant data (evidence, notes, reflections, direct quotes, etc.) in the data collection matrix. The time allocated to the study did not allow the reports to be read thoroughly[6], so priority was given to the executive summary and the sections covering efficiency, lessons learned, conclusions, recommendations. The remaining parts of the reports were selectively searched to capture data on poverty reduction and the programme's theory of change. Additional searches were made in the documents for key words that could indicate a discussion related to poverty.

The team analysed the data jointly in a two-day workshop where the findings were synthesised and conclusions and recommendations developed. This allowed the team members to discuss emerging findings, triangulate the evidence and verify any potential bias in the interpretation of the data. The report was drafted by the three review members, followed by an external quality assurance. Sida's Unit for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) provided comments to the draft report, which were taken into consideration in the final report.

2.2 THE EVALUATION SAMPLE

This review is based on a purposive sample of 84 evaluations. The reports do not include all of Sida's evaluations undertaken in 2013. It has not been possible to verify whether they constitute a representative sample of Swedish development cooperation. The selection of reports was made by PME, based on three criteria:

1. Funding: interventions wholly or partially funded by Sweden
2. Timing: evaluations undertaken in 2013
3. Accessibility: evaluation reports that were shared with PME by Sida's departments and Swedish embassies in response to a request to share all evaluations that had been commissioned/funded partly/wholly during 2013

PME sent out a request to all Sida departments and embassies and the sample constitutes the reports that PME received. PME collects information yearly about evaluations commissioned or funded by Sida units and embassies. Based on this information, PME collected all evaluations reported to have been commissioned or funded during 2013. Due to weaknesses in the procedure to report commissioned or funded evaluations, it emerged after the current Synthesis Report was underway that a number of evaluations that match selection criteria 1 and 2 had not been reported and are therefore not included in the sample. The review team note that there are no

[5] The French language reports were reviewed by Sarah Gharbi at Indevelop

[6] 90mins was allocated per report

evaluations from some of Sweden's largest development cooperation countries, such as Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda. It was agreed during the inception phase to remove all country and regional strategy evaluations from the sample due to the different character and focus of the evaluation scope.

The review team has no information regarding whether the reports in the sample reflect all or some evaluations actually undertaken in a given country. There is no consolidated information regarding commissioned evaluations within the embassies and departments, and it is unknown whether some may commission more evaluations than others. We have not been able to verifiably ascertain if and how these factors have affected the sample.

Many of the evaluation reports lack information regarding who commissioned them, and in some cases it is not clear who carried out the evaluation. The evaluations have been undertaken by a range of actors, to include both international and national organisations; a mix of consultancy companies, academic institutions, and individual evaluators. Only 34 of the evaluations were commissioned by the three service providers through Sida's framework agreement for evaluations and reviews. Indevelop carried out 22, Sipu 9 and Orgut 3. A majority of the evaluations have been commissioned by Sida or the embassies. At least 24 were commissioned by the implementing partner. With some evaluations it has not been possible to determine how or by whom they have been commissioned.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the geographic coverage of the included evaluations:

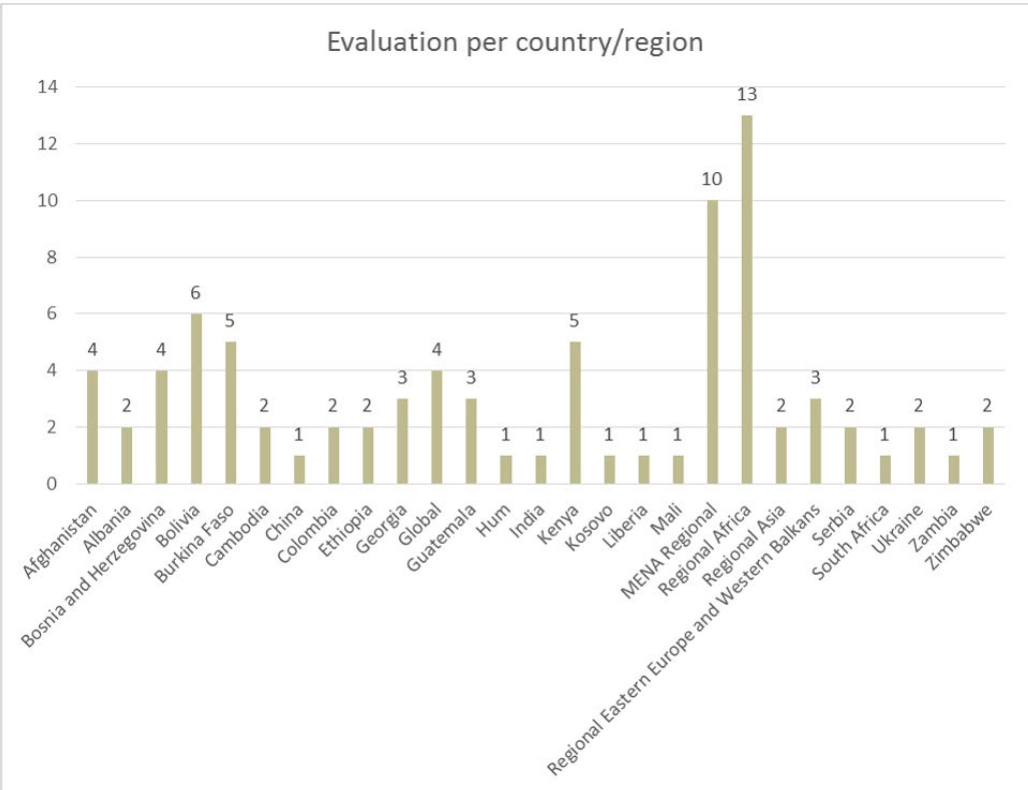

Figure 1

17 of the 84 evaluations were undertaken in countries in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans. The implication of reports from these countries on certain findings, such as poverty reduction, is discussed further in chapter 4.

Figure 2 provides a breakdown of when the evaluations are commissioned in the programming cycle and shows number of evaluations per type of evaluation. Fifty per cent of the evaluations were conducted at the end of a phase or upon completion of the intervention. Thirty-five per cent were considered mid-term reviews, while fifteen per cent lack information in this regard, or are larger ongoing studies[7] and have been categorised as "other".

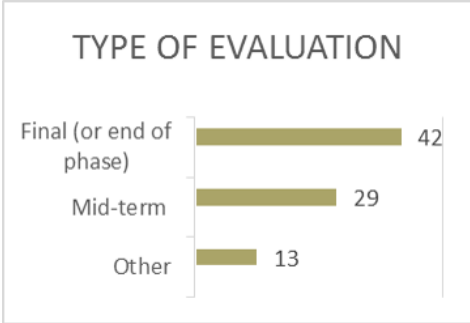

Figure 2

2.3 LIMITATIONS

In the process of undertaking this review the team encountered some limitations:

- It has in most cases been impossible to determine if the (lack of) attention to the issues being analysed in this review (theory of change/intervention logic, efficiency and poverty reduction) is due to the scope of the evaluation or of the intervention itself.
- In order to draw conclusions, the review team has had to interpret the review questions through the lens of the evaluators' interpretations; as such the extent to which the review has been able to draw verifiable conclusions about the content of the evaluated interventions themselves has often been limited.
- Only a relatively small portion of the evaluations explicitly addressed the questions included in the review, which has limited the extent to which the conclusions presented in the review can be rigorously verified. We have chosen to address this by drawing attention to what we have perceived to be interesting findings even where the number of evaluations raising these issues constitutes a small proportion of the sample.
- Even where the review team has judged that the review questions have been addressed in some form in the reports, the frame of reference for these judgements seldom reflects standard definitions. As such the review has had to apply 'flexible' (and indeed generous) interpretations of what 'might' suggest

[7] For example, several evaluations are of a more thematic nature, such as of ongoing support to civil society organisations that cannot be categorised as "final" or "mid-term" (i.e. Review of civil society support modalities at Sida HQ and Swedish Embassies, Multi-year results oriented evaluation of Sida's support via Swedish CSO to CSOs in developing countries)

implications related to poverty, efficiency and theories of change. This is explained further in the respective chapters.

- Furthermore, the interpretation of whether or not the evaluations included an assessment of poverty reduction, or if the evaluated intervention had a theory of change could not be addressed as a simple yes/no question due to the varying ways and degrees to which these aspects are raised in the reports. Evaluators approach these two issues in extremely varied ways (or not at all).
- With regard to efficiency, the review team has judged that the most useful form of analysis is that of describing the de facto definitions and aspects of efficiency that are included in the efficiency sections of the evaluations. The team deems it likely that this is considerably influenced by the biases and interests of the evaluators given that evaluation questions tend to be vague and quantitative data scarce.
- The lack of ToRs in 34 per cent of the evaluation reports did not allow for a full overview of expectations and focus of the evaluations included.
- Assessing the quality of the evaluations was explicitly not included as part of the scope of this assignment. However, the quality of the evaluation reports varied to a great degree. Some reports merely documented project activities and lacked evidence or analysis, which raises concerns about the quality of the data that forms the basis for this review.

Quotes from evaluation reports have been selected as examples that are either illustrative or representative. This is made clear in the reference preceding each example. Direct quotes have not been language edited.

3 Main Conclusions and Lessons Drawn from the Evaluation Sample

3.1 ON LESSONS LEARNING

The following presents some of the lessons noted from the evaluation reports, and also the lessons that the review team has drawn from the issues raised (and even the issues largely ignored) in the sample. The lessons, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations, summarised here, are for the most part not very surprising. They reflect long established conclusions and generally point to categories of good practice and mistakes that have been recognised many times in the past. As such, a meta conclusion of this report is that *we have yet to overcome institutional hurdles and develop sufficient mechanisms to learn from experience in general and evaluations in particular.* There are apparently significant path dependencies related to long established institutional relationships, reliance on prevailing (but unproven) narratives about what constitutes a 'good project' and insufficient investments in the contextual analyses that would be needed to recognise and address risks and obstacles to achieving overall objectives. Together these factors often lock Sida into dysfunctional programming.[8]

Despite the massive amount of attention given at Sida to reporting on 'results', the weaknesses in defining theories of change; in attention to empirically assessing (or even asking questions about) poverty alleviation; and the rather unfocused way that efficiency is addressed indicate that incentives are not in place to promote such learning. It would seem that the huge increase in attention to results has not led to 'asking the right questions', and monitoring and evaluation systems are not in place for gathering the data needed to provide rigorous and verifiable answers. The following chapters cover these issues in more detail.

It is difficult to draw firm conclusions about outcomes based on analyses of outputs. Nonetheless, the evaluations reviewed generally interpret their findings as indicating that the *outputs achieved have created a solid foundation for eventual outcomes*. Capacities have been developed, organisations have been strengthened and formal institutions have been established. Furthermore, the emphasis of much of the program-

[8] These factors were analysed in detail in Ostrom, et al (2002) Aid, Incentives and Sustainability, Sida Studies in Evaluation 01/02:1. The findings of this major evaluation remain relevant today.

ming on networks and cooperation has generated *a high degree of trust among key actors*, some of who had antagonistic relations in the past. This trust is also seen as part of the foundation for future outcomes. The evaluations generally make plausible assertions about how these capacities, institutional reforms and networks may in the future lead to changes in attitudes, norms and practices, even if these assertions cannot be verified. The following excerpt from an evaluation report exemplifies such plausible but unverified assertions, while calling for better tracking of future outcomes:

Example 1: **Evaluation of the trans-boundary integrated water resources management and development projects in the Mara, Sio-Malaba-Malakesi, Kagera under NELSAP**
"*During the evaluation it became apparent that there are many 'unintended' benefits from the programme. These include the establishment of networks across the region, the development of trust relationships and development of capacity that not only serve the programme objectives, but also benefit the national departments and communities. These benefits should be made explicit as objectives in the programme so that they can be promoted, tracked and celebrated.*"[9]

With a few notable exceptions, the evaluations tend not to make assertions directly related to the outcomes that are called for in overall Swedish policy goals regarding the perspectives of the poor and respect for human rights.

The inability to draw non-speculative conclusions is interpreted in some reports as suggesting lessons about the *need for longer and more realistic programme timeframes*, which is in turn related to the need for more realistic programme design. If Sida wants to see genuine outcomes and impacts it needs to change the way it does business to give these processes the time they require. An implicit conclusion that the review team deduces from the evaluations in the sample is that Sida may not 'be around' to find out if the outputs actually lead to intended outcomes and impacts. The following quote from an evaluation report exemplifies the need for more realistic timeframes, which was mentioned in several reports:

Example 2: **Mid-term Review of the UNDP Municipal Training System project in BiH**
"*Arguably it could have been foreseen that an initiative of this magnitude would need a longer term commitment at the onset. In this case the project would have been designed with better phasing in mind.*"[10]

[9] Evaluation report R32
[10] Evaluation report R78

The results reported on, many of which are impressive, are often found by the evaluators themselves due to the fact that *regular programme reporting is weak and activity oriented* and therefore the actors in the interventions may not even recognise their results. The evaluations draw attention to the fact that the partners lack capacities to explain their achievements. Non-existent baselines and weak monitoring are also repeatedly mentioned as serious problems, as the following example shows:

> Example 3: **Mid-term Review of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)**
> "*The intervention has brought significant changes on the ground, but they have no or few systematic recording and reporting of change and impact stories.*"[11]

Many of the lessons reported on refer to *process*, including ways of working, management, networking and coordination. The review team interprets this as possibly being related to the demands of the commissioning programme officers, who need to better understand what is happening within the initiatives. This process focus is thus important for utility, even if it has negative consequences from a results based management perspective.

3.2 ON CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Capacity development is the most common result noted, but these findings are very often *paired with recommendations to give more attention to continued capacity development in the future*. The reports in many cases stress that capacities are still insufficient to attain intended outcomes, and as the following example describes, the intervention logic is not always explicit in regards to what the changed capacities should lead to:

> Example 4: **Evaluation of the project to encourage the uptake and use by developing countries of the international standard (ISO 26000) on Social Responsibility in the MENA region (2010-2014)**
> *"Since this project is basically a capacity development project, there doesn't seem to have been enough thinking as to what constitutes evidence of changed capacities at individual, organisational and institutional level and how this would be assessed."*[12]

The reports draw notable conclusions, both positive and negative, regarding the extent to which the initiatives have fostered *ownership* for the capacity development

[11] Evaluation report R23

[12] Evaluation report R48

processes. Some reports identify successes while others express concerns about weak links with the pre-existing institutional structures (e.g., in government agencies, civil society led initiatives, etc.) that will provide a basis for applying capacities in the future. Some reports note that ownership (and understanding) is best fostered if there are opportunities within the programmes to actually apply new skills and build consensus within the organisations on the practical value of reforms. But other reports note that the timeframes of the initiatives and the evaluations are too short to address the need for moving into application of the skills that have been developed. Most reports find that capacity development efforts have been appropriately adapted, but some reports strongly emphasise that one size does *not* fit all. Some initiatives are criticised for failures to design and target capacity development efforts based on an analysis of perceived needs among partners and the challenges in the broader context.

The evaluations draw both positive and negative conclusions about the ways that programmes have been designed to develop the capacities of the 'right actors'. Part of this involves the need to focus on multiple levels (regional, national, local, community). Some reports note that this choice of levels is a moving target, as it needs to be related to ongoing decentralisation processes and efforts to promote pluralism in different countries. The roles of national and local government are changing, as are the respective roles of the state, the private sector and civil society.

Surprisingly *few initiatives actually have activities to develop capacities at a grassroots level*, but when they do, recommendations are made to ensure that these pilot initiatives are linked to efforts to inform policy. Embassy dialogue is seen as important in engaging with policy-makers, and the evidence of grassroots 'success stories' lends credibility to these dialogue efforts.

3.3 WHICH RIGHTS HOLDERS?

Some recommendations stress that Sida needs to assume stronger responsibilities, or at least send clearer messages, about how the capacities that are being developed should be used to ensure *voice* among appropriate rights holders and the capacities of duty bearers to be able to *fulfil their responsibilities*. Regarding both, a clearer gender perspective is occasionally said to be needed. Most evaluations are silent on gender perspectives, which implies that insufficient attention has been given to these concerns. A significant proportion of the reports emphasise the importance of a focus on youth, while often noting that results have thus far been limited.

A few reports note the need to also *balance* a focus on strengthening the voice of right holders with bolstering, or recognising the limitations of, the capacity of duty bearers to meet the demands of rights holders. This relates to the need for having 'realistic' expectations about how a limited and time-bound investment in one side or the other will lead to better and more accountable governance, as the example below demonstrates:

Example 5: **Evaluation of the Joint Climate Change Initiative (JCCI) in Cambodia**
The report recommended to, *"Use the JCCI community of practice to more systematically assess and discuss the core challenge of how to ensure that capacities continue to be developed among the CSO partners for climate relevant service provision while, at the same time, seeing how duty bearers in local government also develop the capacities they need to take on long-term responsibilities for these service."*[13]

3.4 CHANGING PARTNERS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Due to the limited size and great diversity of the sample, caution is needed in generalising about different partners and partnership forms. However, issues related to partners and partnerships constitute a significant aspect of the conclusions and recommendations of the reports. This suggests the importance of attention to these issues even if the findings regarding specific categories of partners are merely indicative.

Reports analyse the added value of intermediary partners in CSO support (mostly Swedish CSOs) and technical assistance in public sector support (often Swedish public agencies). The evaluations report both positive and negative findings regarding the added value of these partners, often noting *high quality inputs but also sometimes criticising them as additional bureaucratic layers* rather than acting as genuine service providers.

There are similarly mixed findings regarding the added value and the efficiency of other types of partners. Particular attention is paid to the role of *UN agencies, where there are apparent trade-offs between closeness with government and limited perceived neutrality*, suggesting the need for a conflict sensitive perspective when making decisions about if and how to work through the UN.

Also *research organisations* are seen to have positive and negative characteristics. They are *generally respected by a range of stakeholders and have capacities for high quality analyses and convening evidence-based discussions*. At the same time they are seen to have more limited inherent capacities to help partners towards operational decisions and they sometimes demand high overheads.

A number of evaluations present concerns that *insufficient efforts have been made to address communication and dialogue aspects of partnership*. This is sometimes an issue concerning the different organisations in the project itself and sometimes with other outside stakeholders. Some reports mention weak dialogue and communication

[13] Evaluation report 12

with Sida and the embassies, which is seen as leading to unrealistic expectations about what a given intervention can achieve and general ignorance about programme progress. These concerns suggest that the problems noted elsewhere in this review about weak reporting may actually be a symptom of broader problems with dialogue and communication.

Finally, three evaluations[14] raise questions about how Sida chooses whom it works with and supports, and even how Sida partner organisations select whom they fund. *Criteria for assessment of potential partners are not transparent and there seems to be a tendency to work with those organisations with which the embassy has well-established relations*. These may not be the same organisations that are best suited for the task at hand. When more appropriate organisations are overlooked this has negative implications for Sweden's credibility as a development partner. The following excerpt is from a large review that included all of Sweden's support modalities to civil society globally:

Example 6: **Review of Civil Society Support Modalities at Sida HQ and Swedish Embassies**
"*The CSOs themselves think that Sida should have a more transparent framework for their selection procedures and common guidelines for contractual relationships with CSOs (minimum requirements, formats of proposals and reports, common funding conditions). Non-Swedish CSOs are of the opinion that Sida favours Swedish organisations.*"[15]

3.5 LESSONS ABOUT TIMEFRAMES, MANAGEMENT AND OWNERSHIP

Some of the most common conclusions and recommendations in the reports refer to the need for donors to have *more realistic expectations about what can be achieved in terms of long-term change and poverty reduction from short-term projects*. It is furthermore recognised that with certain aid modalities the institutional processes related to setting up coordination mechanisms, mobilising partners, stimulating demand for reform and fostering political buy-in cannot be rushed. The evaluations are generally positive about the choice of modalities in terms of ensuring ownership and political commitment, but highlight that turning this ownership into the concrete results demanded by Swedish development cooperation goals requires considerable time. Perhaps for this reason almost all evaluations recommend continued support; even 'final'

[14] R52, R59, R82
[15] Evaluation report R82

evaluations and those looking at activities where a decision has already been made to discontinue support.

One of the most common recommendations is to *improve results based management in general and stronger monitoring and evaluation systems in particular*. This often paired with recommendations for more coherent systems to establish and follow the logic of the interventions (e.g., in the theories of change) anchored in better results reporting, establishment of appropriate baselines and the *use of baselines* in monitoring, iterative programming and strategic planning.

There are recommendations that the focus of these efforts should be on fostering ownership. Despite largely positive findings in most reports, some initiatives are heavily criticised as being donor driven and managed in parallel to regular structures. A few reports note that research and other policy-oriented outputs are not sufficiently used by country stakeholders when they are not translated into local languages. The following is an example of a successful programme which could have increased its sustainability and reach by also strengthening government ownership:

Example 7: **Evaluation of Reintegration Assistance to Returnee Communities in Counties of High Return in South Sudan**
"*One area in which the programme was particularly successful was improving peaceful community relations, through significantly reducing water conflicts. The program was also very successful in contributing to transition away from an emergency environment and towards a development context in the areas of education and water in target communities. The programme could have had a longer lasting impact if a government capacity building component had been incorporated.*"[16]

3.6 SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is more often addressed in the conclusions and lessons learned than in the findings of the evaluations, presumably as the reports are produced too early in the project cycle to find rigorous evidence of sustainability. The recommendations call for *increased attention to sustainability in programme design and in the institutional anchoring necessary to continue to generate results* stemming from the intervention, as the example below describes:

[16] Evaluation report R54

Example 8: **Evaluation of the phase 2 cooperation with the Albanian Tax Administration**
"*As far as one can judge without good outcome indicators, while the overall impact has been good, the impact of some of the components has been limited because not enough attention has been paid to sustainability. A number of constraining factors have become apparent during the course of the implementation of the project. The most important one is the limited involvement of the highest management.*"[17]

Financial aspects are central in many sustainability discussions, and where this is raised the reports largely recognise that *financial sustainability will be an elusive goal in the short to medium term*. Some recommendations are made for taking more appropriate steps towards financial sustainability, but there are no silver bullets. Evaluators recognise that in certain programmes private sector actors have a potential role to play in moving towards long-term sustainability, and this can be fostered if they are consulted earlier during programme design and implementation. Diversification of donor funding, rather than a phase out of donor funding altogether, is seen as the main solution for CSOs.

A number of evaluations look at the prospects for sustainable partnerships with Swedish institutions, as envisaged in the Policy for Global Development. Findings in this regard are generally grim, as there is *little evidence of trends towards sustainable partnerships based on allocation of resources from the erstwhile partners themselves after Sida funding ends*.

With regard to institutional sustainability, when initiatives are integrated into existing structures sustainability is more likely. This is particularly difficult in regional programming, where there is a need for balance between regional and national interests. Exchange of experience in regional programmes is seen as a strength that deserves continued attention, but the *uptake of regional experience/outcomes is largely dependent on national level action and integration within national demands and priorities.* Evidence of such uptake is lacking in many cases (which may be due to the scope of the evaluations rather than deficiencies in the programmes themselves).

Swedish policy commitments of fostering sustainability through commitments to helping local CSOs to achieve their own objectives or through strengthening a vibrant civil society have not been consistently followed. This is a precondition for institutional sustainability, and *as long as embassies view local CSOs primarily as mere 'implementing partners' the prospects for sustainability are poor*.

[17] Evaluation report R66

Finally, the conclusions of several reports note that the theories of change for achieving sustainability and for scaling up are weak. There is some speculation (but virtually no evidence) regarding if and how small pilot initiatives, training inputs and other programme activities will lead to continued and significant progress towards intended objectives.

3.7 RISK MANAGEMENT AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The conclusions of the evaluations mostly *endorse and encourage risk taking and note that an acceptance of significant levels of risk has usually led to desired results*. However, risk-taking is seen to require a clearer overall vision of what is to be achieved through development cooperation. Some of the evaluations are highly critical where Sweden has apparently lacked well-defined strategies and direction. Examples include support to civil society in Liberia, overall engagements in Abkhazia, and the aforementioned issues around CSO support through embassies. Policies are either too vague or they are not applied. There are also some cases where Sweden has acted in a very strategic manner over a long period of time to achieve outcome and impact results, and where support has been given to weak but strategic partners or political processes as in the case of support to the Nile Basin Trust Fund (NBTF)[18]. Examples include Swedish support to HIV/Aids in South Africa (see example below) and Support to Environmental Investments in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans.

Example 9: **Review of the Swedish Support to the HIV/AIDS Programmes in South Africa 2004-2013**

"The success of Swedish support to HIV/AIDS programmes in South Africa is attributed to:
- Risk taking and the forward-looking strategic selection of partners that could channel the voices of men, women and children who are affected, hold the government to account through legal procedures and challenge the underlying causes of high infection rates."[19]

Few of the reports mention Sida's stewardship in the findings and recommendations (only 15 out of 84). *Where Swedish stewardship is analysed, recommendations point to the need for stronger and more strategic oversight, coordination and learning across different initiatives, and more proactive and targeted use of policy dialogue.*

[18] Evaluation report R33

[19] Evaluation report R62

Some concerns are raised about the timeliness of approval of reports, disbursements and agreements/decisions to support interventions.

Those evaluations that describe the political and economic context (many do not) stress that *interventions need to adapt and respond to political changes*. The review team interprets this as suggesting that political economy analysis is particularly important as part of design to determine what contextual risks exist, how they can be managed and how to balance the need to accept a high degree of risk and the need to manage those risks that can be managed. Such political economy analysis should not be a one-off task, as it is essential to monitor developments and adapt to prevailing conditions throughout the intervention.

3.8 SUMMARY OF LESSONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EVALUATIONS

- Sida has yet to develop sufficient mechanisms to learn from experience in general and evaluations in particular.
- Outputs achieved and capacities developed have created a solid foundation for eventual outcomes, but in many interventions it is unclear if they are sufficient for achieving changes in attitudes, norms and practices.
- Capacity development is the most common result noted, but the reports stress that capacities are still generally insufficient to attain intended outcomes.
- Increased attention to sustainability in programme design and in institutional anchoring is often mentioned as necessary to continue to generate results stemming from the intervention.
- Insufficient attention is given to how the capacities that are being developed will be used to ensure voice among appropriate rights holders and enhance the capacities of duty bearers to fulfil their responsibilities.
- More attention should be paid to dialogue and communication among the different implementing organisations, with other outside stakeholders, and with Sida and the embassies.
- Criteria for assessment of potential partners are not transparent and there seems to be a tendency to work with those organisations with which the embassy has well-established relations.
- Sida should have more realistic expectations about what can be achieved in terms of long-term change and poverty reduction from limited and short-term projects, or (alternatively) reinforce commitments to long-term processes.
- Acceptance of significant levels of risk has usually led to desired results, but risk-taking requires a clearer overall vision of what is to be achieved through development cooperation.
- Interventions need to adapt and respond to political changes. Political economy analysis is particularly important as part of design to determine what risks exist,

how they can be managed and how to balance the need to accept a high degree of risk and the need to manage those risks that can be managed.

3.9 OVERALL SUCCESS FACTORS

This review has identified some specific factors that have been pointed out in evaluations as having contributed to the success of certain interventions and development results. The review did not specifically pursue success factors in the evaluation reports reviewed, but rather captured those that were explicitly identified. These are highlighted below and should be seen as *examples* rather than an exhaustive summary of contributing elements for achieving successful results:

1. A coherent and unified Swedish approach to development goals, using both political and development cooperation efforts to achieve change, often driven by Sida and Embassy staff, as the following exemplifies, "*The success of Swedish support to HIV/AIDS programmes in South Africa is attributed to the coherent and proactive approach taken by the Embassy, which included the political dialogue with high level officials, the proactive role taken in donor coordination and hosting of the EU+ coordination group, the long-term, flexible core support to strategic partners, the arranging of strategic events and competent and well-connected Embassy staff*".[20]
2. Selection of strategic partners with the 'right' approach, capacity, networks and credibility, including partnerships with the 'right' government structures, civil society institutions, researchers and/or private sector actors. Issues related to partners and partnerships constitute a significant aspect of the conclusions and recommendations of the reviewed evaluation reports, and are often identified as a factor leading to results or the lack thereof. More on the importance of selecting the right partnerships is discussed in chapter 3.4.
3. Strong and committed leadership of cooperation partners including Sida, and development partners, government structures and local civil society. Successful results were identified in a few evaluations[21] of strong leadership, manifested in terms of innovating sustainable approaches, mobilising the collaboration of CSOs and governments, inspiring community uptake and replication, and brave decision-making in selection of partners and modalities.

[20] Evaluation report R62, Review of the Swedish Support to the HIV/AIDS Programmes in South Africa 2004-2013

[21] Review of the Swedish Support to the HIV/AIDS Programmes in South Africa 2004-2013 (R62), Flow-River Rejuvenation in India – Impact of Tarun Bharat Sangh's work (R63), Evaluation of Support to Gender Links (R58)

4 Theory of Change /Intervention Logic

4.1 THEORIES OF CHANGE IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

In recent years there has been rapidly increasing attention to theories of change in development cooperation. It is therefore highly appropriate to use this review as a 'reality check' to assess the extent to which the theory of change concept is influencing (a) the design of development efforts, and (b) the way development cooperation is monitored, evaluated and learned from. We use one of the definitions of theory of change (ToC) in order to frame how we used the concept of ToC in this Review.

A definition of Theory of Change (ToC)

Theory of Change defines all building blocks required to bring about a given long-term goal. This set of connected building blocks – interchangeably referred to as outcomes, results, accomplishments, or preconditions is depicted on a map known as a pathway of change/change framework, which is a graphic representation of the change process.
(Definition from: theoryofchange.org)

While the definition of ToC may be broadly understood by many organisations working in development cooperation today, we note that few (only 11 evaluations in the sample[22]) used a ToC approach as a framework for planning and analysis.

With only a few of the reports including an analysis of the evaluated interventions' ToC, it is not possible to judge the extent to which this represents similar uncertainties within the actual interventions. For these reasons we have found it necessary to assess the use of 'theories of change' in a flexible manner that does not strictly correspond to the definition in box 1, instead looking more broadly at the coherence, scope and realism of discussions of intervention logics. In the table below we present the criteria for the broad categories used by the review team for the analysis:

Category	The Review Team's Interpretation
The intervention has an explicit theory of change	The evaluation report states that the intervention has a well-defined theory behind programme design that captures the logical processes of change at different levels that leads to the overall programme objective, including a critical reflection on

[22] R78, R76, R74, R61, R46, R40, R39, R35, R34, R27, R25

	the assumptions regarding how to reach the objectives, presented in a realistic results framework.
The intervention has a partial theory of change	According to the evaluation report there is evidence of a logical framework or similar structure that only partially captures the intended change of the initiative. These are often activity oriented, with large gaps between outputs and the intended outcomes (if any) or the final objective.
The intervention lacks a theory of change	The evaluation report notes that there is no apparent intervention logic, often very activity oriented design with a broad gap between what the intervention does and the overall objectives (result at impact level). It is not possible to trace the intended process of change.
Not possible to assess	The report did not include sufficient information upon which to base an assessment of the intervention's theory of change.

The review sought to understand to what extent the evaluations report that the interventions have a theory of change, and if they use it for analysis and learning. The summary of the assessment is presented in figure 3. Out of the interventions that actually used the ToC, it was assessessed that in only 6 cases, the ToC was used as a tool for learning and monitoring of the evaluation.

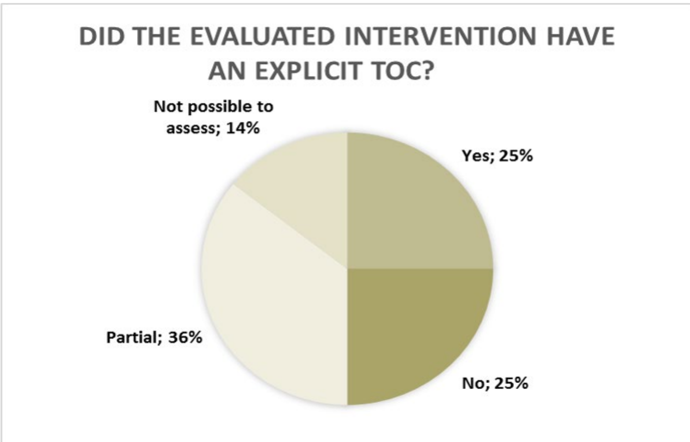

Figure 3

Some partners and evaluators are taking steps towards a more critically reflective perspective on either results frameworks, e.g., perhaps applying a logical framework approach as a 'quasi theory of change'. The main evidence in the reports of significant influence of new ways of thinking about theories of change is in the analysis of *relevance* of interventions. This is interpreted by the review team as representing a step towards critical reflection on assumptions, but not necessarily a wholehearted embrace of theories of change as a tool for planning, monitoring and evaluation (in which case there would be more attention in the discussions of effectiveness and impact). We also note that evaluations themselves seem to sometimes be used as an opportunity to effectively construct, reconstruct or otherwise draw attention to explicit or implicit theories of change, even if the programme in question has not previously been driven by reflections over the theory of change.

In the reports there are indications of a process in some programming away from rigid results frameworks and towards approaches that could foster ToC approaches. Sida is generally committed to a shift to more flexible thinking around results frameworks, and theories of change are well suited to this flexible approach, but it appears from the evaluations that partners may be more accustomed to logical frameworks and may perhaps still be locked into rigid structures due to their agreements with other donors.

Only a limited number of reports have made what the review team interpret to be references to aspects of a results framework that include critical analysis relating to assumptions about the logic of intervention. The political and other contextual factors that led to the choice of a given intervention's partners, modalities and methodologies are not analysed in the majority of the reports, which the team interprets as suggesting that significant aspects of a theory of change approach are lacking in most interventions.

4.2 COHERENCE IN THEORIES OF CHANGE

Many of the reports note a weak connection between activities, outputs, outcomes and impact (chain of results) and that interventions lack an overall logic in their design and implementation (34 reports out of 84) as illustrated in example 10 below.

Example 10: **End-of-Programme Evaluation of International Organisation for Migration- Partnership on Health and Mobility in East and Southern Africa (PHAMESA)**
"While there is clear evidence around the extent of the problem there is less clarity on the specific evidence that informs the project's objectives and interventions. As far as the evaluation can tell, these objectives and interventions are informed by the organisations global programmes area alone. There is an assumption that collectively these should come together to have some kind of results, but those results are not defined in any logical way or based on any explicit evidence."[23]

A major reason for weakness in attention to theories of change is the *activity focus* of both the interventions and even the evaluations. Greater attention is given to 'what we want to do' rather than 'what we want to achieve' and an outcome focus is often lacking. Even within the 34 reports where a weak chain of results is noted, cursory attention is given to outcomes. Some reports make very positive note of the successes of projects in doing things and achieving intended outputs, while either ignoring or merely speculating about contribution to outcomes. Example 11 is representative of the frequent concerns expressed regarding the activity focus.

Example 11: **Mid-term Review of Support to Partnership in Statistics in BiH Phase 3**

[23] Evaluation report R25

"The wording and structure of objectives does not indicate the nature of change expected in the statistics institutes as a result of the project. The project objectives look more like activities. Obviously, the lack of clarity and the extent to which the objectives adequately set out outcomes is bound to have an impact on the effectiveness of the project." "Properly defined indicators were seldom identified for outcomes and impact, and the lack thereof obviously has a bearing on what this evaluation can achieve and how."[24]

Some reports also note (often when discussing relevance) a failure to look critically at assumptions behind programming, especially as related to the broader policy and political context. Few reports make clear reference to relevance in relation to the implicit theories of change in overall Swedish development policies and country strategies.

This gap between the theories of change in policies and in specific initiatives is partly raised when discussing a lack of critical reflection on the choice of entry points and partners, and even a recognition of the limited role of a given partner in the overall intended change process. Related to this, it is often not clear who the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the support are. This is particularly the case in terms of how results based management efforts relate to human rights based approaches, i.e., what is intended regarding change in the attitudes, roles, practices and capacities of rights holders and duty bearers, and how investments in duty bearers are expected to make them more accountable to rights holders, as illustrated in example 12 below. There is vagueness regarding which partners, direct and indirect, are expected to play which roles in intended strategy related change processes; and what changes have occurred in the partners' attitudes, practices, skills and performance.

Example 12: **Evaluation of Joint Climate Change Initiative**
"*Connected to this is the huge gap between the overall objective – essentially a vision – and the outcomes which refer rather vaguely about human rights and livelihoods. The 'expected results' do not even mention the indirect beneficiaries. A more explicit bridging outcome referring to the expected changes in relations between rights holders and duty bearers (rather than beneficiaries) would have helped to define the mechanisms that the project was about to initiate or enhance.*"[25]

4.3 CREDIBILITY OF THEORIES OF CHANGE

The lack of attention to intended outcomes may be related to the large number of reports that are mid-term reviews (35 per cent, see figure 2), many of which

[24] Evaluation report R74

[25] Evaluation report R12

acknowledge that it is too early to draw conclusions regarding outcomes. Some reports also note that the interventions themselves are too short in duration to achieve the outcomes that would be required to demonstrate changes in accordance with the theories of change. The team interprets these two factors as being part of the reason for the limited attention given to theories of change and outcomes more generally. Programme designs are also sometimes described as being far too ambitious in terms of geographic spread,[26] complexity and number of intended outcomes to constitute a realistic or verifiable theory of change. There are also often large gaps between outputs and grand claims made regarding intended impacts - gaps which no credible theory of change can fill. An example of the lack of coherence of the ToC is given in example 13 below.

Example 13: **Mid-term Review of the Swedish support to the Community Policing Project in Albania**

"There is no evidence of systematic, periodic review of the theory of change contained within the programme and whether the activities will, if successfully implemented, still deliver the desired outcomes, and whether participation by key stakeholder groups is having the desired effect. The mechanism does not monitor any aspects related to how the programme objectives can be supported through the way in which activities are developed and implemented."[27]

Perhaps the biggest credibility gap in terms of theories of change, sometimes noted in the evaluations and more often (even more problematically) absent in the evaluations, is that of paths towards sustainability. The paths to sustainability are often weakly integrated into the discussions of the intervention logic. This is particularly problematic with regard to a lack of attention to how de facto pilots are expected to be scaled-up, learned from or otherwise lead to sustained outcomes. Many of the small and time-bound interventions supported appear to be designed based on a recognition that a significant contribution to intended changes will occur through such scaling up or learning, but the pathways to realise these processes are not described. Furthermore, the review team notes how surprisingly little attention has been given to exit strategies and how the dependencies generated by an intervention will be overcome. A couple of reports make statements that effectively acknowledge that financial sustainability according to the standards of developed countries is not a relevant goal (especially as related to civil society), but that alternative assumptions regarding future trajectories have not been sufficiently thought through.

[26] Evaluation report R4

[27] Evaluation report R65

Even though six[28] of the 84 evaluation reports provide evidence that the theory of change concept is being used to influence the design of interventions, and the monitoring, reporting and learning, four of them assess the theories of change to have substantial weaknesses (i.e. they do not fully capture outcomes, objectives formulated as activities, too many outcomes without supporting activities and outputs to achieve them). Only two[29] of these interventions report on outcomes sufficiently.

4.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS IN RELATION TO THEORIES OF CHANGE /INTERVENTION LOGIC

- Elements of a theory of change approach are most apparent in the analyses of relevance of interventions; it is rare that a ToC is used as a tool for planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- A large part (noted in 34 out of 84 reports) of interventions have weak connection between activities, outputs, outcomes and impact (chain of results) and lack an overall logic in their design and implementation.
- There is often a failure to look critically at assumptions behind programming, especially as related to the broader political context.
- It is often not clear who are the targeted direct and indirect beneficiaries and partners, and how they are expected to benefit from the intervention.
- There is vagueness regarding which partners, direct and indirect, are expected to play which roles in intended strategy related change processes; and what changes are expected in their attitudes, practices, skills and performance.
- Many programmes are overwhelmingly focused on activities - greater attention is given to ‘what we want to do’ rather than ‘what we want to achieve’.
- Interventions (and evaluations) generally focus on monitoring outputs while paying little attention to outcomes. Where contributions to outcomes are assessed, this is often addressed speculatively rather than empirically.
- Evaluations find that some programmes are far too ambitious in terms of geographic spread, complexity and number of intended outcomes to constitute a realistic or verifiable theory of change.
- The paths to sustainability are often weakly integrated into the theories of change, and little attention has been given to exit strategies and how the dependencies generated by an intervention will be overcome.

[28] R2, R19, R36, R64, R68, R69
[29] R2, R64

5 Contribution to Poverty Reduction

5.1 LIMITED ATTENTION AND WEAK EVIDENCE

The perspectives of poor people are expected to guide Swedish development cooperation. This puts the needs, circumstances, interests and priorities of poor women, men and children at the starting-point for poverty reduction and the promotion of equitable and sustainable global development. Poverty is regarded as a multi-dimensional concept that is more than lack of money and material resources. It is also about lack of trust, choice, power and influence[30].

Less than half[31] of the evaluation reports reviewed looked at the contribution of the interventions to poverty reduction, most only to a modest extent. Out of the total sample of 84 reports, 17 of the reports were evaluations in Eastern Europe or Western Balkans (a mix of bilateral and regional evaluations) where the poverty reduction objective is not given the same emphasis as in other areas of Swedish development cooperation. Out of the 17 reports, only 4 looked at the poverty reduction in some way. Another region where poverty reduction was seldom included in the evaluation reports is the Middle East and North Africa, where only 2 out of 11 reports addressed poverty in some way. The top five geographic locations of the reports that addressed poverty reduction in some way are:

1. Regional Africa, 6 reports (out of total 13)
2. Kenya 5 (out of total 5)
3. Afghanistan 4 (out of total 4)
4. Bolivia 3 (out of total 6)
5. Global 3 (out of total 4)

The review team judges that the lack of focus of poverty reduction in evaluations indicates a limited demand for assessments of results in relation to poverty. The reasons for this lack of demand and analysis cannot be verifiably determined by a review such as this, but this does suggest cause for concern with regard to Sweden's commitments to core policy objectives of poverty reduction.

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[30] Shared Responsibility for Global Development, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2010

[31] 40 out of 84 reports

Even when poverty is discussed in the reports, very little rigorous evidence is presented and the analyses made are mostly in relation to relevance (see section 5.2 below). Some proxy indicators are assessed related to outputs and outcomes, but the extent to which these outcomes and impacts actually led to the expected impacts of poverty reduction is left unverified and is not critically assessed. The following example illustrates how an evaluation describes outputs that are assumed to lead to poverty reduction, but wherein these assumptions are not tested.

Example 14: **Evaluation of the Non-state Actors Facility (Pact) in Kenya**
"Through various capacity building activities such as advocacy training, MERL training, finance and grants management training, and governance and leadership training, the partners that CRM has engaged with are now able to push forward with their roles of delivering critical services to poor communities, empowering communities through Capacity Development and facilitating government-citizen interaction as well as economic development."[32]

The closest that the reports come to direct analyses of poverty reduction is in income generation related programming, but even here the focus is on skills, i.e., the output level, whilst questions are generally not asked about whether the training is targeted to the poor, or if the training is even relevant for the poor. There is some (but insufficient) analysis of the market for the potential skills, services and products in some programmes, while it is lacking in others.

There may be assumptions that investing in the productive capacity of the better-off will lead to economic development, that will in turn eventually lead to benefits for the poor, especially jobs, but the review team could find no evidence that these assumptions are being critically analysed, and there are no indications that data is being collected by the programme monitoring and evaluations to assess this.

Poverty related to freedom from oppression and political empowerment is evidently hard to measure (for programmes and also for evaluators), and the results are more diffuse. For this reason many evaluations focus on the process characteristics of these aspects of poverty reduction, such as ways of working, management, networking and coordination, rather than the results per se. Example 14 above illustrates this.

There is a lack of monitoring against baselines and indicators, which the review team interprets as stemming from poverty being only referred within the very high levels of the results frameworks, such as impact (i.e., levels that are not tracked in monitoring or even in most evaluations). In the evaluations that attempt to assess if poverty has

[32] Evaluation report R18

been reduced, there seems to be little access to evidence from monitoring upon which to draw conclusions, which may also be related to the expense of collecting such data.

Despite these dismal findings, there are a few evaluations that stand out with measuring impact on the well-being of the poor, with example 15 being the clearest and strongest example within the sample.[33] This example below is an illustration of a report where impact results in terms of improved farmers' livelihoods are noted. There is also some evidence presented related to voice and empowerment aspects of poverty reduction in CSO evaluations that have direct interventions for people living in poverty.

Example 15: **Evaluation of the Pilot Milk of Schools Programme in Zambia** "*The development of the dairy industry has impacted positively on job creation, especially in rural areas. Some of the small holder dairy farmers have invested their incomes from milk sales prudently by sending their children to school, building or renovating houses, buying household assets such as bicycles, motorbikes and solar systems, while a few have actually bought motor vehicles. Thus, steady incomes from milk sales have improved farmers' earnings and livelihoods*."[34]

5.2 POVERTY AS AN ISSUE OF RELEVANCE

In lieu of evidence of actual results, some evaluations pay greater attention to assessing the *potential relevance* of the initiatives for poverty reduction. A problem that arises in this approach is that the judgements of this relevance tend to be anchored in ideologically driven narratives rather than empirical evidence. For example, if an observer accepts the narrative that agricultural commercialisation is a (universally) effective way of reducing rural poverty, then such initiatives can automatically be considered relevant. If one sees subsistence farming as the best way of ensuring food security, then commercialisation programmes are likely to be considered irrelevant. The evaluations of programmes focused on improving livelihoods do not ask whether a focus on the 'productive poor' is likely to generate benefits for those who are too poor to take advantage of the support being provided.

Part of this failure to critically and empirically reflect on prevailing development narratives stems from the limited extent to which factors in the political economy are taken into account in the evaluations. Contexts and causes of poverty are not well

[33] e.g., R17, R36, R37, R38, R58, R81

[34] Evaluation report R36

analysed, nor is attention paid to the extent to which political and economic factors determine if and how growth generates benefits for the poor. The review team cannot assess whether or not such analyses exist at the respective embassies, but it is evident that data on poverty in the respective countries, regions and target groups are not applied in the evaluations (and presumably not in the design of the interventions themselves).

Some evaluations raise questions about the relevance of institutions and organisational partners on the grounds that they may not be appropriate to represent the interests of the poor (rights holders). However, the overall *perspectives* of the poor are very rarely highlighted or described, as both programmes and the evaluations usually assume a top-down perspective, being based on implicit assumptions about poverty with no indication of whether or not these perspectives are in any way shared by poor people themselves. Example 16 is from an evaluation that raises concerns about Swedish support to interventions of four large CSOs failing in this regard:

Example 16: **Review of the Swedish Civil Society Support in Liberia**
"The evaluation team is aware of the difficulties in Liberia in providing direct civil society support to people living in poverty, and still conclude that the poverty perspective risks being undermined by too many chains of cooperating and implementing civil society actors who do not represent the rights-holders. An inclusive poverty perspective parts from the direct voices and interests of people living in poverty."[35]

These problems are indicative of an underlying deficiency in both programmes and evaluations with regard to the overall underlying theories of change. One reason for the failure to follow-up on the assumptions within theories of change is that poverty reduction is a long term process – but the evaluations primarily assess short term project timeframes or just look at a single ‘phase’ of an ongoing succession of programming and thus cannot judge these longer-term processes. Many of the partner organisations are obviously involved in longer-term and potentially effective engagements with targeted groups, but Sida and the other donors for which these evaluations are commissioned are only committed to short-term processes, and therefore the evaluations may look no further at theories of change for poverty reduction that involve many years of engagement.

Explicit attention is seldom given to measuring whether or not service provision is reaching and effectively serving the poor. Short-term service provision projects and pilots can show some direct poverty *related* results. But this says little about the sus-

[35] Evaluation report R59

tainability and replicability that would seem essential to determine the extent to which they genuinely contribute to reducing poverty through ensuring that duty bearers assume their responsibilities to rights holders.

A few reports mention the extent to which the programmes are targeted towards 'vulnerable groups', but the there is a lack of analysis of the theories of change through which the programme will impact on the factors that generate vulnerability (or foster resilience to conflicts, hazards and risk). Despite these generally negative findings, there are a few examples, illustrated by example 17, where the logic of the programme is assessed and where intended outcomes include a poverty focus, and some results are noted.

Example 17: **Evaluation of the Cambodia Community Based Adaptation Programme**
"CCBAP has certainly supported relevant activities that will increase climate resilience in many communities in the target provinces. CCBAP also contributes to the development of climate resilience in communities that are vulnerable to flood and draught."[36]

The review team judges that the weaknesses above can in one way or another be related to the tendency noted to leave poverty reduction as a very high level objective, rather than this being something concrete for which Sida and its partners should be held to account. Poverty reduction is frequently included in the end programme objective, but is often glaringly absent from indicators of outputs and outcomes, and therefore not programmed or monitored. When it is only mentioned as an ultimate and long-term impact (of increasingly short-term programming), this does not *force* the programmers, programme officers or evaluators to question underlying assumptions about the chosen strategies.

Example 18 is a unique example of a broader synthesis evaluation of a range of interventions that summarises well the concerns raised in this chapter.

Example 18: **Multi-year results-oriented evaluation of Sida's support via Swedish CSOs to CSOs in developing countries** (2012-2014)
"In this context, we found that people living in poverty have few expectations of achieving participation, transparency, accountability and non-discrimination in the formal sense, in relation to local or national authorities. Yet these principles are understood and valued using other words, as practiced in people's interpersonal relations with family, neighbours or with front-line workers and intermediaries (teachers, religious figures, NGO workers) and among those slightly better off who take part in self-help groups, co-operatives and savings groups."

[36] Evaluation report R13

"Civil society organisations do not appear to be necessarily pro-poor. And political parties do not play the idealised role of enacting democratic participation."
"Public distribution systems follow logics which are 'anti-poor' rather than pro-poor in their effects, and the private sector appears not to be improving opportunities for those experiencing poverty and discrimination either."[37]

5.3 EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL POVERTY REDUCTION INITIATIVES

Below is a summary of some of the positive results noted with regard to poverty reduction:

- Mine clearing in Afghanistan has led to improved access to land that led to improved food security (R37).
- There are examples of projects that work more directly with communities, or provide small-scale funding to communities, that note positive results such as improved livelihoods, increased access to water supply and other basic services (R2, R11, and R15).
- A facility was created that reached out to organisations that in turn reached out to communities and also managed to influence policy (R18).
- Involving smallholder farmers in value chain production led to job creation (R36).

5.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS IN RELATION TO CONTRIBUTIONS TO POVERTY REDUCTION

- Poverty reduction is often included in the end programme objective, but is glaringly absent from indicators of outputs and outcomes, and therefore not programmed or monitored.
- Limited rigorous evidence related to poverty reduction is presented in evaluation reports.
- The sample includes a few reports that analyse poverty reduction in relation to income generation programming.
- Poverty reduction conceptualised as freedom from oppression and political empowerment is mentioned in a few reports but appears to be difficult to measure.
- Evaluations and programme monitoring often focus on skills development, whilst questions are generally not asked about whether this training is targeted to the poor; sometimes even ignoring if the training is relevant for the poor.

[37] Evaluation report R81

- Attention to poverty is in many cases related to assessment of *potential relevance* of the initiatives for poverty reduction, which is often based on assumptions and ideologies rather than anchored in evidence that the selected initiatives have indeed proven relevant for addressing the causes of poverty.
- Contexts and causes of poverty are not well analysed, nor is attention paid to the extent to which political and economic factors determine if and how growth generates benefits for the poor.
- Concerns are sometimes raised about the extent to which interventions target institutions and organisational partners that represent the interests of the poor.
- The overall *perspectives* of the poor are rarely highlighted or described, as both programmes and the evaluations usually assume a top-down perspective, being based on implicit assumptions about poverty with no indication of whether or not these perspectives are shared by poor people themselves.

6 Efficiency

6.1 THE ELUSIVE NATURE OF EFFICIENCY

Sida formally accepts the OECD/DAC definition of efficiency; *"A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results"*[38]. In actual practice, however, the term 'efficiency' is interpreted in a variety of ways. The efficiency related questions in ToRs of the evaluations reviewed provide little guidance regarding what should be assessed. The review team interprets this, and the highly varied nature of analyses in the reports, as indicating that evaluators are largely left to themselves to make 'executive decisions' about what can and should be analysed. Availability of data is sometimes mentioned as a problem in assessing efficiency, but many evaluators seem to just try to do their best with unclear guidance and with what is obviously often insufficient data to present findings and conclusions. Example 10 illustrates these concerns, but of even more importance are the large majority of reports that do not even mention concerns about lack of data, but only present qualitative assessment of efficiency. The review team interprets this as indicating that lack of data upon which to judge efficiency is generally taken for granted.

Example 19: **The Research Cooperation for Sustainable Farming Systems in the Lower Mekong Basin**
"The current M&E system does not make it easy to make judgement on cost efficiency or cost effectiveness, which should be of interest to Sida. The next phase should address this concern, if judgement of cost-efficiency is of interest."[39]

Fifty-seven per cent of the evaluation reports included some type of assessment of efficiency, although to varying degree.[40] Furthermore, analyses of efficiency are not in great demand at Sida. Efficiency questions were included in only 44 per cent of the ToRs.

This review has found that 'efficiency' is assessed in relation to several analytical categories (that do not necessarily conform with the OECD/DAC definition). The

[38] Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, OECD DAC, 2010, p. 21

[39] Evaluation report R20

[40] The criterion was if the report included a section labeled "efficiency" regardless of the depth of assessment.

most common focus of efficiency analyses could be labelled as that of viable *transaction costs* in programme implementation. Evaluations look at the extent to which optimal institutional structures and administrative arrangements have been found (often combining analysis of administrative efficiency with that of effective management). A common concern here is the transaction costs and delays related to the procurement regulations of a given partner. UN agencies are often criticised in this regard, but the sample is too small to confirm this trend. Analysis is also made of the transaction costs inherent in using channels at different levels and in different modalities. Part of this involves looking at the efficiency of using a given intermediary (or of using intermediaries at all) in order to work with the intended target organisation. Some reports identify where synergies have been achieved to reduce transaction costs and some recommend where these should be explored further.

A second very common focus of analysis is that of *'overhead costs'*. There is no consensus across the sample regarding what budget items should be designated as 'overhead'. Activities of intermediary organisations may combine administrative activities with capacity development efforts, and there is no common guide regarding how to disaggregate this. Furthermore, there is no clear standard for differentiating between operational and administrative costs in the agencies that are the direct beneficiaries of Swedish support. When looking at the costs of staffing it can be hard to discern how to distinguish between administration and the costs of actual service delivery. Comparisons of overheads could be an important touchstone for efficiency analysis, but the individual interventions and evaluations do not seem to have found a basis for direct comparisons.

A third aspect is the *level of ambition of the initiative in relation to resources*. For example, some programmes are criticised for attempting to operate with a geographical spread that is over-ambitious and leads to wasted resources. Similarly, some programmes are judged to have too many components to be managed effectively given the scale of resources available.

A fourth category is the evaluations that attempt to analyse the *unit cost* of specific inputs and activities (training, services, etc.). At least three evaluations judge the efficiency of selected technical assistance. When evaluating the efficiency of unit costs, some evaluators try to find benchmarks for comparison (example 20 is an unusually clear-cut metric in this regard), whereas others tend to rely on what appears to be 'common sense' about what items 'should cost'.

Example 20: **Review of the DDG Humanitarian Mine Action Support to the National Strategy through Clearance and Enhanced Quality Project in Afghanistan**
Comparative costing was done of "mine clearance cost per square meter" between several organisations. However, it was noted, "*Meter calculations thus need to be treated with a certain amount of caution since they need to be combined with a number of other factors (notably effectiveness) to give a reasonable assessment of value for money*."[41]

A variety of other issues related to overall quality of management are also analysed under the heading of 'efficiency'. Some of these issues could be seen as being more related to effective management. The primary focus of this analysis relates to financial aspects, i.e., budget allocations, financial management, cost control, expenditure against budget, financial transparency and anti-corruption efforts. One of the issues that could be perceived of as related more to effective management is the *timeliness of budgetary disbursements*, both within the programme and from Sida. This is given substantial attention and often criticized. Issues related to the quality of planning, strategising and monitoring and evaluation are also raised as efficiency issues.

There are a few additional issues that are occasionally assessed, such as cost-sharing and ability to mobilise additional funding (though this is more than often seen to be related to sustainability).

Finally, an aspect of efficiency that is surprisingly rare in the sample (only applied once, see example 21 below) is that of cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses. Although impossible to verify, the review team concludes that this is due to insufficient baseline and monitoring data to undertake this type of assessment. The lack of time allocated to the evaluation seems to also be a factor.

Example 21: **Evaluation of the Pilot Milk of Schools Programme in Zambia**
"This calculation shows that the net benefit of the programme is US$63.00 per beneficiary, before other development benefits are added. Thus, the benefits outweigh the cost by over a ratio of 2:1. On this account, and based on the data available, the programme is worthwhile implementing."[42]

[41] Evaluation report R37
[42] Evaluation report R36

6.2 WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT DE DO NOT KNOW ABOUT EFFICIENCY

Even once the meaning of efficiency is determined, the measures to assess the different aspects described above are highly problematic. Quality is usually judged in subjective terms (i.e., based on the evaluators' judgments about 'good practice'), data is weak and benchmarking is difficult due to uncertainties about what might constitute a similar enough initiative (with commensurate data) upon which to make comparisons. For example, 'overheads' would appear to vary from 6 to 60 per cent in the initiatives evaluated; but it is impossible to judge the extent to which the comments about 'overheads' are referring to similar costs. In general it is often perplexing to determine how conclusions on efficiency have been drawn given the cursory (at best) source criticism and acknowledgement of limitations in the reports.

This review has been surprised that the issue of lack of quantitative data is not raised more often, as most efficiency assessments are made without reference to quantitative data (only 12 per cent of efficiency assessments use quantitative data). The fact that this is usually not noted as a 'problem' could be interpreted as indicating that lack of financial efficiency monitoring is taken for granted in many programmes.

As illustrated in figure 4 below, out of the 48 evaluations that included an assessment of efficiency 54 per cent of the interventions were found to be efficient (or somewhat efficient), 15 per cent were judged as not being efficient, while it was not possible to conclude efficiency levels in 31 per cent of the interventions.

Category	The Review Team's Interpretation
Not possible to assess	Although the evaluation reports included a section on efficiency, the review team was not able to identify sufficient information to conclude whether the intervention was efficient or not
Interventions are not efficient	The evaluation report clearly concludes that the intervention was not efficient
Interventions are efficient /somewhat efficient	The evaluation report concludes that the intervention is partially or fully efficient

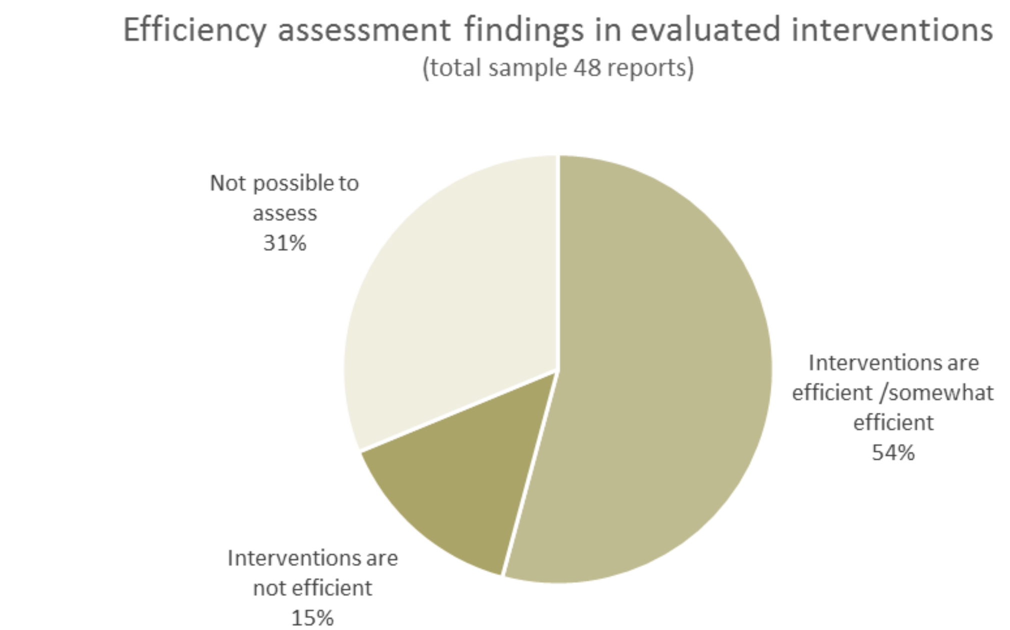

Figure 4

6.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS REGARDING EFFICIENCY

- There is little consensus about what is meant by 'efficiency' and little guidance as to what evaluations should assess – quality is usually judged in subjective terms.
- 'Efficiency' is mainly assessed in relation to four categories:
    - *Transaction costs* in programme implementation – including channels and modalities, institutional arrangements, etc.
    - *'Overhead costs'* – though there is no consensus as to what constitutes overhead, which can include staffing, administration, capacity development and sometimes even operational costs
    - *Level of ambition of the initiative in relation to resources* – related to operating in too many geographical and thematic areas or including too many components in small projects
    - *Unit cost* of specific inputs and activities (training, services, etc.)
- Benchmarking is difficult due to uncertainties about what might constitute similar enough initiatives and commensurate data upon which to make comparisons.
- Efficiency monitoring data is weak.
- Effective or quality of management is often included in the efficiency assessments, which include budget allocations, financial management, cost-control, expenditure against budget, financial transparency and anti-corruption efforts.
- Concerns regarding timeliness in relation to financial disbursements (by Sida or partners) are often raised in relation to efficiency in implementation of programme activities.

7 Recommendations

7.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVED RESULTS BASED DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

- Sida should promote a more open dialogue and revisit past evaluation and research into *organisational processes for learning from experience* in general and evaluations in particular.
- Sida should proactively *test assertions about how capacities, institutional reforms and networks are likely to change attitudes, norms and practices*.
- Sida needs to emphasise how the capacities that are being developed should be used to *ensure voice among appropriate rights holders and enhance the capacities of duty bearers* to fulfil their responsibilities.
- Greater attention is needed to *communication* between the different implementing organisations, with other outside stakeholders, and with Sida and the embassies.
- Criteria for *assessment of potential partners should be made more transparent*.
- Sida should have more *realistic expectations about what can be achieved* in terms of long-term change and poverty reduction from small and short-term projects.
- Interventions need to *adapt and respond to political changes*, which suggests that political economy analysis should be seen as an essential aspect of intervention design and risk management during implementation.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USING THEORIES OF CHANGE FOR MORE REFLECTIVE PROGRAMMING

- A theory of change approach can draw attention to weak connections within results chains and in overall programming logic in intervention design and implementation. An additional added value of such approaches is that theories of change can aid in analysing assumptions behind programming, especially as related to the broader political context. *In order to take advantage of these tools, Sida and its partners must be prepared to embrace more critical and flexible approaches to development cooperation that take their point of departure in field level realities.*
- To be effective, theories of change focused at programme design level *need to be nestled in clearer and more analytical perspectives on intended results in overall Swedish development policies* and country strategies and in the *partner countries' own priorities*.

- Sida and its partners should pay greater attention to defining how partners are to be supported and influenced in relation to Swedish strategic goals (especially poverty reduction and protecting human rights), i.e., *what changes are expected in the attitudes, practices, skills and performance of Sida partners*.
- Discussions on theories of change should be explicitly focused on *shifting attention from 'what we are currently doing' to 'what we want to achieve*' both in the short-term and in the longer-term.
- Theories of change should be used *to better identify realistic levels of ambition* in terms of geographic spread, complexity and number of intended outcomes, especially in relatively small programmes.
- A theory of change approach should be particularly focused on better defining *intended paths to sustainability*.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN ENHANCED FOCUS ON POVERTY REDUCTION

- If Sida wishes to increase its focus on poverty reduction, it is not enough to make passing reference to this as an end programme objective; *actions that are explicitly intended to contribute to poverty reduction must be monitored through relevant output and outcome indicators.*
- Assessment of *explicit and measurable poverty reduction related results* should become standard practice in Sida evaluations. This would have significant cost implications.
- Evaluations and programme monitoring focused on capacity development should *investigate the extent to which the capacities are targeted to the poor*, or if the capacities will *lead to services, institutional reforms and policy formation that are relevant in relation to the challenges perceived by poor people* themselves in the risks they face, their rights and their efforts to maintain and improve their livelihoods.
- Particular attention is needed to regularly *questioning conventional and ideologically anchored narratives about relevance of a given development model* for addressing the root causes of poverty and vulnerability.
- Considerably more attention is needed to the contexts and causes of poverty, including the extent to which *political and economic factors determine if and how economic growth generates benefits for the poor*.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GREATER CLARITY AND QUALITY IN ASSESSING EFFICIENCY

- Sida should first undertake further analysis and then *prepare and provide guidance regarding what the organisation needs to know about efficiency*. This should be directed towards both Sida staff (including those commissioning evaluations) and partners.

- Programme design and monitoring should be based on *explicit benchmarking* against similar initiatives where commensurate data can be gathered in order to make appropriate efficiency comparisons. It is often 'too late' to attempt to construct such comparisons as part of evaluations.
- Strict and standard guidelines for judging relative overhead costs may be impossible given the broad range of programming, but Sida should take steps to define and openly discuss some *comparable measures of overhead*. Prevailing differences in norms for programming led by CSOs, Swedish public agencies and private sector development partners may vary, but the huge variances that appear to be accepted in current programming are incongruous.
- An important aspect of efficiency that can be addressed in conjunction with the greater application of theories of change, noted above, is that of *ensuring more realistic levels of ambition in relation to resources*, e.g., by looking at the relative efficiencies that can be achieved by limiting geographic, sectoral and thematic scope of a given programme.

Annex 1 - Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for Synthesis Report of Sida's Decentralised Evaluations 2013

Date: 2014-07-03

Case number: 14/000918

Background

In 2013, a little over 100 evaluations were commissioned or supported by units within Sida as well as Foreign Missions. The experiences and conclusions from these so-called decentralised evaluations offer an opportunity for learning beyond the immediate contribution, project or strategy level. Sida is determined to make better use of evaluations as a tool for learning at the organisational as well as strategic level. Gaining an overview of conclusions from decentralised evaluations and a synthesisation of findings is a first step towards letting lessons learnt affect and influence Sida's priorities and methods in development cooperation.

In 2013, the report *Swedish Development Cooperation in Transition? Lessons and Reflections from 71 Sida Decentralised Evaluations (April 2011-April 2013)*[43] was published. The report reviewed 71 decentralised evaluations conducted by Indevelop (under the current Framework Agreement for Evaluation) over the course of two years and presented an analysis of lessons learnt from these evaluations.

This assignment holds a similar task, to review evaluations and synthesise findings from 90 decentralised evaluations commissioned or supported by Sida and Foreign Missions, conducted by various evaluation firms during the year 2013. The focus of the report will be on lessons learnt on a strategic as well as operational level. The primary intended users are Sida managers and staff, however it is expected that the results will also be of interest to partners in development cooperation.

[43] Sida Studies in Evaluation 2013:1, Unit for Monitoring and Evaluation in cooperation with Indevelop

Purpose and Objective

Overall purpose

The purpose of the assignment is to provide an overview of conclusions. These conclusions shall form the basis of (i) an analysis and communication of lessons learnt and (ii) recommendations based on the findings of the evaluations.

The basis is the 90 decentralised evaluations financed by Sida and the Foreign Missions during the year 2013. Of interest are lessons learnt on a strategic as well as on an operational level; lessons that can inform and improve Swedish development cooperation, its management and design. The primary intended users are Sida managers and staff, but the Report is also expected to be of interest to partners in development cooperation and the broader development community.

The consultants will be allowed to identify general trends/issues deemed to be of particular importance and decide which conclusions to highlight in their analysis.

The report should meet the below stated objectives which specify areas of particular interest. The consultants are requested to communicate lessons generated or supported by various evaluations *as well* as such lessons that may be generated by a single evaluation but holds particular relevance. Potentially controversial conclusions should not be avoided.

Specific Objectives

The objective of the assignment is to review, analyse and summarise conclusions and lessons learnt from decentralised evaluations, with a special focus on:

(i) If the objects of evaluation have contributed to poverty reduction and create the conditions for improved living conditions for people facing poverty and oppression. If so; how? If not; why not?
(ii) If the objects of evaluation have had an explicit intervention logic/theory of change and any conclusions in relation to these.
(iii) If efficiency in Sida strategies and contributions are included in the evaluations and any conclusions in relation to efficiency. In the case of lacking data on efficiency, the consultant should analyse the reasons for this.
(iv) Conclusions or lessons learnt in relation to the findings of the evaluations. For example: Identification of general trends, success factors or unexpected outcomes.

Moreover, the objective is to:

(v) Provide recommendations to Sida.

Scope and Delimitations

The material to be reviewed by the Synthesis Report are the 90 evaluations commissioned or supported by Sida and Foreign Missions during 2013, so-called decentralised evaluations, that have been made available to the Unit for Monitoring and Evaluation. To be reviewed are the conclusions and lessons learnt from these evaluations in relation to development cooperation and Sida's operations, rather than the methodology or quality of the evaluations in themselves.

As Sida finances and supports a large number of evaluations procured and commissioned by cooperation partners, there might be evaluations supported and/or financed by Sida not included in the sample.

Organisation, Management and Stakeholders

Sida's Unit for Monitoring and Evaluation will commission the Synthesis Report under the current Framework Agreement for Evaluations. Sida will provide comments on Inception Report. The consultant will be responsible for the conduction of the Synthesis Report in line with the principles of independence and impartiality. The consultants shall in their proposal also specify how quality assurance will be handled by them.

The primary intended users are Sida managers and staff, however it is expected that the results will also be of interest of partners in development cooperation.

Questions to Guide the Report

The Synthesis Report should include, but not necessarily be limited to, looking at the following aspects or questions. These should be elaborated further upon in the Inception Report, where the consultants propose to Sida any other relevant focus areas defined in the initial review and analysis of the material.

- (i) What are the synthesised conclusions and lessons learnt from Sida's decentralised evaluations (especially focusing on the below questions)?
- (ii) Do the objects of evaluation contribute to poverty reduction and create the conditions for improved living conditions for people facing poverty and oppression? What conclusions can be drawn from the evaluations reviewed?
- (iii) What conclusions can be drawn regarding the intervention logic and/or theory of change (as applicable) of Sida strategies and supported contributions? Can trends be detected?
- (iv) What can be concluded on the efficiency of Sida strategies and contributions, according to the evaluations? To what extent is efficiency included as an evaluation criterion in decentralised evaluations?
- (v) What stands out as general trends, specific or unexpected conclusions or success factors that can be of relevance on a strategic or operational level?
- (vi) What are the main lessons to be learnt from the findings of the evaluations and what are the recommendations for Sida?

Conclusions, Recommendation and Lessons Learnt

Based on the review of evaluations, the consultants are expected to define and summarise Main Lessons and present Recommendations for Sida in relation to (i) the Guiding Questions (above) and (ii) the different levels further defined below: Strategy level, contribution level and in relation to policies and methodology. The Report should include a clear Executive Summary, which should also include key recommendations. It is important that the consultant takes into consideration the fact that the evaluations are not necessarily representative of Sida's total development cooperation portfolio, in terms of for example geographical spread or forms of cooperation. This should be explicit in the Report.

Approach and Methodology

The consultants are requested to define and propose an appropriate methodology for the assignment in their proposal. However, the report should take into consideration the two dimensions previously defined as (i) lessons or conclusions generated/supported by various evaluations as well as (ii) such lessons that are generated by a single evaluation but of particular interest.

The Report should also, to the greatest extent possible, present lessons learnt and recommendations in relation to Sida terminology, organisation and operational structure. For example:

- Strategy level (donor coordination, forms for cooperation, comparative advantages etc.)
- Contribution level (contribution design, monitoring and follow-up, choice of cooperation partners etc.)
- Policy and methodology (what implications do these lessons learnt have on a strategic decision-making level?).

The Synthesis Report should contain, but not necessarily be limited to, the following parts:

(i) Introduction
(ii) Executive Summary
(iii) Methodology
(iv) Findings and analysis in relation to the above-defined objectives and questions
(v) Main Lessons Learnt
(vi) Recommendations
(vii) List of Reviewed Evaluations
(viii) Report Brief on the back cover of the Report

Time Schedule

The consultancy should be carried out over the period July – September 2014, with the Synthesis Draft Report proof-read and presented in the correct template no later than 2014-09-12.

The Final Synthesis Report should be submitted no later than 2014-09-26.

Consultants are requested to present, in their proposal, a detailed work plan including dates for delivery of Inception Report.

Reporting and Communication

The Synthesis Report should not exceed 40 printed pages excluding annexes. It should be presented in the correct template. Space-consuming diagrams and tables should be placed in an annex.

Reports are to be written in English and adhere to the OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Result Based Management as well as the OECD/DAC quality standards for evaluation.

The Inception Report should include, but not be limited to:

- A further elaboration on the guiding questions
- Approach and methodology
- Possible delimitations to be agreed upon with Sida
- A detailed work programme

The Inception Report should not exceed 10 pages, excluding annexes, and be delivered to Sida's Unit for Monitoring and Evaluation for comments, allowing sufficient time for revision before presentation of Final Draft Report.

Resources

The budget ceiling for the assignment is 320 000 SEK.

The Synthesis Report is a desktop assignment and the total time input is expected not to exceed 6 person weeks.

All costs related to the evaluation, such as assistants, interpreters, proof-reading, digitally publishing for printing must be covered by the total budget. Digital publishing for printing should be made by the consultant with Citat, in accordance with the Framework agreement.

Printing costs are not to be included in the budget.

Evaluation Team Qualification

The evaluation team should consist of at least two persons. One team member should be a Senior Expert (Category 1). At least one team member must have:

- Very good knowledge in reading Spanish (level 2[44]).
- Very good knowledge in reading French (level 2).

References

Documentation

All the evaluations to be included in the assignment will be provided electronically to the Evaluation Team upon signing of contract by Johan Lidholm at Sida's Unit for Monitoring and Evaluation.

Reference Documents

Sida. 2007 (second edition). *Looking back, moving forward. Sida Evaluation Manual.* Sida: Stockholm.

Framework Agreement for Sida Reviews, Evaluations and Advisory Services on Results Frameworks

[44] In line with Sida's language level definition.

Annex 2 – Inception Report

Assessment of Scope of the Evaluation

Our understanding of the assignment is that Sida wants an overview of conclusions from 90 decentralised evaluations commissioned by Sida and the Foreign Missions during 2013 in order to strengthen the organisational and strategic learning and method development for Swedish development cooperation. This objective to focus on learning from evaluations builds on momentum that was gained with a similar study conducted last year, *Swedish Development Cooperation in Transition? Lessons and Reflections from 71 Sida Decentralised Evaluations (April 2011-April 2013)* by Indevelop. This study will be undertaken by the same team. We understand that the review should provide an overview of the conclusions from the evaluations and from these conclusions make a synthesis of lessons learnt and provide recommendations based on the findings.

A challenge in the earlier review was that it looked at both the lessons which could be learnt from the focus of the specific evaluation about Sida's commitments to learning about key issues; and also the actual synthesis of conclusions. These are two separate but in some respect intertwined sets of issues. This Inception Note is being used to present our understanding of how this will be addressed in the different evaluation questions specified in the ToR of this study.

According to the ToR, the primary intended users are Sida managers and staff, but the report is also expected to be of interest to partners in development cooperation and the broader development community.

Relevance and evaluabilty of Evaluation Questions

We recognise that the focus of the review involves looking primarily at the actual findings regarding poverty reduction and use of a theory of change. With regard to efficiency, the review should also explicitly analyse issues arising related to the ways that efficiency has been conceptualised in the evaluation process. Regarding overall conclusions and assessment of unexpected trends we interpret the approach as being relatively open-ended but will focus on the findings of the evaluations regarding Sida programming (rather than analysis of evaluation processes per se). We aim to structure a report based on these premises but we also foresee that these categories may be difficult to maintain in practice. Please see our comments below related to each area as specified in the ToR. We have considered the discussions held at the inception meeting 12 August 2014 between Sida and Indevelop:

1. What are the synthesised conclusions and lessons learnt from Sida's decentralised evaluations (especially focusing on the below questions)?

Comment: During the inception meeting 12 August 2014, it was agreed that the country strategy evaluations would be excluded from the sample of the review. The evaluations in the sample will vary in scope and nature and therefore the coding format will have to be broad enough to draw out the main findings of the reports, independent of the character of the assignment. Based on our experience with the earlier review and our understanding of areas where lessons are demanded or needed (for policy coherence) we have emphasised certain areas already in the report reflection format in annex 1. During the inception meeting, the questions in the format were discussed and agreed upon.

2. If the objects of evaluation have contributed to poverty reduction and create the conditions for improved living conditions for people facing poverty and oppression. If so; how? If not; why not?

Comment: Given that poverty is probably not a major focus of most evaluations, we must, as part of the analysis, acknowledge the limits to which the evaluations provide a sufficient evidence base to answer these questions. This involves stating the percentage of the evaluated intervention/s that made significant efforts to assess contributions to poverty reduction and creation of conditions for improved living conditions for people facing poverty and oppression. We will also include a simple categorization of how poverty reduction was conceptualized in the programmes being evaluated. This is essential to draw attention to how broadly the "perspectives of the poor" are understood. Depending on the reports selected, the findings may also draw attention to the extent to which some programmes seemed to reject this as a criteria for assessment. It was agreed during the inception meeting that the findings regarding the perspectives of the poor will be categorised between support to Eastern Europe and reform cooperation, and other countries. Finally, we will also synthesise the actual results and the factors influencing success and failure (to the extent that these are mentioned in the evaluations).

3. If the objects of evaluation have had an explicit intervention logic/theory of change and any conclusions in relation to these.

Comment: The first part of this question is a seemingly simple yes/no question, but in practice we have found that it is more complicated. This was discussed at the inception meeting. Most programmes have a results framework of some sort, but have not used these frameworks as a tool for management or critical analysis. Some evaluations are able to use the existing results framework in any case, and others have effectively reconstructed (or updated) an intervention logic as part of the evaluation process. One of the findings from the earlier review was that some programmes were able to obtain impressive results without an *explicit* theory of change. During the inception meeting Sida clarified that their main interest is to whether the evaluated interventions have had an explicit theory of change and if so, whether this has been used by the partner organisation, as well as assessing the attainability of the intervention's objectives. In the attached Report reflection format, we have added questions related to how we will assess the theory of change. In the final report we will also explain how we have assessed what a Theory of Change is (i.e. results framework, etc).

4. If efficiency in Sida strategies and contributions are included in the evaluations and any conclusions in relation to efficiency. In the case of lacking data on efficiency, the consultant should analyse the reasons for this.

Comment: From the feedback received on our proposal we understand that we are in agreement regarding the scope of this question. The extent to which it is possible to assess the reasons for a lack of data will be related to what is mentioned in the evaluations. Given that most evaluation teams have not queried the commissioners regarding the reasons behind their decisions about the scope of efficiency analysis, the "why" question may be somewhat speculative. We will look at the ToRs (when included in the reports) to assess the extent to which efficiency has been included. We expect that the conclusions will unpack what is meant by "efficiency", but that this may point out the extent to which there are uncertainties about what this means, what can be analysed given available data, and finally the extent to which this is a priority for commissioners who have a number of questions to ask and limited resources for evaluations. Questions on efficiency are included in the data collection tool in annex 1.

Conclusions or lessons learnt in relation to the findings of the evaluations. For example: Identification of general trends, success factors or unexpected outcomes.

Comment: The report reading format is designed for more general reflections and to raise attention to unexpected trends. Our experience from the study *Swedish Development Cooperation in Transition? Lessons and Reflections from 71 Sida Decentralised Evaluations (April 2011-April 2013)* is that the identification of general trends and success factors necessitated review questions that are relatively open-ended. We recognize that this will involve somewhat of a subjective assessment of what constitutes "unexpected outcomes" and also regarding how to categorise such a broad concept as "success factors" in relation to this very wide-ranging material.

5. What are the main lessons to be learnt from the findings of the evaluations and what are the recommendations for Sida?

Comment: We understand that this question is largely the same as question one. Recommendations will be categorized according to the main issues assessed in the review and focus on areas where more efforts are needed regarding learning, guidance and (perhaps) procedures. The recommendations will not address the roles of specific departments unless the findings raise attention to issues that are clearly associated with these roles.

Proposed Approach and Methodology

A proposed method and work plan is presented below.
The review process will be divided into the following phases:

1. Development of the methodology and report reflection format (data collection tool)
   A draft report reflection format for coding our findings from the review of the reports is attached in annex 1. The format will guide the review of the reports and ensure that it will be possible to draw general findings and conclusions from the evaluations. (total 1 working day)

2. Reviewing of evaluations
   The reviewing and coding of evaluation reports will be done by the review team during the period of August-September. The reports will be divided among the different team members, who will use the developed report reflection format to record and code findings. Given the very limited time available a maximum of 90 minutes will be allocated to reviewing each evaluation report. It should be stressed that this is insufficient to gain a thorough overview of the findings and some important lessons will inevitably be missed. (total 20 working days)

3. Analysis, synthesis and report writing
   The third step, after all the reports have been reviewed and findings coded, will consist of synthesising and analysing the findings. The review team will work together during a 2 day workshop to make an overall analysis of the individual findings. Based on the initial findings from the analysis workshop, conclusions will be identified and the content of the report will be developed. Thereafter the report will be drafted. (total 12 working days)

4. Finalisation
   The report will be sent to UTV for comments, after which the report will be finalised (and proof read) for UTV's approval. The report will be published via Citat.

UTV will provide Indevelop with all the reports to include in this review by 8 August at the latest. UTV had previously offered to provide some support, which will be very useful. We propose it includes the following, based on the format from last year's report:

- A list of all of the included evaluations (name of report, geographic area, commissioning unit/embassy, authors, company)

Milestones for this assignment are as follows:

Inception note	4 August
UTV feedback on inception report	8 August
Draft report	29 September
UTV feedback on Draft report	6 October
Final report	17 October

For a detailed workplan please see Indevelop's proposal.

Annex 3 - Evaluation Reports included in the sample

Existing information regarding the evaluation sample is included below. Some information gaps exist in the evaluation reports regarding commissioning organisation and who the evaluation was undertaken by (i.e. author/s and company).

Report ID	Title	Country/ region	Commissioning organisation	Author/s	Company
R1	Consultoría de Apoyo para la Evaluación de Medio Término del Proyecto Forestal Baba Carapa	Bolivia	Embassy of Sweden La Paz	Trond Norheim	Orgut Consulting
R2	Evaluación de Medio Término del Programa de Desarrollo Agropecuario Sustentable PROAGRO - Bolivia	Bolivia	Embassy of Sweden La Paz	Jakob Kronik, Marina Dockweiler, Ian Christoplos	Indevelop AB
R3	Evaluación de medio término del proyecto: Nodo de Saneamiento Sostenible Descentralizado como plataforma de conocimiento y generación de impacto en soluciones sostenibles NSSD 2012-2015	Bolivia	Embassy of Sweden La Paz		SIPU International
R4	Evaluación Ejes Transversales de la Fundación FAUTAPO	Bolivia	Embassy of Sweden La Paz		Beta Gama Consultores
R5	Evaluación Ejes Transversales de la Fundación FAUTAPO	Bolivia	Embassy of Sweden La Paz		Beta Gama Consultores
R6	Evaluación Final Proyectos: Agua y saneamiento para zonas periurbanas de la ciudad de El Alto aplicando tecnologías alternativas con la Fundación Sumaj Huasi y Servicios sostenibles de agua y saneamiento para zonas periurbanas de bajos ingresos en Cochabamba con la Fundación Agua Tuya	Bolivia	Embassy of Sweden La Paz		Aguilar y Asciados S.R.L.
R7	Evaluation Finale de mise en oevre des actions prioritaires 2006-2010 Au profit de l'ex-ministrere de la promotion des droits humains.	Burkina Faso	Government of Burkina Faso	Julien K. Natielse, Yacouba Dadjoari, Alkassoum Maiga	A.C.I./D. sa
R8	Evaluation Finale Externe du projet d'appui aux elections legislatives et municipals du Burkina Faso 2012	Burkina Faso	UNDP/Government of Burkina Faso	Cheikh Faye, Mathias Cora Batabe	
R9	Revue a Mi-Parcours Du Programme National du Approvisionnement en eau Potable d'Assainissement (PN-AEPA) et du Plan du Action pour la Gestion Integree des Reourcess en Eau (PAGIRE)	Burkina Faso	Government of Burkina Faso		

R10	Projet de reduction de la vulnerabilite des petits barrages aux changements climatiques	Burkina Faso	Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances		
R11	Government of Burkina Faso and Donors Joint Annual Review of the water and sanitation sector programmes in Burkina Faso (PNAEPA and PAGIRE).	Burkina Faso	Government of Burkina Faso and Donors Joint Annual Review/Danida	Mamadou Diallo	COWI
R12	Evaluation of the Joint Climate Change Initiative (JCCI)	Cambodia	Embassy of Sweden Cambodia	Stefan Dahlgren, Ian Christoplos	Indevelop AB
R13	Cambodia Community Based Adaptation Programme (CCBAP) MTR	Cambodia	Embassy of Sweden Cambodia	John Carter and Vong Sok	
R14	Impact of Water Resource Users Association Activities in the Management of Water Catchments and Water Resources	Kenya	Water Resources Management Authority		Field Masters Africa
R15	Civil Society Urban Development Program (CSUDP) End-Term Evaluation	Kenya	Embassy of Sweden Kenya	Mutahi Ngunyi, Rayhab Wangari	The Consulting House and Sharp Development Solutions Consulting
R16	Public Sector Reforms Programme, Phase II, UNDP, End of Programme Evaluation	Kenya	UNDP Kenya		PriceWaterhouseCoopers Limited
R17	End-term Evaluation of "Enterprise Development for Rural Families Programme in Kenya" by Hand in Hands	Kenya	Embassy of Sweden Kenya		Cascade Consulting
R18	The Non-State Actors Facility-Pact- Kenya (ACT!) Mid-Term Evaluation Report	Kenya	Embassy of Sweden Kenya, Dfid		Africa Energy and Environment Consultants (AFREEC)
R19	Évaluation du Programme d'Appui aux Initiatives du Reso Climat Mali pour 1'Adaptation aux Changements Climatiques (PAIRCC) 2009-2012	Mali	Embassy of Sweden Mali	Jérôme Gouzou Bala W. Sanou	Indevelop AB
R20	The Research Cooperation for Sustainable Farming Systems in the Lower Mekong Basin, MEKARN (2008-2012)	Regional Asia	Sida, Regional Cooperation Bangkok	Eliseo R. Ponce, Serena Sanche	
R21	Evaluation of United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater mekong Subreagion (UNAIP), phase III	Regional Asia	UNDP/United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP)	Simon Baker, Amy Jersild	
R22	Terminal Evaluation of Multi-Donor Support for the UNDP Democratic Institution Programme in Ethiopia	Regional Africa	UNDP	Filmon Hadaro Hando, Rajeev Pillay	
R23	Mid-term Review of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding	Regional Africa	Sida, Regional Development	Mehari Taddele Maru	

	(WANEP)		Cooperation Addis Abeba		
R24	Evaluation of Sida's Land Administration Initiative in Ethiopia	Ethiopia			ORGUT Consulting AB
R25	End-of-Programme Evaluation of International Organisation for Migration - Partnership on Health and Mobility in East and Southern Africa (PHAMESA)	Regional Africa	IOM South Africa Office	Gaël Lescornec, Aguil Lual Deng	Coxswain Social Investment Plus (CSI+)
R26	SWHAP – Evaluation of the Swedish Workplace HIV and AIDS programme 2009-2012	Regional Africa		Madeleine Elmqvist, Lars Rylander	SPM Consultants
R27	Review of Swedish support to the World Customs Organization (WCO) Capacity Building, 2008-2012	Regional Africa			Indevelop AB
R28	Mid Term Review of the Trade Policy Training Centre in Africa (TRAPCA)	Regional Africa	Sida, Regional Development Cooperation Nairobi	Bernt Andersson, Talitha Bertelsmann-Scott, Adam Pain	Indevelop AB
R29	An Evaluation of Sida-Funded Project on Regional Cooperation for Organic Standards and Certification Capacity in East Africa – “OSEA phase II” (2010-2013)	Regional Africa	Sida, Regional Development Cooperation Nairobi		E.O.W Associates
R30	Mid Term Review of LVEMP II Civil Society Watch Project of the East African Sustainability Watch Network	Regional Africa	Sida, Regional Development Cooperation Nairobi		Welread Initiative Development and Management Consultants
R31	Bio-Innovate Programme Mid Term Review Report	Regional Africa			
R32	Transboundary integrated water resources management and development projects in the Mara (Kenya/Tanzania); Sio-Malaba-Malakisi (Kenya/Uganda) and Kagera (Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania) under the Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Program. End of project evaluation. May 2013	Regional Africa	Sida, Regional Development Cooperation Nairobi and the Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Program (NELSAP) coordination unit	Maurius Claassen	
R33	Independent Evaluation of the Nile Basin Trust Fund (NBTF)	Regional Africa	World Bank Africa Region	Anton Earle, Kikki Nordin, Ana Elisa Cascao, Drake Rukundo, Wondwosen Michago Seide, Gunilla Björklund	SIWI

R34	Mid-term review of the Sida supported Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) programme "Enhancing Civil Society in Human Security, Conflict Prevention and Peacekeeping" during the period 2010-2012 Final Report,(förf: Jérôme Gouzou och Justine Elakano, 14 Februari 2013)	Regional Africa	Sida, PROGSAM	Jérôme Gouzou, Justine Elakano	Indevelop AB
R35	Evaluation of Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU)	Afghanistan	Embassy of Sweden Afghanistan	Erik Bryld, Ian Christoplos, Dina Sinigallia, Palwasha Hassan, Saboor Kamraan	Indevelop AB and Tana Copenhagen
R36	TetraPak/WFP Pilot School Milk Programme in Zambia	Zambia	WFP, Embassy of Sweden, Zambia		
R37	Review of the DDG Humanitarian Mine Action Support to the National Strategy through Clearance and Enhanced Quality Project in Afghanistan	Afghanistan		Jock Baker, Mark Buswell, Massouda Kohistani, Abdul Saboor Kamraan	Indevelop AB
R38	Evaluation of Hand in Hand "Sustainable Livelihood Programme through Community Mobilization and Establishing Knowledge Resource Centre in Mazar-e-Sharif"	Afghanistan	Embassy of Sweden Afghanistan		SIPU International
R39	Evaluation of Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN)	Afghanistan	Embassy of Sweden Afghanistan	Erik Bryld, Ian Christoplos, Dina Sinigallia, Palwasha Hassan, Saboor Kamraan,	Indevelop AB and TANA Copenhagen
R40	Evaluación del "Programa Liderazgo Joven Construyendo Democracia" Julio 2010 – Diciembre 2012 – Informe final	Guatemala	Embassy of Sweden Guatemala	Annica Holmberg, Irma Otzoy	Indevelop AB
R41	Evaluación intermediaria del "Proyecto: Contribuyendo al Desarrollo Económico e Integral en Área Rural"	Guatemala		Elizabeth Cancino, Kntr. Peter Peeters, Viviana Tzay Patal, Nohelia Donis	CEDES, Asociación Centro para el Desaorrollo
R42	Informe de Evaluación de cierre PROMUDEL, Guatemala	Guatemala	Government of Guatemala	Pedro Morazán, Eberto de Leon	Südwind
R43	How to Define and Measure Value for Money in the Humanitarian Sector, September 2013	Humanitarian	Sida, HUMASIEN	Jock Baker, Ester Dross, Valsa Shah, Riccardo Polastro	Indevelop AB

R44	Evaluation of Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF) programme 2009-2012	MENA Regional		Hilde Hey	
R45	Mid-term Evaluation of the Transparency International Middle East and North Africa Regional Programme	MENA Regional	Transparency International MENA Department	Gerd Lüers	Denkmodell GmbH
R46	External Evaluation Report for “Good Water Neighbours Project” Year 1	MENA Regional			The Butterfly Effect
R47	Mid-term Review of the MENA-OECD Investment Programme 2011-2015	MENA Regional	Embassy of Sweden Egypt		SIPU International
R48	Evaluation of the project to encourage the uptake and use by developing countries of the international standard (ISO 26000) on Social Responsibility in the MENA region (2010-2014)	MENA Regional	Embassy of Sweden Egypt	Bernt Andersson, Folke Hermansson Snickars, Adam Pain,	Indevelop AB
R49	Evaluation of The Carter Center - Egypt Parliamentary and Presidential Elections Witnessing Project	MENA Regional	Sida, Konflikt MENA	Robin Ludwig	
R50	Impact evaluation of the project Rebuilding Post-Revolution Egyptian Media: Embracing Free Expression, Diversity and Inclusiveness (2011-2013)	MENA Regional	Media Diversity Institute	Ghada Hammam	Second Opinion
R51	Evaluation of the "Arab Women's Rights and Regional Media Monitoring" Project	MENA Regional		Ahmed Tawfeeq, Nessim Bayad	Appropriate Communication Techniques "ACT"
R52	Evaluation of Sida’s support to Kvinna-to-kvinna and its programme ”Palestinian women seek greater power and influence to organise for democratic statebuilding" 2011-2013	MENA Regional			
R53	Independent Outcome Evaluation UNDP Rule of Law & Access to Justice Programme in the oPt	MENA Regional	UNDP/PAPP		Buerau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, BCPR
R54	Reintegration Assistance to Returnee Communities in Counties of High Return: Aweil East & Twic (South Sudan)	Regional Africa	IOM/AFRIKA Rättvisa och Fred	Chashah Nicholas, Eric Davin	Altai Consulting
R55	Evaluación al Proyecto Fortalecimiento Democrático PNUD – Idea International - NIMD	Colombia	UNDP Colombia	Carlos Sojo, Rotsay Rosales	
R56	Evaluación Observatorio de procesos de Desarme, Desmovilización y Reintegración (ODDR) de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia	Colombia	Embassy of Sweden Colombia	Miguel Serrano, Camilo Bernal,Francoise Roth	Corporación Punto de Vista
R57	Project Evaluation of Support to Capacity Strengthening of Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC)	Zimbabwe	UNDP andthe Zimbabwe Electoral Commission	Hindowa Momoh, Neddy Matshalaga	

R58	Evaluation of Support to Gender Links - Gender Justice and Local Government Programme	Zimbabwe	Embassy of Sweden Zimbabwe	Sandra Ayoo	
R59	Review of the Swedish Civil Society Support in Liberia	Liberia	Embassy of Sweden Liberia	Annica Holmberg, Varney A. Yengbeh, Jr.,	Indevelop AB
R60	Final review of CENTEC, Center f Environmental Technology, at the Embassy of Sweden in Beijing, China	China			
R61	Experiences and lessons learned from Partner Driven Cooperation in the seven selective cooperation countries	Global		Klas Markensten Johanna Lindström	SIPU International
R62	Review of the Swedish support to the hiv/aids programmes in South Africa 2004-2013	South Africa	Embassy of Sweden South Africa	Annika Nilsson, Ingrid Obery, Tshidi Mohapeloa, Tracey Konstant	Indevelop AB
R63	Flow-River Rejuvenation in India- Impact of Tarun Bharat Sangh's work	India		Jitendra Sinha Manoj Kumar Sinha Umesh Rao Adapa	
R64	Evaluation of support to Private and Decentralised Forestry in Kosovo, 2009-2013	Kosovo	Embassy of Sweden, Kosovo	Åke Nilsson, Valbona Ylli	SIPU International
R65	Mid-term Review of the Swedish support to the Community Policing Project in Albania	Albania			ISSAT
R66	Evaluation of the phase 2 cooperation with the Albanian tax administration	Albania		Allan Gustfasson, Antonin Braho, Sabina Ymeri	SIPU International
R67	Review of Gender Equality support in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans 2001-2012	Regional Eastern Europe and Western Balkans		Dorothy Rosenberg, Sevinc Rende	SIPU International
R68	Review of the Core Support for The Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF), 2008-2013	Georgia	Embassy of Sweden Georgia	Jim Newkirk, Medea Gugeshashvili, Levan Kobakhidze, Vera Devine	Indevelop AB
R69	Review of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) project “Building Public Confidence in the Electoral Process in Georgia” (2009-2013)	Georgia	Embassy of Sweden Georgia	Krister Eduards, Medea Gugeshashvili, Vera Devine	Indevelop AB
R70	Review of the Swedish Development Cooperation within the Breakaway Region of Abkhazia, Georgia, 2011-2013	Georgia	Embassy of Sweden Georgia	Vera Devine, Susanna Dellans	Indevelop AB

R71	Evaluation of Sida's Support to Environment Infrastructure and Reforms in Central and Eastern Europe and Western Balkans 1995-2010	Regional Eastern Europe and Western Balkans	Sida	Eric Buhl-Nielsen, Vera Devine, Gazizullin Ildar	Indevelop AB
R72	Review of the Sida-funded Institutional Cooperation in the Field of Environment in Ukraine – Indevelop, December 2013	Ukraine	Embassy of Sweden Ukraine	Eric Buhl-Nielsen, Vera Devine, Gazizullin Ildar	Indevelop AB
R73	Evaluation of the Council of Europe Action plan for Ukraine 2008-2011 – Synthesis report	Ukraine	Council of Europe		
R74	Mid-term review of Support to Partnership in Statistics in BiH Phase 3	BiH	Embassy of Sweden Sarajevo	Pier Giorgio Ardeni, Anrej Kveder	SIPU International
R75	Evaluation of the Capacity Development of Municipal Associations	BiH		Andrea Spear	Indevelop AB
R76	Review of the Regional Cooperation Council's (RCC) Project "Women Entrepreneurship"	Regional Eastern Europe and Western Balkans	Sida, Eurolatin	Klas Markensten, Ana Popovicki Capin, Ian Cristoplos	Indevelop AB
R77	Evaluation of the Governance Accountability Project, phase II (GAP2), Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)	BiH	Embassy of Sweden Sarajevo		proMENTE Social Research
R78	Mid-term Review of the UNDP "Municipal Training System" project in BiH	BiH	UNDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina	Lilit V.Melikyan	Melikyan and Associates
R79	Peacebuilding and Inclusive Local Development (PBILD), Final Evaluation	Serbia	PBILD		Tara International Consulting
R80	Review of Swedish support to the Serbian administration to prepare a national project pipeline for environmental investments, "Environmental Infrastructure Support Project" , ORGUT	Serbia	Eurolatin	Svend Erik Sørensen, Marina Ilic	Orgut Consulting AB
R81	Multi-year results-oriented evaluation of Sida's support via Swedish CSO to CSOs in developing countries, 2012-14	Global	Sida, Intem	Jethro Pettit, Rosemary McGee	SIPU International (lead), Institute of Development Studies, IOD Park
R82	Review of Civil Society Support Modalities at Sida HQ and Swedish Embassies	Global	Sida, Intem	Annika Nilsson, Annica Holmberg, Pontus Modéer, Mari Brekke Mogen	Indevelop AB
R83	Evaluation of Sida & NIR Core Support Programme (2009-2012)	Global		Erik Bryld, Pontus Modeer, Nadia Masri-Pedersen, Peter Frøslev Christensen	Indevelop AB and TANA Copenhagen

R84	Evaluation of the Swedish Civil Society Organization (CSOs) Co-operation Program in Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Embassy of Sweden Ethiopia		WABEKBON Development Consultants PLC

Annex 4 – Data Collection Tool

The following matrix was used to capture data from each evaluation report:

General information	1. Country
	2. Sida country category
	3. Type of Implementing partner
	4. Evaluation report included ToR? Y/N
	5. Type of evaluation (MTR, final, other)
Efficiency	6. Efficiency included in ToR? Y/N
	7. Did the evaluation include assessment of efficiency (Y/N)?
	8. If yes to 7, was efficiency assessed against (1) overall data, (2) general "good practice", (3) specific examples of activities/outputs, (4) cost-benefit analysis, or (5) value for money of channels/intermediaries (6) other
	9. Comment to 7-8
	10. If yes to 7, what were some notable findings regarding efficiency?
	11. If yes to 7, what issues were raised (if any) regarding data availability?
	12. Direct quotes (efficiency results)
Poverty assessment	13. Did the evaluation address poverty reduction (Y/N)?
	14. If yes to 13, how was poverty conceptualised in the evaluation; (1) income, (2) access to opportunities (services, etc.), (3) freedom from oppression, (4) other?
	15. If yes to 13, what were the factors related to success/failure in contributing to poverty reduction?
	16. Direct quotes relating to poverty reduction
Theory of Change /Intervention logic	17. Did the object of evaluation have an explicit ToC/intervention logic (Y/N/P=partial/O= not possible to assess)?
	18. Did the organisation use the ToC for managing and reporting (Y/N/P=partial/O= not possible to assess)?
	19. Did the evaluation include assessment against this intervention logic or ToC (Y/N/P=partial/O= not possible to assess)?
	20. What were the evaluation findings regarding the credibility (logical and realistic) of the ToC/intervention logic?
	21. What were the evaluation findings regarding the attainability of the objectives (intended outcomes) formulated as part of the ToC/intervention logic (given e.g., available resources, time frame and design)
	22. Direct quotes relating to ToC
Conclusions, lessons learned	23. What were notable findings regarding different forms of results (in conclusions section)?
	24. What were the main conclusions related to modalities, channels and implementing partners?
	25. Does the evaluation assess Sida performance/stewardship? If so, what are the main conclusions
	26. What are the main findings regarding the evaluation recommendations? To be categorised
	27. Emerging findings/trends/overall comments regarding lessons learned
	28. Direct quotes relating to conclusions/ recommendations/ lessons learned

Lessons and Reflections from 84 Sida Decentralised Evaluations 2013 – a Synthesis Review

The objective of the review is to analyse general conclusions from 84 evaluation reports, focusing on findings related to application of theories of change, poverty reduction and efficiency analysis. The report reflects findings that have been recognised many times in the past. As such, a meta conclusion is that we have yet to overcome institutional hurdles and develop sufficient mechanisms to learn from experience in general and evaluations in particular. A majority of interventions appear to lack an overall logic in their design and implementation. This often stems from a focus on activities. When poverty is discussed, very little rigorous evidence is presented and poverty is mostly assessed in relation to the relevance. There is little consensus about what is meant by 'efficiency'. Three factors that evaluations point out as having contributed to the success are identified in the review; 1) a coherent and unified Swedish approach to development goals, 2) selection of strategic partners, and 3) strong and committed leadership of cooperation partners including Sida.

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