



Democracy and Human Rights

Democracy and human rights are essential for people living in poverty and under oppression, giving them the power to improve their living conditions. Sida's support to the thematic area of democracy and human rights amounted to SEK 7 billion in 2019. This makes democracy and human rights Sida's largest thematic area, equivalent to approximately 27% of Sida's total disbursements in 2019.



MAIN AREAS OF SUPPORT

Democracy, human rights and the principles of the rule of law are priority thematic areas in Sweden's development cooperation. A human rights-based approach and perspectives of people living in poverty are fundamental and shall be applied in all Swedish development cooperation. Support to democracy and human rights plays a fundamental role in combatting discrimination and oppression and reducing poverty in all its dimensions.

The Agenda 2030 declaration is clear in requiring respect for human rights and all Sustainable Development Goals relate to several human rights. While democracy is only explicitly mentioned in the declaration, and not in the goals themselves, the broad agenda of goal no. 16 includes promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice for all and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Among the targets of particular relevance to the work of Sida within the thematic area of democracy and human rights are:

- 16.6 *Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels*
- 16.7 *Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels*
- 16.10 *Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements*

Goal 10 promotes social, economic and political inclusion and reducing inequalities in opportunities and outcomes:

- 10.2 *By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status*

- 10.3 *Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.*

The rights of persons with disabilities are highlighted under goal 4.5 and 8.5. The rights of the child are visible under a number of goals such as Goal 3, 4, 5 and especially;

- 16.2 *End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.*

Following the launch of the Swedish government's *Drive for Democracy*, Sida was tasked with further developing its democracy support in order to strengthen the impact of Swedish development cooperation in promoting democratization. Sida has proposed that this will be done through, among other things, strengthening freedom of expression online and supporting democratic advocacy voices such as human rights defenders.

The focus areas within the sector of democracy and human rights is reflected in the volume of the support. Democratic participation and civil society is the largest sub-area (SEK 2.5 billion or 35% of disbursements), and human rights the second largest subarea (SEK 1,3 billion or 19%). In terms of regional distribution, most funds are allocated to Africa (28%) and Asia & MENA (22%). Support to global programmes, for example through the UN or international NGOs, constitute 30% of total disbursement.

THE GLOBAL GOALS

The Global Goals for Sustainable Development include everyone – and we can all contribute. The goals are interdependent and therefore indivisible. Sida's main contribution is to implement development cooperation, thereby reducing poverty and saving lives. Together we can build a better future where no one is left behind.



Results

DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD

In a global perspective, respect for human rights and democracy has made great advances over the last 40 years. However, a reverse trend towards increased autocratization is currently accelerating globally. For the first time since 2001, a majority of the world's population live in non-democracies in 2019.¹ Threats and violations against civil and political rights, in particular freedom of expression, assembly and association, occur in more than 100 countries and six out of seven individuals live in countries where those freedoms are to some degree violated.

In many countries the space for civil society actors to freely exercise their civil and political rights is shrinking, including environmental and human rights defenders, not least women, anti-corruption activists, as well as journalists and opposition political parties. Sida's partners in many countries continue to face oppression in the form of violence, threats and increased regulations (related to registration, financing, advocacy etc.) of civil society organisations, media actors as well as increased control of internet access and freedom.

Many affected civil society actors work hard to adapt to these challenges. Despite the negative trend in many of Sida's partner countries, there are positive results at programme and project levels due to partners' capacity as change agents and their ability to act flexibly and adjust to changing political landscapes and unpredictable developments.

SIDA'S SUPPORT

Sida's democracy and human rights portfolio covers many sub-areas, as reflected in tables 1 and 2. Examples of results from 2019 include:

- Support through Interparliamentary Union has strengthened national parliaments in their independence from executive powers, their administrative capacity, interaction with civil society and digitalization, in nine countries globally.
- Electoral commissions in 11 countries in the MENA region have formed a common platform for mutual learning and strengthened capacities. In the same region, trainings on women's role in electoral processes have been organized by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation with support from Sida.
- In Kenya and Somalia, Sida support through the UN has contributed to political decentralization reforms, and support through the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions has strengthened its counterpart in Tunisia.

1 V-Dem Institute: Autocratization Surges – Resistance Grows, University of Gothenburg, March 2020.

- Civil society support to the partner CIVICUS, in partnership with Amnesty International, has contributed to the acquittal of peaceful demonstrators under trial in Zambia.
- Support through the Media Development Investment Fund provides financial assistance through loans to independent media in countries with restricted media freedom.
- In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sida support allows the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to effectively monitor and report on human rights violations across the territory. Through the partner TRIAL International, the capacities of the judicial system to handle cases of severe human rights violations and war crimes have been strengthened.

In many countries, corruption constitutes a concrete barrier to escaping poverty and oppression. Where corruption is widespread, all sectors and functions of society are hampered. Corruption undermines the rule of law and reduces trust in and legitimacy of governance and public institutions. Sida's targeted support to anti-corruption organisations and institutions amounted to SEK 137 million in 2019. Other contributions relevant to fighting corruption include those to improve public financial management (SEK 112 million), government administration (SEK 320 million), and media support and free flow of information (SEK 492 million).

TABLE 1: YEARLY DISTRIBUTION PER SUBSECTOR WITHIN DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS, MILLION SEK

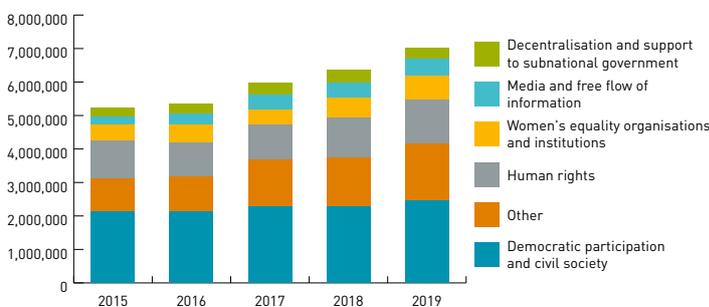


TABLE 2: GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION, %

