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Evaluation of the Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations 2010–2014

Final Country Report - Pakistan

Sida

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFC	adolescent-friendly centre
CBO	community-based organisation
CCDRM	Child-Centered Disaster Risk Management
CSO	civil society organisation
DRR	disaster risk reduction
EQ	evaluation question
FPAP	Family Planning Association of Pakistan, recently renamed Rahnuma
HRBA	human rights based approach
LEF	Labour Education Foundation
LPO	local partner organisation
LQM	Labour Qaumi Movement or National Labour Movement
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OPIC	Olof Palme International Centre
RC1	Reality Check Round 1
RC2	Reality Check Round 2
RDPI	Rural Development Policy Institute
RHIA	Reproductive Health Initiative for Adolescents
SCP	Save the Children Pakistan
SCS	Save the Children Sweden
SFO	Swedish framework organisations
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SMC	Swedish Mission Council

Executive Summary

This report describes the research undertaken for the evaluation of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)'s support to civil society in Pakistan. The focus of this phase of the research has been on the community-based organisations (CBOs), Pakistani national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Swedish framework organisations (SFOs) which work in the areas covered by our original set of Reality Checks undertaken in 2013 (RC1).[1] The report explores the contradictory context for civil society in Pakistan, with its combination of large numbers of civil society organisations (CSOs), a vibrant media sector and increasingly independent judiciary, yet at the same time high levels of political and inter-communal tension remain in many areas.

Swedish aid to Pakistani civil society is now at a very modest level, and this, combined with security constraints, posed some challenges for our choice of agencies and projects to study. Nevertheless, we were able to research projects undertaken by two SFOs (Olof Palme International Centre, and Plan Sweden) in some depth, and we also undertook a brief study of DevCon, a local partner of Save the Children Pakistan (funded by Sida through SC Sweden.) This research, however, should in no sense be regarded as a traditional evaluation of these projects; throughout the research we have studied the selected sites and projects as examples of the kind of work supported by Sida's civil society funding, to enable us to reach conclusions about the relevance, feasibility and appropriateness of this type of funding.

As described in section 3 of this report, the methodology followed in this second phase of Reality Checks (RC2) in 2014 has involved relatively brief repeat visits to the households and communities covered in RC1, in order to follow up issues raised during those initial visits, and to find out the extent to which their situations had changed in the intervening year. The researchers then focused on better understanding the history, strategies and theories of change of these NGOs and the CBOs with whom they work.

The key findings from all the areas covered are described in section 4. In Ghotki District, Sindh Province, we found an improved picture in the village over the past year, as there were no devastating floods in 2013 and more people are now able to earn an

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[1] See *Synthesis Report* section 1.5 for definitions of CSOs, NGOs and SFOs.

income from agriculture. The Sida-funded work in relation to disaster risk reduction (DRR) implemented by a national NGO, the Rural Development Policy Institute (RDPI), has had some strongly positive results, including an increase in engagement between local people and the district administration on a range of issues, which has led to increased investment in flood protection.

In Chakwal District, Punjab Province, our Reality Checks were conducted in the same community as a project on adolescent sexual and reproductive health funded by Sida through Plan Sweden, and implemented by a national NGO called Rahnuma (formerly known as the Family Planning Association of Pakistan). The major activity supported was the provision of adolescent-friendly centres with separate facilities for girls and boys.

The third area covered is the city of Faisalabad where our research has focused on the power loom workers, whose trade union, the Labour Qaumi Movement (LQM), was assisted by the Labour Education Foundation (LEF) funded by the Olof Palme International Centre (OPIC) from 2007 to 2011. The second phase of our research in Faisalabad looked in more detail both at this trade union and LEF, as well as LEF's previous relationship with OPIC. The LQM has had some success in enforcing government minimum wages and getting social security benefits for the power loom workers, but it is still not recognised as a trade union by the Government of Punjab or the power loom employers.

Finally we also undertook a very brief case study of DevCon, an NGO based in Hyderabad which acts as the secretariat for a large network of CSOs campaigning for improved child rights in Sindh Province.

Section 5 of this report analyses these findings in relation to the human rights based approach (HRBA) and the *Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations 2010–2014*. In relation to the evaluation question about what rights mean for poor people, we found that in all three sites in Pakistan, the human right to which people referred most often was the right to sustain and if possible improve their livelihood. In Ghotki, people feel that since the 2010 floods and the work funded by Plan and Sida they now have greater awareness both about their rights and the need for disaster preparedness. In Faisalabad, the power loom workers are far more aware than before of their legal rights. In both Ghotki and Faislabad, though people's awareness of rights has increased, their ability to claim these rights has so far changed very little. The report explores what the HRBA principles of non-discrimination, participation, transparency and accountability mean in practice. In spite of the efforts of local partners, and the high priority they give to increasing people's participation, poorer people in Chakwal still feel excluded by the local CBO, and due to their work commitments they are less able to participate in NGO-funded activities. In relation to accountability, the lack of any local democracy at the district level and below in Pakistan makes it very difficult to hold local officials to account. In spite of this, in Ghotki greater awareness of rights does appear to be leading to increased community action,

which is led by a network of CBOs supported by Plan's local partner, RDPI. The major challenge for LEF and the power loom workers trade union it supports, LQM, is that there is no legal recognition for the rights of the power loom workers, and the employers have been able to bribe government officials and the local judiciary to ensure that the power loom workers remain unable to claim their rights as workers under the law.

With regard to the contributions of these agencies to achieving positive change for poor people, the report documents many positive changes in Ghotki as a result of the work undertaken by the CBOs supported by Plan and RDPI, but also finds considerable challenges in relation to LEF in Faisalabad. Even in the case of Ghotki, the report questions whether all these positive changes can be sustained once funding is discontinued.

As regards capacity building, the report concludes that successful partnerships maintained over a period of time, like those between Plan and RDPI and Rahnuma, do have a positive influence on the capacity of the national partners, but that in some sectors, like that of the power loom workers, lack of capacity of the local trade union was not the major constraint, as there are far more fundamental problems in the broader power loom sector.

In conclusion, we find that overall the Swedish civil society strategy is highly *relevant* to Pakistan. If anything, its relevance is increased by the very severe pressures facing civil society there – including increasing religious fundamentalism, increasing intolerance and violence, high levels of corruption, and declining health and education services for the poorest sections of the population. But within this unpromising context we have found an often remarkable awareness among people about their rights, and even though people's ability to claim these rights has so far changed very little they have a growing willingness to come together to assert these rights.

In relation to the *alignment* between the Swedish civil society strategy and the approaches of SFOs and their partners, we have found a good fit at the strategic level, but a weaker fit at the operational level. All three SFOs in this research (Plan, OPIC and SC) have strong rights-based strategies, which are clearly mirrored in the strategies of their local partners. The challenge is to maintain this level of alignment throughout the implementation process, even when the focus shifts to time pressures and results. The research indicated that SFOs may be failing to make sufficient use of the flexibility offered by Sida. While Sida has offered funding for its framework organisations over a period of 3-4 years, a constant theme of many stakeholders we talked to throughout this research – communities, NGO staff and government officials – was that the Sida-funded projects we were reviewing had too short a lifespan; their perception was that positive change could be initiated, but not really consolidated.

With regard to *feasibility,* it is probably inherently unrealistic to expect major changes in attitudes, behaviours and social relations as a result of relatively small amounts of

foreign funding of the type that SFOs are able to provide in Pakistan. At the end of the research, we invited a wide range of participants including donors, civil society activists, and representatives of different NGOs to a workshop in Islamabad. They came up with interesting proposals about how a donor like Sida could give more direct support to civil society in Pakistan. Very few of these ideas are feasible, however, under the present system of civil society funding, by which Sida makes long-term commitments to the small number of SFOs still working in Pakistan; unlike other donors, Sida does not have a bilateral aid programme or a long-term country strategy. We conclude that while Sida has a long-term civil society strategy and the SFOs and their local partners have a clear holistic vision of what they want to achieve, the aid system itself tends to result in the fragmentation of this vision into more specialised and time-limited projects.

A further aspect of feasibility is simply the low level of Sida's assistance to civil society in Pakistan. Though Sida has in the past provided considerable humanitarian assistance to Pakistan, its total support for civil society in the country is currently very small at only US$3.3 million in 2013. This raises a question about whether Sida's civil society funding should be directed to countries where it already has a significant aid programme, or whether – as at present – the geographical allocation of the funds should be left to the SFO concerned. In the case of Pakistan we would recommend that Sida decide to discontinue funding for SFOs working there on the grounds that it no longer has a bilateral programme, and that its overall programme there has become too small to be viable.

The conclusion on feasibility in the case of Pakistan is that SFOs need to reflect carefully on exactly what kind of change is really feasible over what kind of timescale in Pakistan, and that they should consider making greater use of the greater flexibility recently offered by Sida which enables civil society funding to be made available for longer periods. In addition one of the key findings from this research is that unless CSOs in Pakistan are supported to expand their sphere of influence and to scale up their activities and impact, visible or sustainable change is unlikely.

1 Introduction and Background

1.1 OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE OF THIS EVALUATION

This report presents the main findings and recommendations of a two-year evaluation of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)'s support to civil society actors via Swedish framework organisations (SFOs)[2] in Pakistan, as one of three country studies. It synthesises findings from the evaluation's inception phase and two rounds of fieldwork carried out between September 2012 and November 2014.[3]

The purpose of the evaluation was "to find out if, how and why/why not the support to civil society actors in developing countries via Swedish civil society organisations (CSOs) has contributed to the overall objectives of the support by creating conditions to enable poor and discriminated people to improve their living conditions and quality of life. The focus of the evaluation should be on learning aspects."[4]

The evaluation focused on whether and how the Swedish civil society strategy,[5] as put into practice by SFOs and their local partner organisations (LPOs), is *relevant, aligned* and *feasible*. The evaluation questions are detailed in section 1.4. Rather than evaluate the entire strategy, the study examined:

- The realities of people living in poverty and marginalisation, and their perceptions of what is changing in the enabling conditions needed to improve their lives.

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[2] Swedish framework organisations (SFOs) are Swedish CSOs that have a framework agreement with Sida, and framework status under the Swedish civil society strategy.

[3] The evaluation was carried out by a consortium of Swedish Institute for Public Administration (SIPU International, the lead organisation), Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK and International Organisation Development (IOD PARC), UK.

[4] *Terms of Reference*, GLOBAL/Unit for Civil Society, case number 2011-001257, 10 January 2012.

[5] Government Offices of Sweden (2009a) *Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations* 2010–2014, Stockholm: Sida (UF2009/28632/UP, 10 September 2009). We refer to this strategy as the 'Swedish CS strategy'.

- The human rights based approach (HRBA), and what its four principles – participation, transparency, accountability and non-discrimination – mean to people living in poverty.
- The theories of change and strategies of SFOs and LPOs, and how these organisations understand and pursue the four principles of the HRBA.
- The plausible contributions of SFOs and LPOs to creating changes in enabling conditions, and of CSO capacity development efforts.
- The relevance, alignment and feasibility of the theories of change, strategies and interventions of the SFOs and LPOs.

The evaluation used a learning process approach, in which key questions, methods and understandings evolve throughout the evaluation. Learning events and dialogue involving Sida, SFOs and LPOs took place in Nicaragua, Pakistan, Sweden and Uganda during each phase of the evaluation.

The evaluation used the Reality Check Approach (RCA)[6] to understand the realities and perspectives of people living in poverty and marginalisation. RCA was combined with 'meso-level' and organisational inquiry into the efforts of diverse actors – notably the local partners of SFOs – to strengthen civil society and create enabling conditions for change.

The study explored the *theories of change, cooperation strategies, intervention logics and practices of SFOs and LPOs* in relation to *the realities and perspectives of people living in poverty*. Using a mix of methods, the evaluation assessed the Swedish CS strategy as implemented by SFOs and LPOs, considering coherence across the various levels of cooperation – including people living in poverty, SFOs and their local, national and international partners, and the Swedish CS strategy itself. This was not an evaluation of the performance or effectiveness of specific CSOs.

Comparing perspectives 'from below' with the strategies and approaches of these organisations, the evaluation assessed the *relevance, alignment* and *feasibility* of the Swedish CS strategy. It inferred the *plausible contributions* of Swedish support to creating enabling conditions for people to improve their lives. It identified opportunities for achieving greater capacity and alignment so that the prospects of achieving results within the strategy are increased. Understanding how change and *human rights based development* are perceived and supported by different actors, and how they

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[6] The Reality Check Approach (RCA) involves researchers living with families in communities for visits that last several days and are repeated periodically, in order to gain an understanding of the lives and perspectives of people living in poverty and marginalisation. Further details are provided in Section 2 and Annex 5, and http://reality-check-approach.com/

align with the realities, perspectives and strategies of people living in poverty and marginalisation, is the central focus of this evaluation.

1.2 SWEDISH CIVIL SOCIETY POLICY AND STRATEGY

According to the *Policy for Support to Civil Society in Developing Countries within Swedish Development Cooperation*, Swedish development cooperation aims to support "a vibrant and pluralistic civil society in developing countries that contributes effectively, using a rights-based approach, to reducing poverty in all its dimensions" and to create conditions that will "enable people living in poverty to improve their lives."[7]

The Swedish CS policy is made operational by the Swedish CS strategy[8], which shares its aims, but also has two additional objectives:

> *Enhanced capacity of civil society actors in developing countries to apply a rights-based approach in their roles as collective voices and organisers of services.*

> *Enhanced democratisation and increased respect for the human rights of poor and discriminated people.[9]*

Swedish cooperation's HRBA is guided by four main principles: participation, accountability, transparency and non-discrimination:

> *The human rights based approach puts people who are poor first and helps development cooperation to better take into account the views of men, women, children and young people living in poverty. These approaches provide a clearer picture and better knowledge of local power structures in the provinces and sectors where Sida works. The human rights based approach is primarily a method of working, a 'how'.*

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[7] Government Offices of Sweden (2009b) *Pluralism: Policy for Support to Civil Society in Developing Countries within Swedish Development Cooperation,* Stockholm: Sida, http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/13/13/60/8c589318.pdf (Accessed 9 March 2015), p.7. This is referred to henceforth as 'the Swedish CS policy'. It was replaced in March 2014 by the *Aid Policy Framework – The Direction of Swedish Aid* (Government Offices of Sweden, Government Communication 2013/14:131).

[8] Government Offices of Sweden (2009a) Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations 2010–2014, Stockholm: Sida (UF2009/28632/UP, 10 September 2009). We refer to this strategy as the 'Swedish CS strategy'. The strategy has been extended to 2015

[9] Government Offices of Sweden (2009a) *Op. cit.,* p.4

The human rights based approach encompasses the central elements of democracy, good governance and human rights, equality between women and men, and rights of the child. In combination with the human rights based approach, development cooperation shall be pervaded by the perspectives of the poor.

Sida has chosen to work with these principles as a starting point for both the human rights based approach and the perspectives of the poor. The principles constitute a basis for analysis and assessment and a common basis for dialogue, cooperation and follow-up. The human rights based approach shall strengthen individual empowerment, that is, the human right of individuals to influence their own situation and development.[10]

In Swedish cooperation, poverty is understood to be "a condition where people are deprived of the freedom to decide over their own lives and shape their future. Lack of power and choice and lack of material resources form the essence of poverty. Given that poverty is dynamic, multidimensional and context specific a holistic analytical approach is advocated."[11]

These principles and definitions shape expectations about what should be changing if poverty is to be reduced and human rights are to be realised, and imply *theories of change and action* for organisations seeking to fulfil the aims of Swedish development cooperation. Understanding how these theories are perceived and supported by different actors, and to what degree they align with the realities, perspectives and change strategies of people living in poverty, is the central focus of this evaluation.

Sweden is concerned with democratic, social, economic, environmental and civic change in favour of people living in poverty and marginalisation. For such changes to happen, it supports civil society actors to enhance meaningful forms of participation, transparency and accountability in relation to government, to contribute to creating the conditions for economic growth, to work towards gender equality, and to overcome other aspects of discrimination and marginality. Sweden promotes social cohesion through supporting effective interfaces between different social, cultural, religious, political and ethnic groups.

Sweden gives particular attention to groups that are discriminated against on grounds of ethnic origin, religion or other belief, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, or

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[10]Sida (2012) *Results for Justice and Development: Report on Sida's Results on Democracy, Human Rights and the Human Rights Based Approach,* Stockholm: Sida, p.60

[11] Sida (2002) *Perspectives on Poverty,* Stockholm: Sida, p.2

transgender identity or expression. As such, Sida promotes capacity development for CSOs with similar priorities, emphasising a set of domains in which changes, including shifts in power relations and rights, are to be supported and anticipated.

The Swedish CS strategy emphasises some aspects which this evaluation does not directly address, in particular the principles of aid effectiveness, which include donor harmonisation, predictability, long-term support, alignment with partner systems and procedures, and increasing the share of the local partner in core and programme support. The evaluation does however address the strategy's aim of seeing CSOs acting as the effective and representative voice of poor and marginalised groups, and enablers of good quality and fairness in provision of services such as health and education. This aim informs decisions about how support through the programmes of SFOs is directed and aligned, and underpins the *results orientation* of this evaluation.

1.3 FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

With reference to the Terms of Reference (ToRs), the Inception Report and the Swedish CS strategy, this evaluation aimed:

- To identify the priorities and perceptions of people living in poverty and marginalisation concerning the enabling conditions they need to improve their lives, and perceived changes in these conditions.
- To explore what the HRBA and its guiding principles mean to people living in poverty and marginalisation, and to civil society actors implementing the Swedish CS strategy.
- To infer the plausible contribution and the alignment, relevance and feasibility of SFOs and LPOs to creating the enabling conditions for people to improve their lives.[12]

The evaluation framework combined power analysis with a multidimensional perspective on poverty and vulnerability. The four principles of an HRBA were used as the primary lens for understanding the *theories of change and action* used by SFOs and LPOs to implement the Swedish CS strategy. To understand if the strategy is *relevant, aligned* and *feasible*, we posed the following broad questions:

- **Relevance** – *are the programmes, approaches and theories of change of the SFOs and LPOs relevant to people's priorities and perceptions of the changes that would enable them to improve their lives?*

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[12] Adapted from *Inception Report*, May 2013, p.10

- *Alignment* – are the programmes, approaches and theories of change of the SFOs and LPOs aligned with the strategies of multiple actors at different levels, including actions being taken by local people themselves, to create enabling conditions to improve their lives?
- *Feasibility* – are the programmes, approaches and theories of change of the SFOs and LPOs feasible in terms of their plausible contributions (and in relation to what other actors are contributing) to creating enabling conditions for people to improve their lives?[13]

1.4 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

As this was a learning process evaluation, the questions evolved during the inception phase as methods and a sampling approach were developed and piloted.

The ToRs called for a qualitative, participatory, mixed methodology. Rather than attributing specific impacts to specific actors, the team's methods and sampling approach were designed to examine *relevance, alignment* and *feasibility,* and to establish the *plausible contributions* of Sida support to civil society. This focus required a purposive and non-probabilistic sampling method, and a reframing of the research questions as follows:

1. What are poor people's perceptions of the changes taking place, or not, in the enabling conditions needed to improve their living conditions?
2. What actors, including the Swedish CSOs and their partners, can plausibly be inferred to be contributing positive changes in the enabling conditions?
3. What does a human rights-based perspective mean to people living in poverty and marginalisation?
4. What is the relevance, alignment and feasibility of the theory of change, strategies and interventions of the Swedish CSOs and their partners?
5. What plausible contribution can be inferred to the role of CSO capacity development and enhancement in the context, and in relation to the key issue?
6. What are the theories of change and strategies of Swedish CSOs and their partners, and what do the four human rights principles of participation, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability mean in their practice, in the context of the key issue?

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[13] *Synthesis Report, Round 1*, January 2014, p.20

2 Country and Organisational Context

Pakistan was always seen as presenting both considerable challenges and significant opportunities for the use of the RCA. Firstly, in terms of security, although large parts of Punjab and Sindh provinces are currently fairly stable, other areas – especially in the north-west and Baluchistan province – are more volatile and vulnerable to attacks from the Taliban or other groups. In many parts of the country, but especially in Karachi and Gilgit Baltistan, there is also increasing internal conflict between Sunni and Shia groups, and there have been an increasing number of attacks on the Christian minority; a Swedish missionary working for a local Sida-funded Christian non-governmental organisation (NGO), the Full Gospel Assembly, was killed in Lahore in December 2012, a few days before we started the pilot Reality Check (RC1) which this NGO was facilitating.

In recent years Pakistan has made some steps towards devolving more powers to its provinces and local authorities. There was a Local Government Ordinance in 2001, which aimed to transfer more powers to the district, sub-districts, and Union Council levels within the provinces. This brought improvements in the system, but the Ordinance was reversed in 2008 and the previous system of Commissioners was restored. Since 2008 there has been some devolution from the federal level to the provinces, but no matching devolution from the provincial to the district level. Though this devolution of powers to the provincial level was much needed, it has not yet delivered any improved services as the provincial governments do not have sufficient human or financial capacity. These changes have also tended to create uncertainty among different government departments about their roles and have tended to reduce their overall effectiveness.

Though Pakistan has managed a surprisingly high rate of economic growth over the last 10 years, this has benefited the richer sections and the urban middle class far more than the rural poor: incomes in urban areas are estimated to be 42% above those of rural areas.[14] Health services are especially poor in the remoter rural areas, with minimal government investment and very high rates of child mortality and neonatal

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[14] Tirmizi, F. (2012) 'Income disparity: The very uneven rise in Pakistani incomes', *The Express Tribune*, 30 July (http://tribune.com.pk/story/414810/income-disparity-the-very-uneven-rise-in-pakistani-incomes/).

mortality.[15] Public education in rural areas is in a perilous state after decades of neglect by successive governments; as a result, less than half of children complete even primary education. There are also enormous variations in the quality of education among different provinces: as Bloom notes, while 65% of Punjabi men completed primary school in the early 2000s, only about 10% of women from rural Baluchistan and other more remote provinces did so.[16]

2.1 CIVIL SOCIETY IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan has been under military rule for 34 out of the 67 years since the country achieved independence. Even when elected governments are in power, the influence of the army has always been strong, and these governments have rarely promoted democracy in its real sense; they have never enabled the representation of the marginalised, especially those who are living below the poverty line.[17] Since political parties generally have very little room even for the middle class, let alone the marginalised, deprivation prevails for the majority of the population. In this context, when people feel denied any meaningful participation in the political process or in civil society, there is a dangerous tendency for many to channel their energies into fundamentalist movements, a minority of which – like the Taliban – have a violent agenda.

Pakistan has an articulate middle class and a well-developed public discourse around women's rights and human rights violations against religious minorities. If the number of registered CSOs were an indicator of a thriving civil society, Pakistan would be doing well, with over 45,000 registered CSOs. The great majority of these organisations, however, offer religious education, and are located in the more developed provinces of Punjab and Sindh. Other NGOs face a range of threats, especially in the more insecure provinces such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Baluchistan, where they need to obtain government permission to undertake activities in specific districts. In these areas, NGOs seen to be promoting education for women or vaccination cam-

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[15] Wasif, S. (2013) 'Unhealthy revelations: Pakistan plagued by dismal healthcare system', *The Express Tribune*, 18 May (http://tribune.com.pk/story/550876/unhealthy-revelations-pakistan-plagued-by-dismal-healthcare-system/).

[16] Bloom, A. et al. (2014) 'Education system reform in Pakistan: Why, when, and how?' IZA Policy Paper 76.

[17] (1) As many as 58.7 million people in Pakistan are living in multidimensional poverty with 46% of rural population and 18% of urban households falling below the poverty line. Source: Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) (2014) *Clustered Deprivation* (report prepared with the financial and technical assistance of the United Nations Development Programme). (2) According to a recent ADB report, 21% of people in Pakistan live in extreme poverty, defined as less than US$1.25 per day. Source: Tahir, A. (2014) 'Pakistan population boom: extreme poverty rate at 21 percent poses enormous challenge: ADB', *Business Recorder*, 21 August (http://www.brecorder.com/money-a-banking/198:pakistan/1215287:pakistan-population-boom-extreme-poverty-rate-at-21-percent-poses-enormous-challenge-adb/).

paigns face a continuing threat of terrorist attack, and NGOs receiving foreign funding are vulnerable to accusations that they are promoting western donors' agendas in Pakistan. Linked to this is a tightening of the rules governing the registration of NGOs and a new Foreign Contributions Regulations Act is currently being enacted, which will require all NGOs to declare all their sources of foreign income.[18] These measures are seen as likely to result in increased government control of NGOs.

In relation to the media, Pakistan presents a contradictory picture. In recent years there has been rapid growth in the media in Pakistan, in particular in respect of independent television channels. This can be seen as an indicator of improving public space for debate on national issues. A few of these independent channels, such as Geo-TV, are not afraid to cover controversial stories and express views highly critical of the government. On the other hand, Pakistan remains a very dangerous country for journalists. Since 2008, according to Amnesty International, 38 journalists have been killed in Pakistan, 8 of them since June 2014.[19] It is alleged that Pakistan's military intelligence agency, the ISI, is implicated in some of these attacks.

Finally, an important feature of the last 10 years in Pakistan has been the growth of a robust and independent judiciary, which has played an important role in challenging the government on numerous issues, including many human rights issues.

2.2 ROLE OF CSOs

CSOs in Pakistan have a vital role to play in the building of civil society and in giving a voice to the marginalised. CSOs are the only sources of support available to these sections of society, but their impact is often confined to the local level and they are usually far less effective in achieving social change at the regional or national level. One of the key findings from this research is that unless CSOs are supported to expand their sphere of influence and to scale up their activities and impact, visible or sustainable change is unlikely. Nevertheless, there have been CSO-initiated processes which, after a substantial struggle, have achieved their desired impact. One successful example is the struggle for women's empowerment and representation in the elected bodies; through affirmative action, women's political representation was visibly enhanced in 2002 by the previous military government. Other examples of limited success, both from Sindh Province, are documented in section 4.

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[18] For details see http://www.dawn.com/news/790181/oppositions-bill-seeks-oversight-of-ngos-funding

[19] For further details see: Amnesty International (2014) *Pakistan: "A bullet has been chosen for you": Attacks on Journalists in Pakistan,* London, Amnesty International (https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA33/005/2014/en)

NGOs in Pakistan (defined as in the Executive Summary as a specific sub-set of CSOs) can be broadly classified into three categories based on their focus and activities: (a) welfare and charity; (b) community development; and (c) sustainable development and advocacy. The first category includes NGOs that are mostly alleviative, those in the third category are mostly transformative, while those in the second category are a combination of both.[20] The human rights and rights-based organisations and advocacy groups are mostly in the third category of NGOs.

The first category of NGOs, which also tend to be the first generation of NGOs, enjoy good support in the community and also receive large donations, but as a conscious policy they do not have much interaction with the state and remain distant from it. They are involved in service delivery and not in any policy advocacy work, and thus they are not involved in transformative socio-political change. However, the leadership of these organisations may, in their capacity as private individuals, be engaged in political or other issues, and the government may invite them to attend different forums to provide advice or to enhance the credibility of the forum. There is a conscious effort by the leadership of these organisations to keep their organisations separate from their public or political roles.

The second generation and second category of NGOs are community-development-oriented. These NGOs emerged in the 1980s to fill a vacuum left by the government's inability to provide basic services, which in turn was a result of the failure of the over-centralised planning and top-down approach. While like the first group of NGOs they may also be involved in service delivery, these NGOs differ because they are also providing a range of development services to communities that were traditionally the domain of the government.

The third category and youngest generation of NGOs includes those focused on sustainable development and advocacy. These NGOs are actively and overtly engaged in equitable development, community empowerment and transformation, as well as leading advocacy campaigns and lobbying for social and economic change.[21] Comparatively fewer NGOs are found in the third category, as there is considerably more risk involved in taking adversarial stands against the government and local power elites and vested interests.

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[20] Khan, A., Khan, R. (2004) *Drivers of Change Pakistan: Civil Society and Social Change in Pakistan*, The Collective for Social Science Research (http://www.researchcollective.org/Documents/Civil_Society_And_Social_Change_In_Pakistan.pdf).
[21] A few of these groups originally emerged between 1985 and 1995 in response to the policies of General Zia ul Haq's military government, which curtailed progressive trends especially in the media, arts and culture.

2.3 POLITICAL CONTEXT

The second phase of our research in 2014 coincided with a relatively brief spell of reasonable political stability in Pakistan. The elections in 2013 proceeded peacefully, and during much of the research phase in March 2014 there was a truce between the Taliban and the Government of Pakistan, even though our fieldwork at that time was interrupted by some local instability in Sindh Province. From July to September 2014, there were continuous and often violent demonstrations against the government in Islamabad and other areas, led by an unexpected alliance of the opposition party, Tehreek-e-Insaf, led by Imran Khan, and a separate movement led by a populist cleric, Tahir-Ul-Qadri. The demonstrators argued that the May 2013 election was rigged, even though it was won by a wide margin and rated as fair by most international observers. These demonstrations failed to bring down the government, and have now ended.

One factor underlying the current political unrest is a general disillusionment with politicians and the political system. This scepticism is fuelled by the perceived failure of successive governments to come to grips with some of the systemic problems that continue to plague Pakistan, especially corruption and the continuing shortage of electricity. The lack of sufficient electric power continues to affect everyone's livelihoods, especially industrial workers like the power loom weavers.

2.4 SWEDISH AID TO PAKISTAN

Since 2007 Sida has withdrawn most of its funding to Pakistan; the only remaining funding is humanitarian funding and civil society funding (both allocated from Sida in Stockholm). In 2013 Sweden's total aid to Pakistan amounted to approximately US$15.9 million, of which 78% was used for humanitarian purposes. This left US$3.5 million for development purposes, of which US$2.6 million was used for the support of civil society (described as "governance, human rights, and gender equality").[22] In 2013 the main recipients of Sida's civil society funding for Pakistan were Save the Children Sweden, US$809,000), Forum Syd (US$700,000), Plan Sweden (US$609,000) and the Development Organisation of the Swedish Pentecostal Churches (US$130,000).

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[22] For further information see Openaid.se: www.openaid.se/aid/sweden/pakistan/2013/.

3 Methodology and Process

3.1 METHODOLOGY

In this section we outline key aspects of the methodology which need to be understood for engaging with the evaluation's findings, analysis and conclusions. The methodology evolved through the tendering process, the inception phase and two rounds of field work, giving rise to much discussion, and some doubts and differences in understanding.[23] Here we provide a brief overview of how our methods and sampling processes developed during the course of the evaluation. A full explanation of the methodology and its validity is provided in Annex 2.

Pakistan was one of three countries selected by Sida before the tender award. The evaluation was conducted in three 'sites' selected to represent a diverse set of the key issues, population groups and partner organisations covered by the Swedish civil society strategy.

The ToRs for the evaluation called for a qualitative, participatory, mixed methodology that would combine RCA with other methods. RCA involves researchers immersing themselves in the daily realities of people living in poverty, in order to understand their lives and perspectives. Given the original research questions presented in the ToRs, the evaluation team tendered a research design combining RCA visits at the household and community levels with 'meso-level' research and 'organisational inquiries' to document the theories of change and practices of actors at the local, national and international levels. These meso-level and organisational inquiries focused primarily (but not exclusively) on LPOs and SFOs, and sought to establish how Sida's support to CSOs made plausible contributions to achieving the objectives of the Swedish CS strategy.

An evaluation team of three to four researchers in each country conducted fieldwork, with one person leading the RCA visits, meso-level studies, organisational inquiries and analysis for each site. The teams were trained and methods tested during the inception phase (July 2012–January 2013); the *Inception Report* formed the foundation for the two rounds of fieldwork (March–September 2013 and March–September

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[23] For example, there have been differences of opinion between the commissioner of the evaluation and the evaluation team about the criteria for site selection.

2014). Fieldwork and subsequent analysis, validation and learning, was conducted as follows:

- *Round 1 reality checks (RCs)* (three to five days each) were conducted in one community per site. Each RC involved the researcher getting to know a particular family, observing and interacting with household members, neighbours and a wide range of people in the community, taking detailed notes, and making preliminary analysis. Note that in the case of Pakistan, for security reasons it was not felt advisable for researchers to stay overnight in any of the three sites. Once the RCs were completed, the information gathered was shared within the team and the analysis developed collectively. These initial findings informed the focus of the meso-level and organisational inquiries.
- *Meso-level inquiries* involved semi-structured interviews with civil society, state and other actors at the local and national levels, including LPOs and networks supported by SFOs. SFO representatives or their intermediaries were interviewed in countries where they were present; where they were not, they were interviewed in Stockholm. Organisational documents were collected and reviewed.
- *Round 2 RCs* (two days each) followed the same pattern as the first round, and were conducted with the same families and communities in order to build a deeper understanding and to observe any changes over time.
- *Organisational inquiries* with one or two LPOs per site (including advocacy NGOs at the national level) were carried out in the second round, in recognition of a need for more detailed information about their theories of change and interventions. The team used qualitative research methods including semi-structured interviews, workshops and, where possible, observation of the daily activities of LPO staff.
- *Analysis* of findings was carried out after both rounds of fieldwork, in face-to-face workshops and during report drafting by each country team, in synthesis workshops involving the lead country researchers and other country research team members, and, to engage stakeholders, in validation and learning events.
- *Validation and learning events* were held in all three countries after the second round of fieldwork, and in Stockholm with representatives from civil society, LPOs, SFOs, Sida and Swedish embassies. These events were vital in feeding back interim findings, seeking clarifications and corrections from key informants, and deepening the analysis. Drafts were reviewed by Sida, the PAG and the SFO methods network, and then revised by the evaluation team.
- *Quality assurance,* following the standards of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, has been provided by Professor David Lewis, London School of Economics, an experienced anthropologist and RCA practitioner.

3.2 SITE SELECTION

Table 1 is a summary of the site selection approved by Sida for Pakistan in the inception phase, with some updating on the basis of Rounds 1 and 2. The process of selecting households and respondents within these sites is explained in Annexe 2.

Table 1: Pakistan: selection of sites, SFOs and LPOs

Key known issues	Swedish framework organisations	Local CSO partners	Geographic sites
Workers' rights	Olof Palme International Centre (OPIC) (funded 2007–2011)	Labour Education Foundation/Power Loom Workers Union	Faisalabad City, Punjab Province
Adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights	Plan Sweden	Rahnuma	Chakwal District, Punjab Province
Child rights and disaster risk reduction	Plan Sweden	Rural Development Policy Institute	Ghotki District, Sindh Province
Child rights	Save the Children	DevCon[24]	Hyderabad City, Sindh Province

Our initial selection of sites and organisations was influenced by security concerns (including the murder of a Swedish missionary in Lahore) at the time we were designing the study in December 2012. Thus, after discussions with Save the Children Pakistan and the Swedish Embassy, we decided to eliminate from our initial selection SC and the Swedish Mission Council (SMC), as the majority of SC's Sida-funded projects were in insecure areas, and continuing attacks on the Christian minority in Pakistan discouraged us from undertaking Reality Checks with any of SMC's local partners.

Our final choice of agencies and areas for this research had to take account of issues of security and access, and the key issues, agencies, and areas covered. Sida asked us to include in our sample one project which was no longer funded, and we were able to include the Labour Education Foundation (LEF), which was funded by the Olof Palme International Centre (OPIC) from 2007 to 2011. In Round 2, at the request of Sida, SC and its local partner DevCon were also interviewed as part of the research.

In one location, Ghotki, our researcher was able to make several visits in order to get a deeper understanding of the interactions between local community-based organisa-

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[24] This was a light organisational review, which was added to RC2 at the request of Sida; no Reality Checks were conducted with DevCon or any other partner of Save the Children, Pakistan

tions (CBOs), the administration, and other stakeholders. This was not possible in all areas, and a last minute request from Sida to add in a partner of SC meant that less time was available for research in other areas.

In spite of some security concerns, the international country team leader was able to visit, albeit briefly, all the areas covered by the first round of the RCs in March 2014 and had discussions with the RC households, and staff of both local NGOs and the international NGOs funded by Sida.

3.3 ANALYSIS, VALIDATION AND LEARNING

The evaluation set out to be a learning process, which the evaluation team pursued in a context of finite resources and wide-ranging stakeholder expectations. We recognise that the outcome is a trade-off between competing priorities.

The validation and learning events held in Pakistan, Nicaragua, Uganda and Sweden were designed to be the main learning moments for the key stakeholders who participated in them. The evaluation team designed and facilitated customised processes involving presentation of findings followed by focused, small-group discussions of particular aspects of what had been presented. The intention of these processes was to validate – or complement, or correct – researchers' interpretations and analysis. They were also designed to deepen understanding of the methodology, and stimulate reflection and learning from the findings in ways that could enhance participants' practice as researchers, development professionals, civil society activists and advocates.

4 Key Findings

4.1 PEOPLES' PERCEPTIONS FROM THE THREE SITES[25]

This section describes our findings from both phases of the research, including updates from the families covered by our Reality Checks as well as our observations at the community and organisational level. It aims to address the first evaluation question (EQ1): *What are people's perceptions of the changes taking place, or not, in the enabling conditions needed to improve their living conditions?* It also covers EQ6a: *What are the theories of change and strategies of Swedish CSOs and their partners?* After we present them here, these findings are then synthesised and analysed in Section 5.

As expected, we found some similarities in people's perceptions of the enabling conditions for a better life across the three sites, but also some differences. Peoples' common priorities across the three sites are (i) more secure livelihoods and employment opportunities and (ii) improved government services, especially where they are lacking. Education is perceived as critical in enabling the next generation to escape the poverty suffered by older generations. Another common theme is people's need to be taken seriously as citizens, and to have both their legal and human rights respected; this sentiment was especially strong among the power loom workers.

4.2 GHOTKI DISTRICT, SINDH PROVINCE

Our first Reality Check undertaken in March 2013, in the final year of the 3-year Child-Centred Disaster Risk Management (CCDRM) project, focused on selected households in one village, Saindad Chachar, whereas in 2014 our research focused on the CSOs working with the flood-affected communities in 25 villages in Ghotki. This second phase of the research was conducted during a 1-year extension period awarded to Plan and its implementing partners for the calendar year 2014.
When we returned in March 2014, we found the road in Saindad Chachar slightly improved as a temporary embankment road had been built by RDPI and the commu-

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[25] Although research was also undertaken with the NGO DevCon in Hyderabad at the organisational level, no Reality Check was conducted in this area: this section therefore focuses on the three sites where RCs were undertaken.

nities. While in March 2013 there had been vast fields of sand and no cultivation, in 2014 there were only small areas of sand and most of the land was covered with a standing crop of wheat. There were other parcels of land where sugarcane, mustard, fodder and onions were grown. The barren land that had been left under layers of sand after the devastating floods of 2010 had been rendered cultivable by the flood-waters of 2013, which were less intense and which deposited alluvial soil on the sand, thus making it suitable for cultivation and improving its fertility.

There was also evidence of other improvements in the village. The courtyards and floors of the thatched-roofed huts had been plastered with mud, making them look much neater than the previous year, and ten more households had returned to the village following encouragement from the community.

The people of the community were happy not to have to go to distant areas for the harvest;[26] they would be able to stay in their homes and harvest the nearby fields. Since 2010, when standing *kharif*[27] crops (e.g. rice) were washed away by the heavy floods, 2014 was the first year that *rabi*[28] crops (e.g. wheat) were being grown.

> *After 3 years, we have our crops. We will not be disturbed to go to some other lands for harvest. We will harvest our crops living in our own homes. We will store our wheat without carrying it from distant areas and paying for the carriage. We are very happy.*
> – Woman from Saindad Chachar, 24 March 2014.

The household of Ismail, who was visited in RC1, was locked up; we found out that his father had died and the family had gone to a nearby town, Kandkote. During the period of field visits the family had not returned. Ismail being the eldest son had to spend 40 days of mourning in his father's house and receive the mourners who came to offer their condolences. It was evident that the household had not changed much. No livestock had been added, nor did they cultivate any land. The house itself, however, had been rebuilt on a platform of raised mud along with 15 other households of the hamlet, and so it had remained dry even in the flood of 2013.

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[26] They had been doing so since the floods of 2010 because there were no crops grown in the village for 3 years (2011–2013). They went to areas where crops were grown so that they could participate in harvest to collect grain for their family consumption for the year. This is one of the coping mechanisms they used to improve food security.

[27] This refers to summer crops, which include rice, maize and sugarcane.

[28] This refers to winter crops, which include wheat, mustard and fodder.

For the people of Saindad Chachar the key enabling conditions for a better life would appear to be: first, freedom from, and more protection against, natural disasters, especially floods; second, greater exposure to the outside world, since the flood relief efforts in 2010 made them far more aware of the services they lack, especially education; and third, the most significant change since RC1 is that they have started peaceful agitation in support of improving the provision of primary schools in the area.

4.3 CHAKWAL DISTRICT, PUNJAB PROVINCE

Round 2 research in Chakwal benefited from the research team receiving in August 2014 an external evaluation of the Sida-funded Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health project supported by Plan Sweden, which provided useful secondary data. There was a change in approach between RC1 and RC2: as the household selected for RC1 did not have an adolescent member, Sida asked us to include in RC2 a new household with children who were making use of the adolescent-friendly centre (AFC).

The new household selected in Chakwal was led by Amir, a daily wage labourer in the village who was ill for several months and could not do any work. The sole earning member of the household was his son, who was about 21 years old. Amir's adolescent daughter, Kamala, age 16, was not going to the AFC a year before. She started going to the AFC about 6 months before, along with her cousin. Initially Kamala was very shy about being interviewed, but she went and called her cousin and asked her to talk to us. Kamala then shyly giggled and lay down on her *charpouy* (bed) and covered her face with a *chaddar* (piece of cloth) feeling embarrassed. It took quite some time for Kamala to overcome her shyness. In the meantime her mother joined us. The household poverty was evident; the house comprised one very shabby-looking room and a very small courtyard. Kamala's mother said they were very poor. She said that Kamala had never gone to school and so sending her to the AFC has been useful. She felt some level of change in her daughter since she joined the AFC. She took interest in going to the AFC, and would tell her mother what they were doing at the AFC every day. In the previous month she had fever, but she still wanted to go to the AFC. Kamala's mother was appreciative that since attending the AFC there had been a change in her daughter, who was previously always quarrelling with her and was often rude to her, but now is more respectful and helpful. Finally, some communication was established with Kamala, despite some continuing giggles and blushing. With this improvement in her behaviour, she shared her fondness for her AFC, where she made friends with whom she laughed and shared, and learnt information that she found useful. She found the computers at the AFC fascinating. The games at the centre were new to her and she enjoyed these as well. According to Kamala, she was shy to go the AFC before but gradually she became interested, and now she likes to stay at the centre for longer when she goes.

We also undertook a repeat visit to another household which was visited by the RC researcher in 2013. In that household, there is an AFC member, Fehmida, who had married into the family 2 years before. Despite being over the age of 18, she had con-

tinued going to the AFC for any courses that were held there, and just to spend time there. Since her marriage, she had been largely confined to her in-laws' house and her husband was working in Rawalpindi. She is the daughter of a daily wage labourer and belongs to the poor social strata of the village. On our return visit after a year, we found that Fehmida had filed a *khula* suit seeking divorce from her estranged husband. She was upset but she was confident and said that she has support from her AFC friends and her family. She said that she can go to the AFC when she feels depressed and the environment there helps her feel better; she shares her worries with the manager and facilitator and they console her. She also wanted to use the AFC to learn, and she hoped that she might be able to do some further training, such as a beautician course or a sewing course, to learn skills that will help her earn some money to support herself. Her family is poor, and she will no longer be able to get any support from her husband.

The boys' AFC has been shifted from the previous space, which was provided by the chairman of the CBO, and now occupies a space in the house of the AFC manager. This shift was made as a result of a serious leak in the roof at the previous centre. We found during our final visit in July that the CBO could not repair or maintain the premises of the AFC during the project period. The CBO chairman's provision of the space for the male AFC was a positive contribution, but essential maintenance and repairs could have been arranged as a community activity involving the AFC members and using soil from the village to plaster over the leak. Maintenance of this centre remains a major issue.

Plan Pakistan's lead implementing partner for this project in Chakwal District is Rahnuma, originally known as the Family Planning Association of Pakistan. This is one of Pakistan's oldest NGOs, established in 1952 as a service delivery organisation offering family planning services and maternal and child health services. In 1953 it became affiliated with the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). From its start as a one-room operation, it now stands as the largest service provider in the field of reproductive health and family planning in Pakistan. In over 60 years of operation, it has sometimes faced tough resistance due to the sensitive nature of promoting family planning services, but it has kept working. As part of its evolution, it has recently renamed itself Rahnuma, which means a 'guide' (i.e. for development and prosperity), and it has now moved away from its service delivery origins to work more on advocacy and rights-based approaches. The focus of its advocacy work is on changes in relevant policies and laws and avoiding the negative implications for reproductive health and family planning of the 18th Amendment, which devolves responsibilities for health and family planning to the provincial level.

From the perspectives of the households that participated in our RCs in Chakwal, the key enabling condition for a better life would appear to be more employment opportunities nearer to home, especially for the many families who have no land.

4.4 POWER LOOM WORKERS, FAISALABAD

On our return visits in 2014 to the two households in Faisalabad in which Reality Checks were undertaken the previous year, we found very little change in their perceptions of their situation. The repeat visits were helpful in providing insights into how intransigent extreme poverty is for people without assets or connections, even in urban areas with far more job opportunities than in most other parts of Pakistan.

Anwar, who was paralysed while working on a power loom, could not meet with us as he was out of the city when we visited. However, his family confirmed that his health had not improved. His official papers have not been signed by his ex-employer, which means that no financial help has been extended to him or his family members. He is surviving on contributions from his colleagues and neighbours and his wife's earnings. He and his family are living in a very desperate situation, and he can no longer afford to send his children to school.

Our second RC was undertaken in the house of Allah Rakkhi, who is married to Zulfiqar Ali, who was working as a weaver when they got married. The couple have five children ranging in age from 5 to 14 years. Many years ago, however, Zulfiqar become addicted to drugs and then he disappeared; he has not returned home in the last year. This is some relief for Rakkhi, because when he did appear he would often beat her and upset the children, but it also means she has to provide for all five children entirely from her own resources. Rakkhi has vacated her previous rented house at the landlord's request, and she has managed to move out of that locality. She has also left all the small jobs she used to do and she now has a very poorly paid job sorting waste cotton very close to her new house. Despite the low pay, this is a very good development as she does not have to travel far from home; she can now keep an eye on her children who do not attend school, while concentrating on her job. Still, her economic woes remain the same. She is not receiving any financial assistance from any quarter. Her children are growing but she has no means to support them.

In terms of the wider context, there has been little change in the power loom sector. Electricity supply remains a serious issue in spite of promises made during the 2013 election, and there has been little tangible improvement in workers' rights.

During this phase of research, we focused on the two key organisations – the Labour Qaumi Movement (LQM) and the Labour Education Foundation (LEF). We tried to deepen our understanding of both organisations and the previous relationship between the LEF and Sida-funded organisations.

The LEF is the NGO supporting the LQM, and in turn it was supported by different Swedish agencies – including the OPIC, the Swedish Teachers' Union and Forum Syd – using Sida funds from 1993 onwards. It was registered as an Education Foundation in 1995 and has worked on child labour issues and adult literacy. It has worked in support of a number of other trade unions in Pakistan, including carpet weavers and

others who work from home, and LEF believes that it has had greater success in its work with these unions than it has with the power loom workers. LQM was already established before LEF started supporting it in 2003, and its objective was to mobilise the power loom workers to raise their voices and claim their rights. In addition to trying to organise the power loom workers, LQM is also now trying to assist other groups of workers, like brick kiln workers, who also work in very poor conditions and have no legal rights.

OPIC's assistance to LEF was through the Democracy, Peace and Workers Rights project, which lasted from 2008 to 2011. The overall goal of this project was "to protect social, economic and political rights of the working class of Pakistan" and its purpose was that "Trade unions, informal sector workers' organisations, civil society organisations and political parties, which are part of the project are enabled to protect their social, economic and political rights".[29] The activities in support of this goal all relate to increasing workers' awareness of their legal rights to form and register trade unions. To this end, LEF produced many publications and has run numerous short-term training courses for different trade unions, and also provided them with legal aid. Though the original proposal envisaged that it would take 6–8 years to achieve the project goals, funding was stopped in 2011 after only 3 years when LEF failed an audit undertaken by OPIC. Since then, LEF has been able to improve its financial systems and has continued to operate with a reduced budget thanks to assistance from the Finland Trade Union Solidarity Center, but its assistance from OPIC has not been restored.

4.5 DEVCON, HYDERABAD

At the request of Sida, we undertook a study of DevCon in Hyderabad, which acts as the secretariat for the Child Rights Movement in Sindh Province. Sida's support to this agency is recent and is channelled through SCS and the current funding is only for 1 year. DevCon also has a number of other foreign donors, including the United States Agency for International Development, Terre des Hommes, and Concern Worldwide. IKEA Sweden has also funded DevCon, beginning in 2010, to undertake a major project in relation to child labour in cotton picking.

There were limitations to this study as it had to be done during a single visit and we had limited interaction with DevCon's different stakeholders. We followed an Appreciative Enquiry approach and did not attempt to reach any conclusions about DevCon's long-term effectiveness or impact. We concluded from this case study that

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[29] Funding application to OPIC 2008–2010. Labour Education Foundation (Internal document provided by OPIC)

DevCon is a well managed and well focused organisation, which acts as the secretariat for a large network of CSOs campaigning for improved child rights in Sindh.

4.6 THEORIES OF CHANGE AND STRATEGIES OF THE SWEDISH FRAMEWORK ORGANISATIONS AND LOCAL PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

This section summarises the theories of change and strategies of both the SFOs and their LPOs**.** According to *Plan Pakistan*'s *Country Strategic Plan 2011–2015*, the overall goal is "to achieve a strengthened civil society and responsive governance for realising the rights of children". One of the key strategies to achieve this goal is "strengthening local and national civil society organisations (CSOs) to enable them to participate in planning, monitoring, and holding decision-makers accountable". In relation to the two sectors included in this research, Plan's strategy for disaster risk reduction (DRR) is "to focus on improving policy and strengthening local institutions and communities in poor, disaster-prone areas", while in adolescent sexual and reproductive health it aims to make 'adolescent-friendly' health services more available and to combine this service provision with a strong advocacy component.

Our study of Plan's major partner, the Rural Development Policy Institute (RDPI), in Ghotki District, presents a positive picture of an NGO that started out as a local activist group in the Punjab, and gradually expanded to its current status as a respected national NGO. This gradual shift from local to national NGO was greatly facilitated by funding that RDPI received in response to Pakistan's all too frequent natural disasters, including the Baluchistan earthquake of 2007 and the Indus floods of 2010.

RDPI's implicit theory of change is that rural development in Pakistan will only come about through effective joint action by government and NGOs. While it may not use the language of human rights explicitly, RDPI has worked hard since it was founded to hold government agencies to account, and it focuses on an interesting combination of detailed research work, advocacy, capacity building of CBOs and service delivery.

RDPI in turn works in Ghotki through a number of local CBOs, which were also reviewed as part of the second phase of this research. The five CBOs working with RDPI in Ghotki are all small, but they were all formed in response to specific issues arising in their villages of origin. These organisations tend to have quite a broad cross-sectoral focus and they were formed by social activists to give voice to those who oppose perceived social or political injustice.

DevCon's theory of change is that issues related to inadequate education, poor health care and poverty can only be sustainably solved if there is political will and if these issues are made a part of the government's mandate. To make this possible, DevCon

plans to continue to strive to empower communities so that they can hold the government to account at various levels. DevCon's strategy stresses that:

Education is believed to be the basic human right. We believe that education is a basic human right and fundamentally important for the development of every individual and society. Besides providing quality education services to deprived communities, we advocate with government to make it realise that arranging quality education services to every citizen is its responsibility that has to be fulfilled in an honest and transparent manner. The current inequality in educational systems and services has eventually created a huge social disparity.[30]

The common theme underlying these strategies is to make children and young people more aware of their rights, and to find ways of holding government to account.

The Olof Palme International Center (OPIC) has a theory of change that embodies a strong element of global solidarity with CSOs, trade unions, and social democratic political parties. As explained on their website:

Through our development projects, we seek to empower people to change their societies and thereby their own lives through joint action. Women, youth, and grassroots activists are our main target groups. Our member organisations' extensive international network enables cooperation with partners around the world who share our democratic values.[31]

Like Sida, OPIC has much reduced its funding to Pakistan in recent years, and currently has only one active project – the Women Workers Helpline, in Lahore.

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[30] Internal policy document. See also: http://www.devconpk.org/education.php
[31] For more information, see: http://www.palmecenter.se/en/what-we-do/

5 Analysis of Findings

5.1 PERSPECTIVES OF PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY

Evaluation question 3 asks: *what does a human rights based perspective mean to people living in poverty and marginalisation?* In all the sites in Pakistan the human right to which people referred most often was the right to sustain and if possible improve one's livelihood.

In Ghotki, while people valued the training in DRR, in the discussions around the Reality Checks they expressed disappointment that RDPI and Plan had not placed higher priority on livelihood issues.[32] In Faisalabad, the power loom workers are focused on achieving their rights as a means of securing higher wages and hence a more secure livelihood. As in the two rural areas, access to high quality and affordable education for their children is seen as critical for families.

In relation to people's perceptions of rights in the areas studied, we found that people in the Ghotki area have an emerging awareness of rights as a result of their greater exposure to the work of local and international NGOs following the Indus floods, and that they are starting to act on this greater consciousness. The people there also believe that the DRR mitigation measures promoted by Plan and its local partners have made a significant contribution to this change. Communities reported that they now have greater awareness both about their rights and the need for disaster preparedness. They also have a greater sense of solidarity and reported a lower level of internal conflicts.[33]

Also, as mentioned in the RC1 report, though the CCDRM project sought to promote child rights it was not designed to address important related issues, such as education and health. The project area is remote and out of 25 target villages of the project, 19 have no primary school.[34] The village selected for RC1 had no educated person except a retired school headmaster, and he had also moved out of the village to Ghotki

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[32] *Ghotki RC2 Site Report*, p.10.

[33] *Ibid.,* p.6.

[34] *Hattar RC1 Site Report*, p.17.

by the time of RC2 in March 2014. One of the CSO partners (Hwa Foundation) did try to start schools in some villages but the teachers hired from other villages did not continue as the salary offered was too low. Similarly there is no primary health facility in any of the project villages, and no female health worker. Only polio vaccination teams reach these villages. Thus, awareness of rights has increased, but people's ability to claim these rights has so far changed very little.

5.2 HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH

The second part of evaluation question 6 asks: what the four human rights principles of participation, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability mean in the practice of Swedish CSOs and their partners? While people are broadly aware of discrimination in all three geographical areas studied, we found the strongest evidence of it in Chakwal. Although we found slightly lower levels of extreme poverty in Chakwal than at the other two sites, poorer people there still feel a degree of exclusion. In Hattar, for example, they feel that the CBO does not really represent their interests as it is run by a group of landed families. As one young woman told us, "if any opportunity comes up it is not taken by the poor but it goes to the family of the CBO president". In RC1 we documented the issue of water supply in Hattar: a piped water supply was established in 1997 and was much appreciated. This had to be paid for, however, and better-off people found it cheaper to have their own bore-wells in their own compounds, and stopped paying the user charges. This resulted in the water supply system being discontinued in 2012, which clearly has a far greater impact on poorer households than on better-off people who either have their own wells or can employ people to collect water for them.[35] Although this was not deliberate discrimination against any particular social group, incidents like this help build the perception that public goods – like water supply – will only be provided so long as they meet the needs of better-off people.

The power loom workers in Faisalabad face constant discrimination in the sense that they are essentially regarded by their employers as having little inherent value and very limited 'rights'. The employers' perception is that if one worker falls ill or dies, there are always several others willing to take his place.

The extent of participation is also related to poverty. Both Plan and its local partners put great emphasis on participation by people of all ages in all their programmes, but they face challenges in implementing this ideal. In Chakwal, for example, we found a group of much poorer people who did not send their daughters to the Sida-funded

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[35] *Ibid.*, p.17.

AFCs, or let them pursue further studies at school. The reasons cited for this are linked to poverty, specifically the fact that they do not own land. These families keep livestock and work in the fields of other people, and these livelihood efforts require the labour input of the whole family. The mothers go to work in the landlords' house-holds and the daughters take care of the livestock as well as fetching water. There-fore, they do not encourage education beyond primary and do not send their girls to the AFCs.

We also found that high levels of migration can have a negative impact on participa-tion. In Chakwal in particular, a large number of adult men live and work outside the area, with many joining the army, seeking work in urban areas, or moving to work in the Gulf States. Our first report raised questions about the extent to which this migra-tion had an impact on participation, especially in a society where women are often confined to the domestic sphere.

In relation to accountability and transparency, the context is changing fast with the growth both of different media channels as already noted (see section 2.1), and the growth of social media. As Bloom & Aziz argue, the media has provided a forum for voicing popular discontent on various issues, including health and education, and "political leaders know that there is a new reality and that they can no longer hide behind a cloak of obscurity if service delivery or reform implementation is marred by corruption".[36] However, our research suggests that while this may be true for the ur-ban middle classes, this enhanced level of public debate has yet to result in better ser-vices for the communities in which we conducted our Reality Checks.

5.2.1 SFO practices in relation to HRBA principles

Globally there would appear to be an excellent 'fit' between Sida and the three SFOs in our research (Plan International, SCS and OPIC), as all three organisations follow a similar HRBA in their programming and take seriously the HRBA principles. How-ever, as the SFOs themselves are not often involved in the direct implementation of projects and programmes, we answer this question mainly with reference first to the LPOs, through which the SFOs work, and secondly in relation to the CBOs, which these local partners support in turn.

First, we found that, like many similar well respected national NGOs, RDPI (Plan's partner in Ghotki) has a pragmatic approach to rights, which underscores all their

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[36] Bloom & Aziz, op. cit., p.7.

programmes. In terms of the principles of the HRBA, both RDPI and the CBOs they support promote greater participation by people in rural areas, and are constantly pressing for government agencies to be more transparent and accountable. Thus strong participation is an essential strength of all the LPOs covered in this research. For example, both the Ghotki and Chakwal projects try to operationalise the principle of participation and specifically the right of children and youth to participate in decisions that affect them, for instance by giving them responsibility for DRR in their communities in Ghotki. We would assume there is a similar congruence of operating principle between Sida and SCS, given SCS's global commitment to promoting child rights. In the case of DevCon, SCS appears to be successfully promoting a whole network of child rights organisations in Sindh.

But for the communities we got to know during this research, practical results are more important than the principles themselves. Greater awareness of rights does appear to be leading to increased community action. For example, in the Ghotki area during the 2013 election people expressed dissatisfaction with the old system under which they were often instructed how to vote by a candidate's paid henchmen, and they were far more critical about the promises offered by the candidates.

Our research in Ghotki found that these CBOs have largely won the trust not just of the communities but also of the district government; they feel they can now approach elected representatives of the government with their demands. The CBOs have a good understanding of rights-based approaches, and they see these approaches as one of the important instruments for addressing issues of power, to empower the marginalised, and to reduce the growing gaps between rich and poor.

These CBOs promote rights through advocacy and have an understanding of advocacy as the most important tool for creating awareness about rights. They work through a network of village organisations and other groups they have formed. Their rights-promotion strategy works at three different levels: the first tier is the people, including the communities where awareness about rights is promoted through organisations, officials, and youth groups; the second tier is the government, raising awareness of rights and rights-based approaches among various departments; and the third tier comprises the elected representatives, other stakeholders like international companies, and power structures in their areas. The CBO activities to promote awareness about rights include networking, seminars, and peaceful rallies and demonstrations.

The CBOs in the Ghotki area approach local issues of power with a collaborative rather than confrontational approach, even in relation to more sensitive issues like their recent campaigns against so-called honour killing. They believe in taking the powerful along, and they argue that a more confrontational approach might be counterproductive as it would be likely to elicit a strong and repressive response from the authorities. They aim to raise their voices to raise awareness and pursue advocacy. They do not believe in violence as part of the struggle, but look for peaceful resolution to problems and try to form effective organisations at the village level.

5.2.2 Challenges and responses in relation to HRBA

In the two rural districts, the greatest challenge is the lack of local democracy and accountability. Under the current civilian government, some devolution of powers has been granted to the provinces, but not to the district level. This is part of a wider historical trend in Pakistan, as Cheema et al. have pointed out:

> *Three times in the history of Pakistan, elected institutions of local democracy have been created by military regimes, and each time the subsequent civilian governments have either failed to revive elected local governments or replaced them with unelected administrators.*[37]

This highly centralised system makes it very difficult for CSOs in Pakistan to hold government to account at the district level, even though our case study of CBOs and NGOs working in Ghotki suggests that some progress can still be made if these CBOs are able to work out a positive relationship with the local district administration. What is far more uncertain is whether the current centralised local government system will deliver the basic services of health and education being advocated both by the communities we met during our RCs and by their CBOs.

Both the LEF and the trade union it supports, the LQM, face considerable challenges in ensuring legal recognition for the rights of the power loom workers. The problem they face is that while the Constitution and the labour laws of Pakistan provide both a basic right to workers to organise in trade unions and associations, and some basic rights to employees, workers who try to assert these rights are still regarded as seditious. Six LQM leaders who were leading the campaign to get the power loom employers to pay government minimum wages were in 2010 given punitive jail sentences, which amounted to a cumulative total of 590 years, after a demonstration initiated by LQM ended in a violent confrontation in just one factory. The justification for these punitive sentences was that the LQM members involved had to be treated as 'terrorists', but LQM believe that the power loom employers were able to bribe the judge in this case to ensure that very harsh sentences were given out to the alleged leaders of the agitation as a deterrent; they remain in prison to this day.

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[37] Cheema, A., Khan, A. and Myerson, R. (2014) *Reforming local government in Pakistan, India at LSE*, London, London School of Economics and Political Science (http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/indiaatlse/2€014/08/04/reforming-local-government-in-pakistan/).

5.3 CONTRIBUTIONS TO ENABLING CONDITIONS

Evaluation question 2 asks: *what positive changes in the enabling conditions can plausibly be attributed to the actors, including the Swedish CSOs and their partners?*

Our findings from Ghotki and Chakwal do suggest that Plan and their partners are making some contribution to improving people's life conditions in two very different rural areas. However, in both cases, Sida – through the Swedish civil society strategy – is contributing modest amounts of funding to relatively specialised projects; for example, DRR in Ghotki, and the Reproductive Health Initiative for Adolescents (RHIA) in Chakwal and other parts of Pakistan. RHIA works at a number of different levels, including raising awareness within the government health system about the need to develop health services more sensitive to the needs of adolescents. While this project has been successful in providing safe spaces – the AFCs – where young people can come together and discuss highly sensitive subjects that are very rarely discussed in a structured way in rural Pakistan, it is less clear what long-term changes, if any, in attitudes or behaviour these centres will bring about within the relatively short timescale of this project.

In the case of the power loom workers, a key enabling condition is increasing their level of income. In this respect, there has been some progress in that before LQM was formed there was a large number of workers who – because they had incurred large debts to their employers (paid in the form of advances on wages) – had to work as bonded labour in the power loom industry. Reportedly, the extent of this kind of bonded labour is now much reduced. In addition, the power loom workers have benefited from annual increases in the level of minimum wages set by the Government.

While OPIC may have made a plausible contribution to this improvement, it is impossible to attribute this change to OPIC's funding since its support to LEF was terminated unexpectedly in 2011. Even though OPIC is no longer able to provide the level of technical and financial support to LEF that it could offer before, LEF continues to support the LQM in different ways from other funding sources, including support for training, publications, and a contribution to the salary of one full-time staff member. While in relation to the power loom workers, positive change remains elusive (at least from the perspective of the families in our Reality Checks), we also need to look at the counterfactual and ask what positive changes for the power loom workers might have occurred without LEF or LQM's involvement. Given the difficult context for this sector and the attitudes of the employers, their contribution should be seen as modest but still positive.

The Government's role in assisting the power loom workers obtain their rights under the law appears essentially contradictory. On the one hand, the Federal Government of Pakistan and the Government of Punjab have in place legislation that allows for independent trade unions to be formed and registered. In addition, there are governmental institutions like a Labour Department, Social Welfare Department, and an

Employees Old Age Benefit Institution, which is responsible for workers' pension benefits. But the very existence of this legislation means that the costs for employers are greatly increased once workers are formally recognised as employees, and collectively these measures create a strong incentive for employers to avoid recognising the rights of their workers. Thus after a long struggle, up to 7,000 social security cards have been issued to power loom workers, but the majority of the 400,000 or so workers and their dependents are still unable to gain access to the national and provincial government social security networks. The perception of the LQM is that in any confrontation between the power loom owners and their workers, like the 2010 confrontation referred to in section 5.2.2, the government will normally side with the power loom owners.

Our research suggests that local organisations like the CBOs in Ghotki are achieving positive change. For example, the work funded by Sida supported the building of small embankments, facilitating people's access to their lands. Furthermore, the awareness raising and capacity building of communities on DRR also played a pivotal role in enabling communities to move their livestock, fodder and other movable assets well before the arrival of seasonal floods in 2013.

Other significant achievements we observed over the last year included the greater interest of the district government in these communities and a higher level of direct interaction between them. Furthermore, there are now protest demonstrations by the children, demanding educational opportunities and schools for their villages. A year earlier, in 2013, they had raised this issue in discussions, but now they have become mobilised and have carried out peaceful demonstrations and protests for the right to education, and the community has sent applications to the education authorities.

However, there are uncertainties about whether, in the absence of further natural disasters, there will be the same funding available for these CBOs in the future as there has been in the last 4 years. International NGOs could have a real role in providing support for these CBOs if they were able to offer more long-term support, including support aimed at helping the CBOs become sustainable social enterprises. We found no examples of this kind of funding.

5.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF CAPACITY BUILDING

Evaluation question 5 asks: *what plausible contribution can be inferred to the role of CSO capacity development and enhancement in the context, and in relation to the key issue?*

We found many examples of successful capacity building – for example Plan Pakistan's long-term partnership with RDPI and Rahnuma, and RDPI's support for the capacity development of local CBOs around Ghotki. But we also found in both Chakwal and Ghotki that CBOs' capacity can be built just through the process of implementing a project. Thus the implementation of the DRR project in the Ghotki area helped to increase the CBOs' expertise and confidence in this field, and these CBOs

also found that their wider experience in implementing Sida-funded projects helped to enhance their implementation capacity. Many of these CBOs feel they have the potential to grow to become district-level organisations, but feel they need continued support to reach to that level. Most CBOs in rural areas like Ghotki face human resource constraints: there are few educated people available within the communities and they cannot afford to bring staff from the city to these remote areas.

With regard to Plan's work in Chakwal, its local partner, Rahnuma, had extensive experience and strong commitment to improving adolescent sexual and reproductive health, so its partnership with Plan in this project enabled them to improve the way they relate to and support adolescents. Plan did not have to build Rahnuma's capacity, but it did assist it to better target its assistance to adolescents. Thus it encouraged Rahnuma to divide the adolescents into three age groups: 9–13, 14–16, and 16–18 years. They developed materials according to the level of information suitable for each age group. Rahnuma previously viewed adolescents as one group, whereas in reality their needs vary widely across these age groups.

In the case of the LEF, as already noted, it is difficult to reach firm conclusions about OPIC's capacity building role, as its funding to LEF was suddenly withdrawn following an audit in 2011. While OPIC funding was still being given, capacity building was provided at two levels: (i) OPIC's capacity building of LEF; and (ii) LEF's capacity building of the LQM. The fact that LEF failed an audit in 2011 and OPIC then withdrew funding could possibly be an indicator of underlying capacity weaknesses within LEF, but according to OPIC this audit was simply part of a more general tightening up of financial accountability in their programme at that time. LEF still feel that this problem could have been averted if OPIC had undertaken more rigorous assessments of their managerial and financial capacity at the outset.

In relation to LEF's support for LQM, the trade union representing the power loom workers, as already noted, in their original proposal to OPIC in 2008 LEF had suggested a time period of 6–8 years to achieve their objectives. During this research we heard different perceptions of LQM's capacity. One view was that LQM would have benefited from a longer period of support and mentoring from LEF, which might have better equipped them for the considerable challenges that arose during their struggle with the power loom employers. To be effective, LQM leaders need to acquire skills in many areas, including negotiation, office management, computer use, and fundraising. LEF could potentially assist with this but they now have few resources, and LQM has not received training in how to raise and manage funds.

An alternative view is that the major problem is not just a lack of capacity, however that is defined by LQM, and an inadequate period of funding, but that even extended funding and longer-term support for LQM's capacity might not have produced dramatically different results for the power loom workers.

On conclusion of this research we organised a workshop in Islamabad in November 2014, which was attended by a wide range of civil society actors, including representatives of all the NGOs who were part of this study, as well as the research team and Sida representatives. One of the issues that emerged at this workshop was that the whole power loom sector in Pakistan faces acute problems due to the use of outdated technology, the continuing severe electricity shortage, and increasing international pressure on the textile industry in Pakistan from other Asian countries which are able to produce textiles more reliably and cheaply. This would suggest that one of the key capacities that an SFO like OPIC can help develop in a partner like LEF is its capacity to design and follow a long-term strategy. This needs to include making hard-headed assessments about which sectors it is likely to be most effective at engaging with, and which sectors it needs to be more cautious about offering support to.

6 Conclusions - Relevance, alignment and feasibility

6.1 RELEVANCE, ALIGNMENT AND FEASIBILITY OF THE SWEDISH CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGY

Evaluation question 4 asks: what is the relevance, alignment and feasibility of the theory of change, strategies, and interventions of the Swedish NGOs and their partners? In this section we review the questions: How relevant is the Swedish civil society strategy to the concerns of poor and marginalised people in Pakistan? How aligned are its operations with their own strategies and concerns? And to what extent can we regard the Swedish civil society strategy as being feasible in the sense of being likely to make a difference to civil society in Pakistan?

6.1.1 Relevance

This section addresses the question of whether the programmes, approaches and theories of change of the Swedish CSOs and their partners are relevant to people's priorities and their perceptions of what changes are desired in the conditions that would enable them to improve their lives.

From this research we can conclude that overall the Swedish civil society strategy is highly relevant to Pakistan. If anything, its relevance is increased by the very severe pressures facing civil society there – including increasing religious fundamentalism, increasing intolerance and violence, high levels of corruption, and declining health and education services for the poorest sections of the population. But our research has shown, against this unpromising context, an often remarkable awareness among the people we got to know during this research of their rights, and even though people's ability to claim these rights has so far changed very little they have a growing willingness to come together to assert these rights. This relevance is broadly underlined by the struggles of the power loom workers in Faisalabad, the recent increase of peoples' awareness of their rights to basic services in the flood-affected areas in Sindh Province, and in the growing child rights movement in the same province.

6.1.2 Alignment

This section address the question of whether the programmes, approaches and theories of change of the Swedish CSOs and their partners are aligned with the strategies of multiple actors at different levels, including actions being taken by local people themselves, to create enabling conditions to improve their lives.

In summary, we have found a good fit at the strategic level, but a weaker fit at the operational level. First, there is good congruence in strategies at the level of the three SFOs involved in our research in Pakistan (SC, Plan and OPIC). All three have strong rights-based strategies, which are clearly mirrored in the strategies of their local partners. The challenge is to maintain this level of alignment throughout the implementation process, even when the focus shifts to time pressures and results.

Our conclusion from this research is that SFOs may be failing to make sufficient use of the flexibility offered by Sida. While Sida now offers funding for its framework organisations over relatively long periods of 3-4 years, a constant theme of many stakeholders we talked to throughout this research – communities, NGO staff and government officials – was that the Sida-funded projects we were reviewing had too short a lifespan. As one district official in Ghotki said about the work of Plan's local partner, RDPI:

> [W]hen people have started understanding the work promoted by RDPI and its partners, and started fully participating, RDPI says its time for them to leave. This is unfair, people still need them for some more time if not into the long term. With their long-term presence in the area many issues will be resolved. They have guided people, given them awareness, helped them understand their right to participation and much more.[38]

Against this it could be argued, first, that the default position of most stakeholders involved in development cooperation – especially when they meet outside researchers – is that projects should continue as long as possible, and secondly, that Sida is often only one amongst many donors, and that the majority of other donors prefer relatively short-term projects of 1–3 years. In the context of what started as a post-flood intervention in Ghotki, 3 years is itself seen as relatively long-term funding when compared with the short lifespan of most humanitarian assistance. Even so, the evidence we have gathered in Pakistan over the last 2 years does reinforce a sense of unfinished business, with projects tending to close before benefits could be fully realised. For example, everyone acknowledges that informing young people about their sexual and reproductive health and rights is a long-term process, but the people of Hattar in Chakwal are not clear how their AFCs will continue after the cessation of funding at the end of 2014. In Ghotki, meanwhile, as the quotation above suggests, though much interesting work has been initiated it is unclear how long the different NGOs will be able to continue working in this area without further funding.

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[38] Ghotki RC2 Report (August 2014), p.11.

6.1.3 Feasibility

Finally, this section addresses the question of whether the programmes, approaches and theories of change of the Swedish CSOs and their partners are feasible in terms of their plausible contributions (and in relation to what other actors are contributing) to creating enabling conditions for people to improve their lives.

At the national level in Pakistan, it is probably inherently unrealistic to expect major changes in attitudes, behaviours and social relations as a result of relatively small amounts of foreign funding of the type that SFOs are able to provide. Participants at the November workshop mentioned above had many good ideas about how a donor like Sida could give more direct support to civil society in Pakistan. These included suggestions for deeper and longer-term engagement with a wider variety of civil society actors and linking up far more closely with other major donors to Pakistan like DFID. Very few of these ideas are feasible, however, under the present system of civil society funding by which Sida's only involvement in civil society issues is its financial commitment to the small number of SFOs still working in Pakistan; unlike other donors, Sida does not have a bilateral aid programme in – or a long-term country strategy for – Pakistan.

Feasibility relates both to the design of Sida's assistance, and its quantity. In terms of the overall design, as already noted in the previous section, in Ghotki we found that the need to improve and diversify livelihoods, build the capacity of CSOs, and follow through on campaigns to improve health, education and protection against future floods, require a longer time scale than has been allowed for in the current project design. Similarly we are unclear about the sustainability of Plan's project on adolescent sexual and reproductive health in Chakwal, now that both the project is being phased out and Plan is withdrawing from this area.[39]

Our research suggests that there are dangers in SFOs supporting projects that are over-specialised. The idea that interventions need to be based on participatory research into the multi-faceted needs of the people included in our RCs appears to be in decline. While the power loom project was directed at promoting workers' rights, and DevCon focuses broadly on promoting child rights, the other two Sida-funded initiatives – Child-Centred Disaster Risk Management (CCDRM) and RHIA – appear to be quite specialised and both would have benefited from a broader and more flexible design. In the case of the CCDRM, while the focus on DRR is highly relevant in this

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[39] Plan Pakistan is phasing out of this region in response to an evaluation suggesting that they were "spreading too thin" and needed to focus on fewer areas.

flood-prone area, both local people and the CSOs feel that the impact of the project could have been stronger had it been combined with a broader programme design that included measures to strengthen livelihoods; plenty of different ideas emerged in our various discussions in RC2 with communities and CSOs. It could well be that SFOs and their local partners have a clear holistic vision of what they want to achieve, but that the aid system itself tends to result in the fragmentation of this vision into more specialised projects. The challenge for the SFOs is to better document how relatively specialised interventions like those reviewed here really contribute to long-term changes in people's living conditions and people's ability to claim their rights.

A further aspect of feasibility is simply the quantity of assistance. Though Sida has in the past provided considerable humanitarian assistance to Pakistan, its total support for civil society in the country is currently very small at only US$3.3 million. This raises a question about whether Sida's civil society funding should be directed to countries where it already has a significant aid programme, or whether – as at present – the geographical allocation of the funds should be left to the SFO concerned. It is interesting that one SFO, OPIC, does now focus its work in a limited number of pro-gramme countries, but Pakistan is no longer included in this list.

The conclusion on feasibility in the case of Pakistan is that SFOs need to reflect care-fully on exactly what kind of change is really feasible over what kind of timescale in Pakistan, and that they should consider making greater use of the flexibility now offered by Sida's civil society funding to make funding available for longer periods.[40] One of the key findings from this research is that unless CSOs are supported to ex-pand their sphere of influence and to scale up their activities and impact, visible or sustainable change is unlikely.

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[40] OPIC's project in support of LEF did originally envisage a far longer period of funding, but it was suspended after only three years.

7 Recommendations

As regards Pakistan, given that it will be very challenging for a donor like Sida to influence civil society in this large, complex, and conflict-prone country Sida needs to re-think its overall strategy in supporting SFOs to fund projects there. Supporting SFOs like Plan and SC to undertake specific projects there may be one component of this strategy, but it is not sufficient. We would recommend that Sida should discontinue funding for SFOs in Pakistan, on the grounds that it no longer has a bilateral programme there, and that its overall programme there has become too small to be viable.

Alternatively, if Sida feels it has sufficient resources and commitment to promote its HRBA in Pakistan, it could offer to continue to fund a small number of SFOs that are able to come up with well-evidenced and long-term programmes in Pakistan that address some of the critical problems of civil society discussed in this research. These programmes would probably cover a wide range of sectors, but would include a component of long-term support to particular types of CSO. The emphasis should be on building awareness of the HRBA, increasing citizens' voice and capacity to hold government to account. They might include several time-limited and specialised projects of the type reviewed in this research, but any such projects would no longer be funded in isolation. Any projects supported would have to offer practical ways of assisting people access their rights rather than just raising people's general awareness of rights.

More generally we would recommend that Sida should cease using its civil society funding to support a wide variety of small, and often rather specialised projects, and it should require SFOs to have longer agreements with their partners.

Finally, in order to avoid spreading its resources too thinly, we would recommend that in future Sida should only offer civil society funding to those countries where it already has a bilateral program.

Annex 1- Map of Pakistan
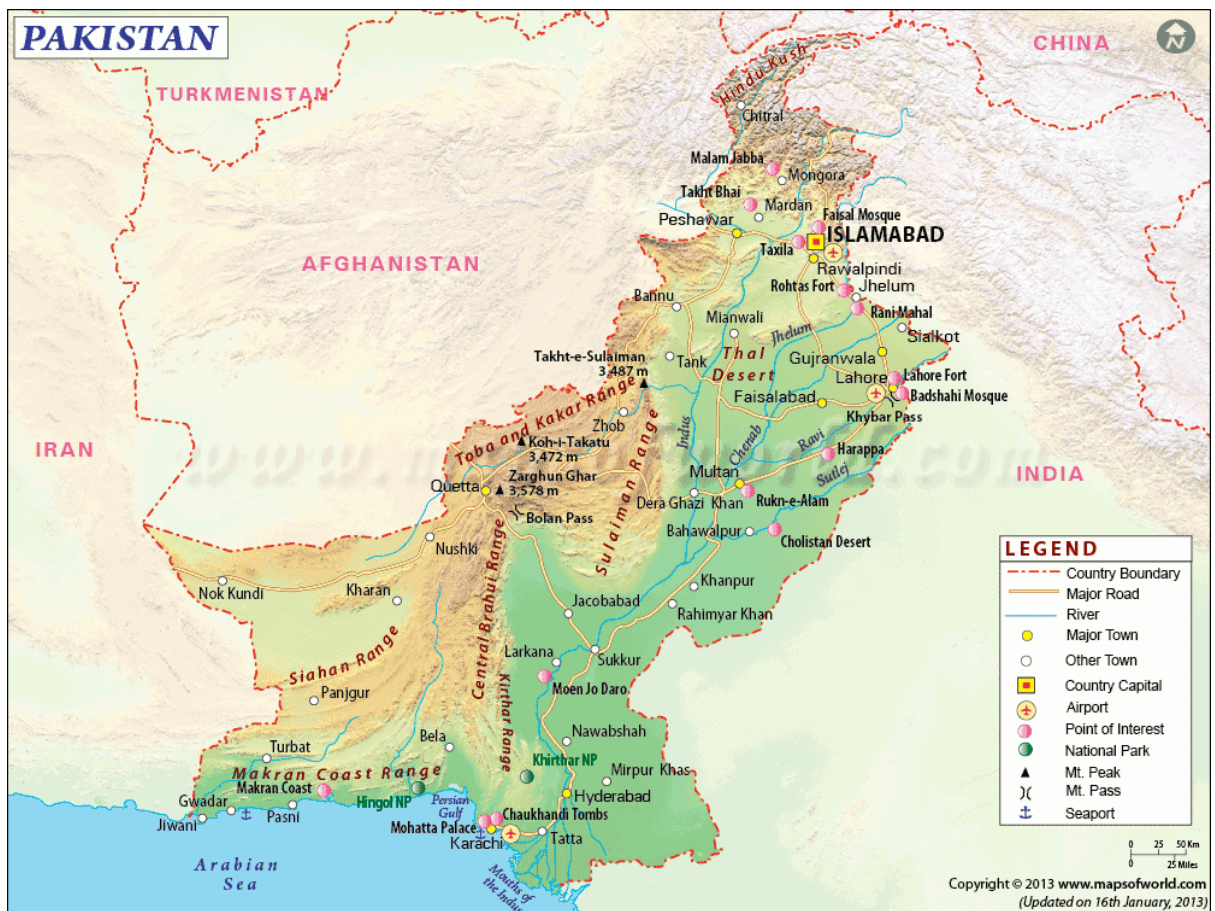
Annex 2- Methodology

1. Site selection

The researchers selected and lived briefly with households in areas that fall within the domains, thematic priorities and geographic regions where Swedish CSO-supported community based and civil society organisations and are working. RCs were given greater time and priority in Round 1 (3–5 days) than in Round 2 (2–3 days), in order to allow more time in the second round to get to know the local organisations. Nonetheless, the return visits were invaluable for identifying change or stasis, and for deepening understanding of household realities.

The selected districts were Faisalabad City, Chakwal District and Ghotki District . Each district presents a known key issue and demonstrates distinct regional variations in terms of demography, geography, civil society activity, political power and history. See Table 1 in the main text for a summary of the selected sites and key issues and the SFOs and LPOs relevant to each site.

1. Reality checks

An RC is an immersion of several days with a household and community, which identifies the perspectives of people living in poverty. As its originators describe it, an immersion "extends the tradition of the 'listening study' (a method used by researchers to understand social reality by listening and documenting what people have to say) by requiring researchers to stay for several days and nights in the homes of poor families and join in their lives."[41]

This approach involves developing relationships of respect, living with and co-researching with people, following their leads, interests and contacts in order to inquire what is important to them and how they go about their lives, and analysing context and change with them, with particular emphasis on issues of power for change. The RCA emphasises: *living with,* rather than visiting; *conversations,* rather than in-

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[41] http://reality-check-approach.com/approach

terviews; *learning,* rather than finding out; *inclusion* of all members of households; and o*rdinary interaction* with frontline service providers[42]

The team used the RCA to gain diverse perspectives about realities and changes in people's lives. The RCs for this study sought to understand how people understood rights and the HRBA principles, what their priorities were, and what changes in enabling conditions they were achieving or would like to achieve in the context of development projects, programmes and wider social change initiatives.

The team spent four or five days with one household staying the nights when appropriate. They spent much time with the householders, their children and relatives, and also with their neighbours. Their aim was not only to learn about the key issues we had already identified, but also to understand the other issues that were given priority by the householders, their relatives and neighbours. We returned to these same households a second time after 12 months to feed back our analysis and deepen our relationship and learning.

2. Meso-level inquiry

The team members:
- Attached themselves to one "learning partner", an LPO linked to the RC site-level and key issue, and interviewed key staff, accompanied selected staff on their duties, engaged in dialogue about the evaluation questions, and obtained relevant documentation in order to assess what the LPO is saying and doing linked to the evaluation questions.
- Teased out the organisations' theories of change and logics of intervention, which are not always immediately observable or documented.
- Consulted organisational documents provided in advance of field work and as part of field work and dialogue
- Emphasised organisational inquiry with LPOs, some of which have taken place at the capital level.

This inquiry used mixed qualitative methods to find out about the relevant civic, social and political actors, including the LPOs of SFOs, and their allies engaged with the same issues, geographic areas and populations. This inquiry complemented and responded to the RC findings, using interviews, learning events and secondary data.

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[42] *Ibid.*

2.2. *Learning with local partner organizations*

The team visited the offices of learning organisations in Islamabad and Faisalabad as well as conducted field visits to Chakwal, Hyderabad and Ghotki where LPOs and CBOs offices have been visited as well as additional field visits to project areas with relevant staff and officers. We would like to mention that because of security reasons the Pakistan study has always been constrained when it comes to field visits.

The strongest relationship with learning organisations was with Plan Pakistan & their local partners, RDPI, RAHNUMA, and the local CBOs which they in turn supported. There was plenty of 'accompaniment' of LPOs' staff during their field visits - probably strongest in our case in Ghotki.

Save the Children played only a marginal role in the study but one of their local partners, DevCon, was included at the request of Sida in Round 2; one of the national team members paid a visit to their office in Hyderabad and this is documented in the report.

With regard to LEF and LQM the team met with key staff in Faisalabad. Accompaniment with staff in project areas was not really possible in this case since we were reviewing a project that was closed in 2011, and thus there was no reason why LEF staff should give up their time for these kinds of field visits

2.3. *Validation and Learning*

A two day Validation and Learning Event was conducted in Faisalabad were learning partners, Sida, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and selected national, regional and international CSOs were invited to participate. The outcome of the workshops was incorporated in the final report.

Evaluation of the Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations 2010-2014

Final Country Report - Pakistan

This report shares the findings and recommendations from an evaluation of Sweden's Civil Society Strategy 2010–2014 as implemented by Swedish civil society organisations and their national partners in Pakistan, as one of three country studies.

The purpose of the evaluation was to find out if, how and why/why not Sweden's support to civil society organisations has contributed to the overall objectives of the strategy.

The Reality Check Approach was used to understand the realities and perspectives of people living in poverty combined with 'meso-level' and organisational inquiries. The findings were used to explore the theories of change of the organisations in relation to people's realities, in order to analyse the strategy's relevance, alignment and feasibility.

Sida