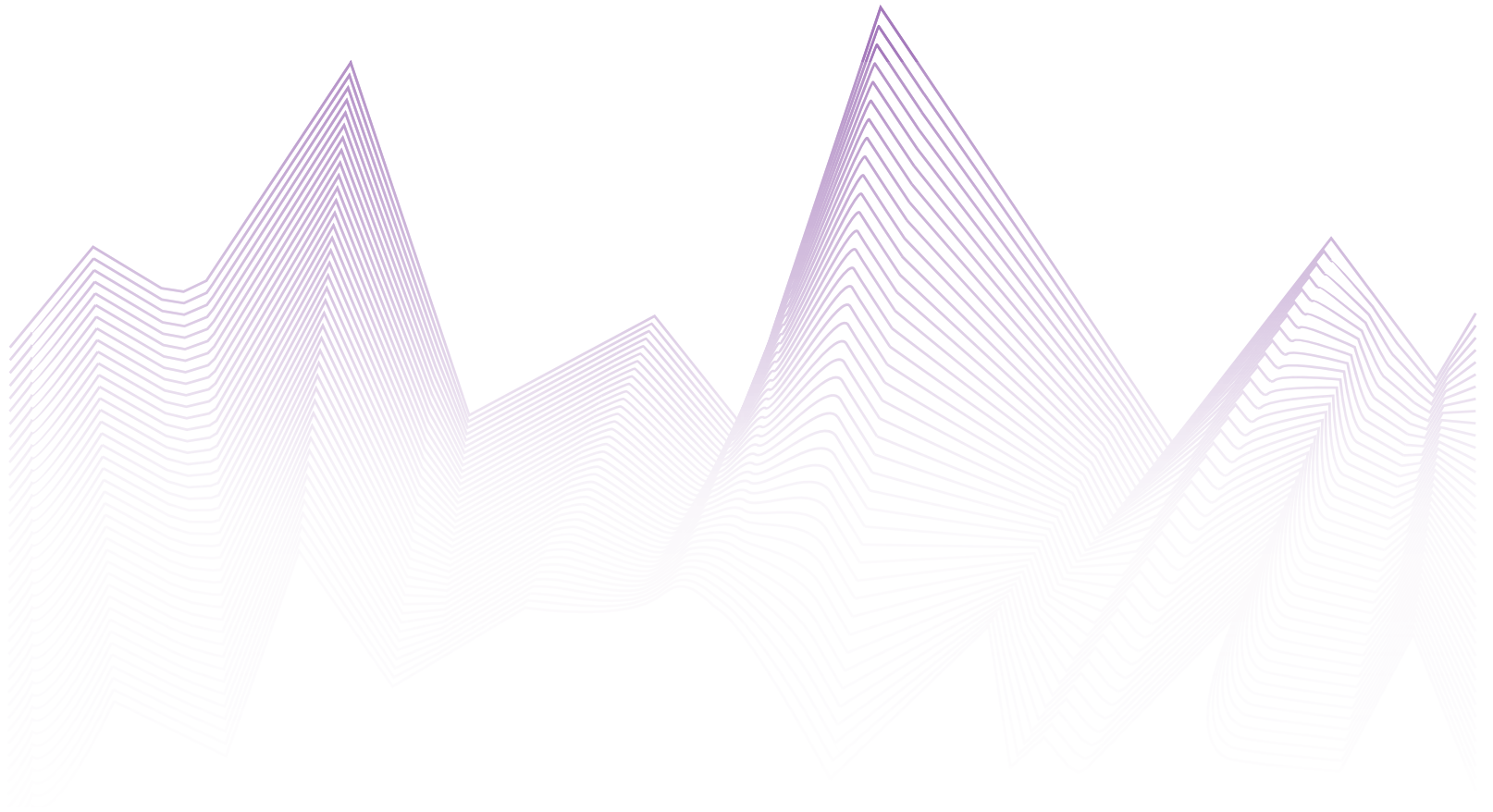




**EXPERT GROUP
FOR AID STUDIES**



2016

THE EBA AID REVIEW

Expert Group for Aid Studies

The Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA) is a central government committee that was established in 2013 with the task of evaluating and analysing Sweden's international development cooperation. Its mandate includes commissioning and conducting evaluations, analyses and studies and disseminating knowledge about the implementation, results and effectiveness of aid. EBA's work is focused on providing analyses of aid from different perspectives and presenting the results through reports and seminars. The overall aim is to contribute to the development of Swedish aid and to building up a long-term knowledge base of high quality.

EBA consists of a chair and nine members. It also includes an expert from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The day-to-day work is managed by a secretariat.

Photo: Jessica Karlsson



Preface

Each year, by 31 March, EBA is to submit a report to the Government that summarises the content and conclusions of the evaluations, analyses and studies that have been published the previous year. In the 2016 Aid Review, we present the results from our operations for 2015, but we also provide an account of current and planned activities for 2016.

EBA's objective is to make a contribution to the development of Sweden's international aid and to building up a knowledge base covering issues relevant to aid. Our ambition is that the studies conducted shall be of a character that allows them to be used to support decision-making concerning priorities, as well as discussions on how international aid is to be implemented. The primary focus of the mandate is to provide studies on issues that are relevant to Swedish aid, though we also hope that the studies will be of international interest.

EBA works with experts in areas relevant to aid who carry out studies and contribute to the discussion in seminars. In addition, the secretariat conducts limited surveys and studies.

We strive to contribute with new perspectives and by highlighting issues that are important to Sweden's international development cooperation. This involves issues that can stimulate discussion and reflection whilst also improving the design and implementation of aid. The ambition is to supply the Government and other concerned aid actors with useful data of high quality.

There are many actors conducting research linked to development and development cooperation. In addition, a large number of evaluations and analyses are conducted each year in both Sweden and abroad. We strive to build on and utilise the knowledge that already exists and to avoid duplicating others' work. Consequently, EBA is actively monitoring trends and the external environment in order to identify relevant questions and areas in which there may be a need for further knowledge. In some cases, we conduct studies in areas where there is already a great deal of knowledge. In such cases, a study is justified on the basis of the need to compile existing knowledge and translate the results of research and evaluation into policy



conclusions. EBA's mandate provides a basis for conducting various types of complementary evaluations, studies and analyses.

In our role as a knowledge provider, we want to contribute to increasing the amount of exchange and dialogue between research, policy and practice. We believe that EBA could play a role in linking up researchers and those who make decisions and implement aid. One way is by using reports and seminars to make relevant research findings better known and accessible for those working with aid. Another way is to open forums for meetings and dialogue by arranging various types of seminars. In 2015, we made further progress in this direction by introducing a new series of reports and seminars – Development Dissertation Briefs – in which the results from recently published dissertations are presented to a wider audience.

Over the course of 2015, we decided on nine reports and conducted twelve seminars. In the 2016 Aid Review, we summarise the main conclusions from these reports and seminars. A brief overview of completed and current activities can be found at the end of the report. More information about our reports and seminars is available on our website www.eba.se. Here you will also find presentations and blogs, as well as sound recordings of the seminars in the form of a podcast (rAIDio).

There have been some changes to the expert group since the 2015 Aid Review. Gun-Britt Andersson and Malin Mobjörk took office in June 2015 and Arne Bigsten in February 2016. Jakob Svensson left his post in February 2016.

We would like to thank all those we have had the pleasure of working with this past year. This appreciation is of course directed at people who have written reports for us, but also everyone who has contributed to reference groups and seminars. Your contributions are vital to EBA's ability to function effectively. In this context, we would also like to take the opportunity to thank all of you who have attended our seminars and have contributed to the discussion in various ways. This adds up to several hundred people, which is outstanding. We are looking forward to further interesting conversations and meetings in 2016.

Stockholm, 31 March 2016



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Introduction

International development cooperation takes place in a global context that is constantly changing – sometimes a great deal, sometimes less so. The year of 2015 will probably go down in history as the year of the major global conferences, when leaders from all over the world gathered together to make decisions about the way forward on a number of major and important issues. The year began in March with a global conference concerning disaster risk reduction in Sendai, where a framework containing overarching targets was agreed upon; one that will remain in force until 2030. The next issue on the agenda was development financing, a theme that was discussed at an international conference in Addis Ababa, where world leaders agreed on a common agenda, known as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. This forms the basis for future and more in-depth international cooperation in a range of areas that have a bearing on issues that are central to Swedish development cooperation.

In September, the UN General Assembly adopted a new global agenda for sustainable development, known as the 2030 Agenda. Seventeen global sustainable development goals have been set. In terms of substance, they constitute an expansion of the previous Millennium Development Goals, which were valid for the period 2000–2015. The new agenda applies to all countries and does not concern development cooperation alone. Finally, world leaders gathered in Paris in December to agree on a new climate agreement within the scope of COP21. This agreement stipulates that developing countries will continue to receive support in order to limit their emissions and adapt their societies to climate change.

The decisions concerning these agendas mean that the international community is in what could be called a transitional period, which has consequences for international development cooperation. The development agenda is increasingly becoming part of a universal agenda that spans a range of policy areas. Partly as a reflection of this, the Government has, at home, announced a relaunch of its policy for global development. The Government has also initiated a revision of the aid policy framework that was adopted by the previous government in 2013. At the time of writing, it is unclear how the new policy framework will differ from the previous one, but it is already clear

that the new Swedish framework will reflect the conclusions from the international conferences that took place in 2015.

Other events that are having an impact on international aid are the historically large humanitarian needs in 2015. The humanitarian system is under great strain. Wars in various parts of the world have not only involved a great deal of local suffering, they have also contributed to extensive migration outside of their immediate surroundings. European countries, and Sweden especially, have received a significantly higher number of asylum seekers than in previous years. As we had already established last year in The Aid Review 2015, these changes are having a direct impact on aid, with increasingly large deductions being made for the reception of refugees from the aid framework – a development that is expected to continue in 2016. A ceiling for these deductions has been set. Nonetheless, we are once again able to establish that even if the aid budget increases, the appropriation for aid actually decreases in nominal terms.

All in all, 2015 was a year with an unusually large number of changes for global development cooperation, which will in turn have an impact on Swedish aid. The year of 2015 was also an eventful year for EBA. In total, we launched nine reports on various themes. On top of that, we launched a new series of reports, Development Dissertation Briefs, which is based on results from new dissertations that are linked to development and aid. We have also been active in arranging seminars, through which we have contributed with new perspectives and stimulated debate in a number of areas that are relevant to Swedish development cooperation.

In our reports, we have drawn attention to a range of different issues. These include the significance of well-functioning institutions and how Sweden can contribute in various ways, what aid donors should think about in partnerships with the private sector and how to encourage increased entrepreneurship among young women. Cooperation with other important actors in the Swedish aid community has also been highlighted, for example through an analysis of changed conditions for providing support to and through actors within civil society and how the central government as a donor can behave in relation to this. Other questions that we have dealt with are the effects of climate-related aid interventions, conflict and development, and concentration within Swedish aid. We have also surveyed how Swedish aid is evaluated. One conclusion we have drawn from this survey is that Swedish aid is evaluated to a great extent, but that there is a need to acquire more

knowledge and to analyse questions that are important to aid, such as how aid should and could be evaluated so that Sweden is able to run an aid programme of a good standard. This is perhaps especially important in a time of changing circumstances and an ongoing discussion about the role of aid, at the same time as there is a great need for support and high expectations of what international is able to achieve.

The results and experience gained from our reports and other activities are presented in more detail in the following sections.

Photo: UN Photo/Cia Pak



The content and transparency of Swedish aid

The government budget for 2015 set out that the aid budget would amount to SEK 40.4 billion. Of this, around SEK 10.9 billion was expected to be used for aid-financed operations in other expenditure areas in the government budget, primarily to cover the cost of receiving asylum seekers in Sweden. The final aid budget decided by the Riksdag thus amounted to SEK 29.5 billion. But what are these billions actually used for? And how accessible is this information?

One example of communication concerning the content of Swedish aid is the list Sida drew up in conjunction with the discussion about the aid cutbacks resulting from the increased cost of receiving refugees in autumn 2015. It was decided that this list – which had widespread coverage in Swedish media and which Sida subsequently published on its website – would highlight those aspects of Swedish aid where it is relatively simple to quantify and where it can be linked directly to individuals (e.g. women and children's welfare) and their access to various types of social services. For someone without much knowledge of Swedish aid, it appears that the aid is largely comprised of specific educational initiatives, health initiatives, humanitarian initiatives and initiatives that focus on water and sanitation. Educational issues that have been a low priority in Swedish aid have been placed first on the list. At the bottom, and more hidden, we find the relatively large quantity of aid focused on civil society and human rights. Democracy – an area that has been the subject of significant amounts of Swedish aid in recent years – is not listed. And climate and gender equality initiatives, which are prioritised areas, are only mentioned in passing. How Sida and other aid actors communicate has an impact on the general public's impression of what current aid actually contains.

EBA would like to contribute to the understanding of the content of aid using both overviews and more in-depth surveys and descriptions. Over the course of the year, EBA has carried out three studies in which a specific area of the



Photo: UNMISS/JC McIlwain

Swedish aid portfolio has been investigated. In short, these reports indicate the following developments in the different areas.

- *Collaboration with the private sector:* In recent years, this area has been highlighted as new and a priority. The EBA report indicates that cooperation with the private sector through direct, joint development initiatives (activities that involve only implementation are not included) account for a relatively small proportion of both total Swedish aid (0.8 per cent in 2014) and in comparison with other donor countries (e.g. Denmark's support was equivalent to 4 per cent). Sida's cooperation with the private sector more than doubled between 2011 and 2014, but from a very low level. The majority of Sida's financing (with the exception of guarantees) is directed at what are known as *Challenge Funds* (2015:06).
- *Support for official societal institutions:* The number of initiatives that contribute to democratic social development has increased in the past ten years and now constitutes a significant portion of the support

provided by Sida. A large part of this increase concerns support for strengthening civil society organisations, while support that aims to strengthen official societal functions has remained relatively unchanged and has thus decreased in relation to other initiatives (2015:07).

- *Climate-related aid interventions*: climate and environment are prioritised issues within Swedish aid. According to the authors of an EBA- report, climate financing is “fragmented and politicised and the aid donors have a high degree of discretion concerning its use”. According to the report, Swedish climate aid increased significantly in conjunction with the Government's specific investment for the period 2008–2013 and then also as a proportion of total Swedish aid. At the same time, the report states that general environmental aid appears to decrease. This indicates that climate initiatives may have increased at the expense of general environmental aid (2015:09).

One challenge for those who want to understand or analyse Swedish development cooperation lies in finding accessible, comprehensible and useful information about the focus and content of the aid. EBA pointed out the difficulties involved in mapping and describing Swedish aid last year. This problem remains. In many cases, it has been difficult for the authors writing report to the EBA to easily obtain appropriate statistics that allow them to describe the portfolio in the area concerned in an understandable way. One recurrent problem is linked to the way initiatives have been coded. One initiative can often be attributed to more than one statistical area.

Swedish statistics must, of course, be adapted to international categorisations, but for reasons of transparency, it can be important to differentiate more between different types of initiatives when reporting on Swedish aid. For example, Rothstein and Tannenberg argue in their EBA report (2015:07) that initiatives aimed at developing democratic processes and those aiming to build up a well-functioning public administration are very different and should therefore be reported separately. Support for public administration, democracy, human rights and gender equality are reported together in Openaid.se. It appears particularly important to increasingly differentiate this reporting as it covers different activities, but also because this involves several different areas that are prioritised in Swedish aid and as such each one of them should be simple to evaluate and track via, for example, Openaid.se.

There have been efforts to improve information. For example, the previous government launched what is known as the transparency guarantee

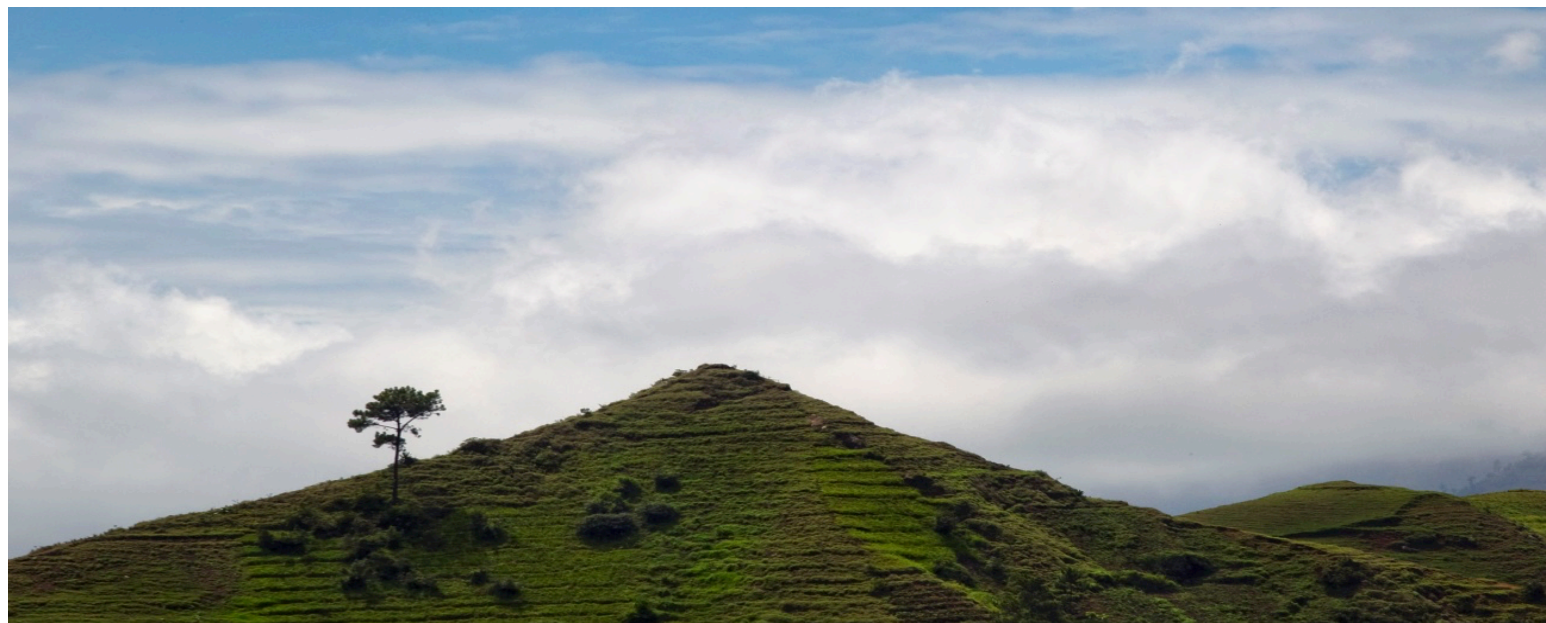


Foto: UN Photo/Logan Abassi

(“transparensgarantin”) in December 2009. The aim was very ambitious: for “all official documents and all official information about aid to be available online. The information is to clearly indicate where, to whom and why aid funding has been paid out, and what the results were”.¹ This ambition was praiseworthy and much information is now available from Openaid.se, but, as EBA established in The Aid Review 2015, transparency involves more than simply making documentation accessible. It is also about how useful the information is for those who want to conduct reviews and analyses. In these respects, the current system still falls short.

The challenge for the organisations responsible seems to lie in specifying who the target groups are (for example Openaid.se) in order to enable adaptation of the system to the needs of the actual target group, their ability to absorb information, and various quality requirements. At the same time, the aid statistics need to be based on appropriate categorisations that are valid in the long term. One question that should be posed is whether it is the improved production of statistics that is needed rather than the unsorted publication of documents. Appropriate statistics that are quality assured and provide the opportunity to monitor aid over time would not only facilitate more and better studies about and for Swedish aid, they would also contribute to providing improved evidence for decision-making and thus ultimately result in better aid (as well as greater understanding among Swedish tax payers about what Swedish aid contributes to). The content and transparency of Swedish aid is an issue that EBA will continue to work on.

¹ Guaranteeing the transparency of aid

Development and aid

The overall goal of Sweden's international development cooperation is to lay the groundwork for better living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression. There needs to be improvement in a range of different areas if this goal is to be achieved. Hence, investigating “the drivers of development” is of great importance to successful and effective aid.

From the start, the EBA has drawn attention to fundamental issues for Swedish aid by inviting discussion about the overall goal and by analysing and reflecting on the focus on poverty and the support for democratic development. We have also endeavoured to investigate what drives development and to discuss what role aid can play in promoting positive change. Over the course of 2015, EBA has presented a number of reports on these issues.

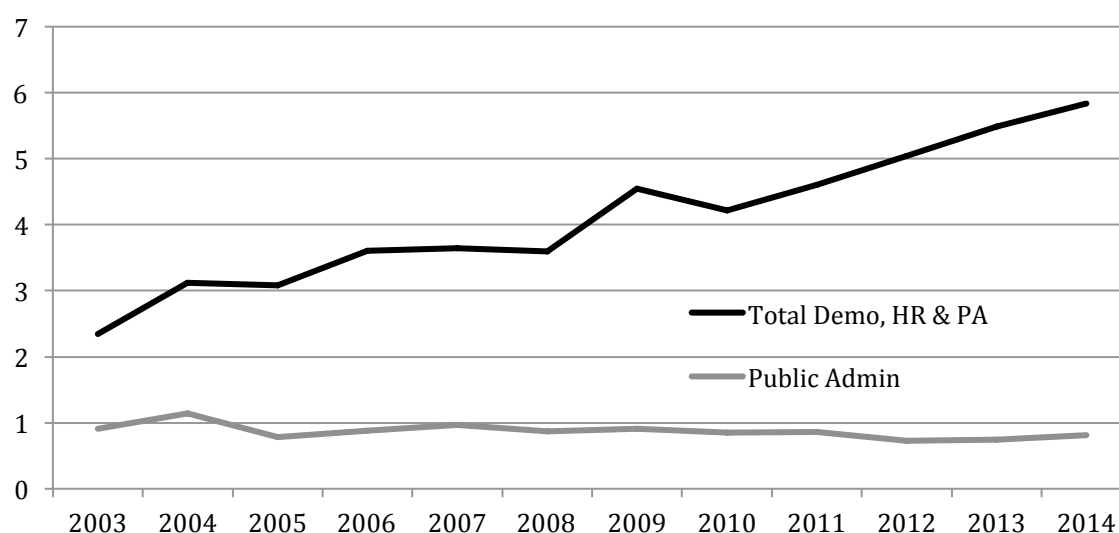
One fundamental question in relation to development cooperation is to understand the drivers of development and why some countries are more successful than others. Academic literature provides many explanations in terms of differences in historical and geographical circumstances, while other explanations instead deal with institutional differences. Several researchers highlight the negative influence that conflict, corruption and a weak state have on a country's development. In recent years, world leaders have highlighted corruption as a critical issue and a phenomenon that must be addressed in order to reduce poverty and promote development. Donors have long been working to counter corruption from the perspective that aid funds may be misused, but what is perhaps more important is to address corruption and weak institutions as a fundamental barrier to development. But how is this done?

In the EBA report 2015:07, Bo Rothstein and Marcus Tannenberg, University of Gothenburg, summarise the current state of knowledge concerning the importance of well-functioning institutions and discuss policy implications in terms of how aid should be directed. One central conclusion is that the quality of government institutions plays a vital role in a country's development. If the aim of Swedish aid is to increase “human wellbeing”, the authors argue that it is important to improve the quality of the Government and increase the capacity of the public administration. Universal education and gender equality

have a positive impact on human wellbeing. According to the authors, there is no evidence that the promotion of democracy leads to better governance and reduced corruption; democracy has an intrinsic value and can be seen as an important goal in itself, but is not necessarily a means to achieve development and reduce poverty.

Democracy, human rights and gender equality have been prioritised issues in Swedish aid for a long time. About one third of the funds provided by Sida are targeted to initiatives that promote these issues. The category “public administration, democracy, human rights and gender equality” includes different types of support, from support for civil society organisations to support aimed at strengthening public administration. However, at the same time as the total level of support for this type of initiative has increased in the past ten years, support for strengthening public administration has decreased.

Diagram 1. Sida's support to public administration as a proportion of the total portfolio for democracy, human rights and support to public administration (SEK, billions)



Comment: Support to public administration includes support for reforms in the public sector and financial system, statistics, policy development and management, decentralisation, etc.

EBA agrees with the authors' opinion that there should be a clear differentiation in both policy and practice between aid that aims to develop democratic processes (e.g. parliaments, political parties and electoral systems) and initiatives that aim to improve the quality of governance and the public administration. It is important to clarify both aims and expected results since all good things do not necessarily go hand in hand.



Photo: Erik Haglund

It is not obvious how an external actor can contribute to democratic development. A common approach in Swedish aid has been to provide support to civil society organisations in order to promote democratic development through participation and active citizenship. But how should donors act in a changing world? An EBA report by Richard Youngs (2015:01) demonstrates the challenges involved in providing support for democratic development in a situation where the conditions for providing support to civil society have changed in parallel with increased diversification of civil society itself through the emergence of new actors and protest movements that differ from more traditional social movements. The author underlines that the contextual competence of those who make decisions concerning this type of support is crucial. In the report, the author argues that support for civil society can contribute to the development and expansion of democracy. But the picture is not unequivocal. According to the author, there are risks involved in this type of support. Not all protest movements and actors that emerge from within civil society are standard-bearers for democracy.

All in all, the reports above demonstrate that it is not obvious what can be achieved with “democracy aid”. This is also a conclusion of a previous EBA report on international party assistance (2014:03), which is based on a review of research and evaluations. Accordingly, there are grounds to continue discussing and problematising the basic premises of Swedish aid in this area and what can be expected to be achieved with various types of initiative.



Photo: UN Photo/Marco Dormino

Other perspectives on drivers of development deal with the significance of a functional private sector. Aid can contribute to this in various ways. Well-functioning public institutions can contribute to a climate that is friendly to investment and hence have a major significance to social development. However, building up public institutions is a long-term project and is not always a viable option for aid donors if the country's government is not interested in this type of development. In which case, other measures that act in the short term may be required. An EBA report on entrepreneurship and micro-credits by Kjetil Bjorvatn (2015:04) highlights the issue of job creation activities and how to involve groups of young people who would otherwise be unemployed in productive activities. The study is based on experiences from Tanzania, but the results relate to demographic challenges faced by many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, where the majority of the population are under the age of 20 and new jobs have to be created in order to involve all young people in productive activities. The study provides examples where initiatives targeted at young women –engaging them to start small businesses – are able to contribute to both higher income and greater empowerment. The best results are achieved if educational initiatives involving entrepreneurship are combined with access to financial resources. Even though small-scale entrepreneurship is not a solution to all problems, the report shows that such support can be justified on the basis of a pragmatic approach to promoting development.

Another area that has been highlighted in recent years is collaboration with the private sector. The idea is that this kind of aid will lead to businesses in developed countries investing more in developing countries and thus creating jobs in these countries. However, for an aid actor, working together with the private sector has its risks, as described in a report written by de Silva, Kokko and Norberg (2015:06). Even though the private sector has a vital role in economic development, it is not obvious that private companies' interests are always consistent with the objectives of aid. Instead, there is usually a tension between them. That is why the authors state there are good reasons to carefully consider which type of cooperation contributes to the aid policy objectives.

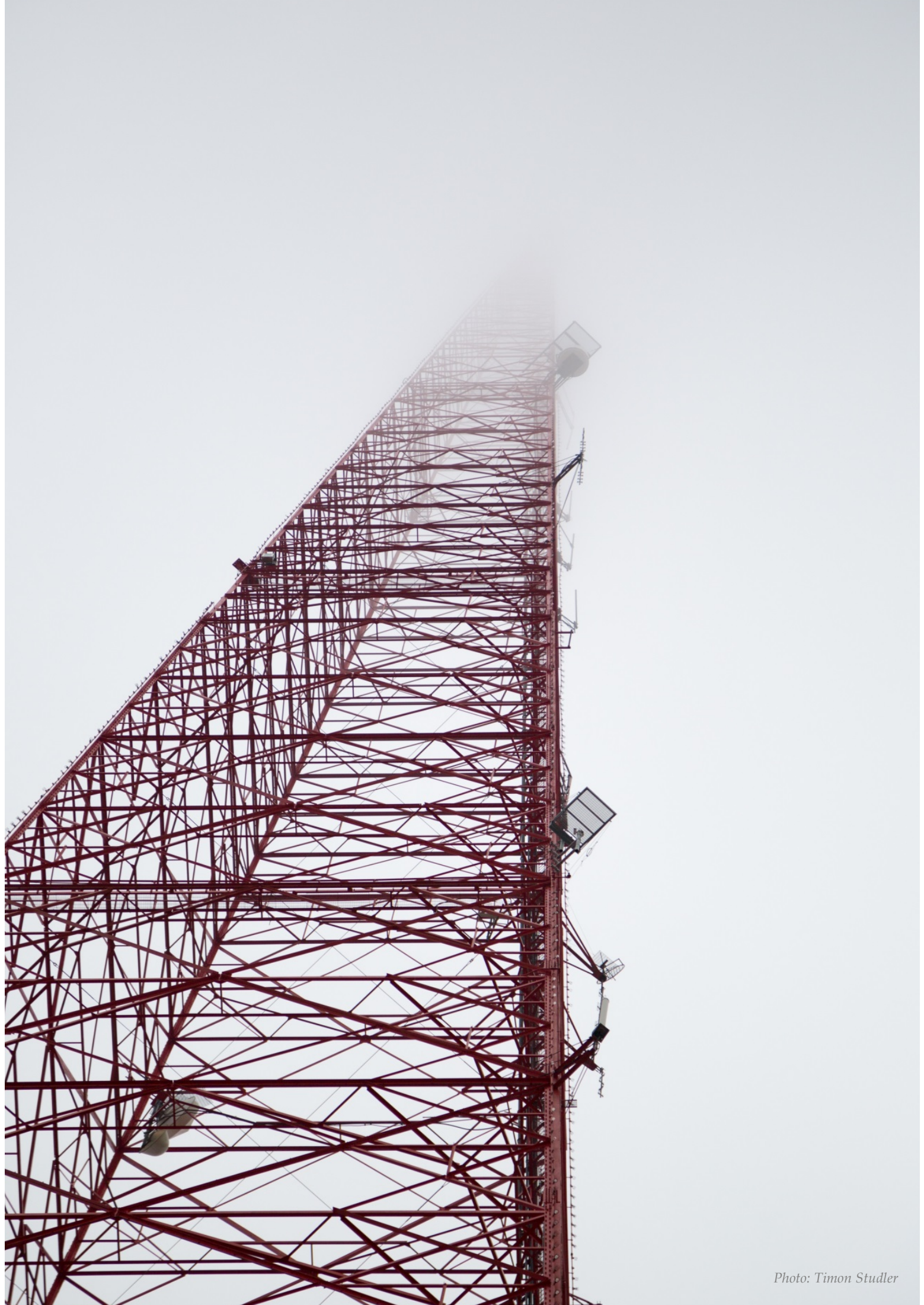


Photo: Timon Studler

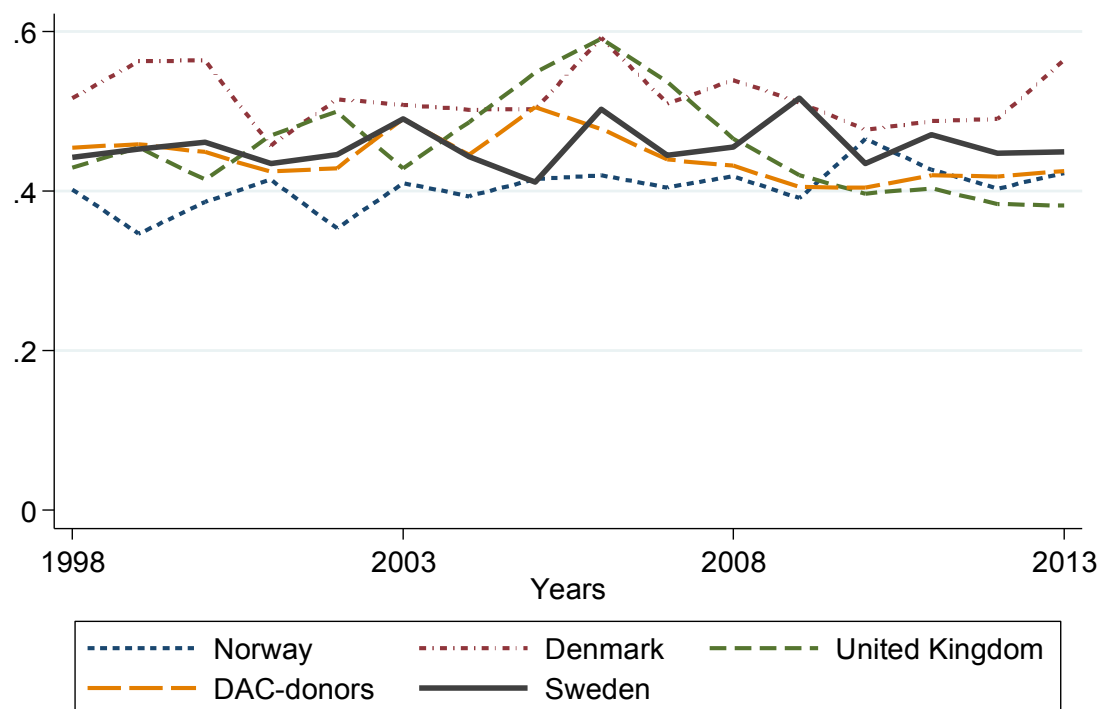
Aid effectiveness and results

The Paris Agenda from 2005 on increased aid effectiveness has been described as a paradigm shift in terms of international aid policy. By signing up to the agenda, Sweden has made a commitment to work according to a number of principles for more effective development cooperation. This involves, for example, increased ownership, improved donor coordination, a clearer focus on results and donors working on the basis of national plans and using developing countries' own systems and institutions. Over the years, the agenda's clear focus on results has been reflected in the Government's management of Swedish aid, for example through result strategies and more stringent requirements concerning the reporting of results. About ten years after these principles of aid effectiveness were formulated, the number of references to the agenda has decreased and many argue that the Paris Agenda is dead. At the same time, the fundamental issues of effectiveness and results remain relevant and pertinent. In order to maintain a high volume of aid, it is important to be able to report on results.

One important issue is the consequences of one donor providing aid to many countries and many sectors. If aid has a high level of dispersion, there may be effectiveness problems that are fundamentally due to transaction costs (e.g. administration costs) for both donors and recipients. The degree of dispersion of aid is often used as an indicator of aid effectiveness and is something that the OECD-DAC draws attention to in its recurrent peer reviews of donors. On several occasions, Sweden has been criticised in these reviews for dispersing its aid too thinly between and within countries.

In an attempt to reduce the dispersion, the Swedish Government launched a policy in 2007 aimed at concentrating aid to fewer partner countries and sectors. An EBA report by Rune Jensen Hagen (2015:03) analysed how successful this reform has been and what the situation is like today. The report indicates that in direct connection to the reform, Sweden concentrated its aid by winding up cooperation with several countries, but that the dispersion subsequently increased again (higher values indicate more concentrated aid) – see Diagram 2. At the same time, it appears that Sweden is doing relatively well in comparison with other DAC countries.

Diagram 2: Theil index, 1998–2013, which shows how concentrated aid is.



Source: Author's calculations

Source: Figure 3.5 in EBA report 2015:3. The measure of concentration (Theil) takes into account the dispersion both between countries and between sectors within countries. The figure shows the overall measure. A higher index means more concentrated aid.

The diagram provides an overall appraisal of how aid is dispersed between both countries and sectors. According to Hagen, the dispersion between sectors has not changed appreciably over the course of the period so the changes primarily reflect the dispersion between countries. Since the reform, the number of Swedish partnerships via “country strategies” has decreased and the 23 “phase-out countries” listed in the reform have been phased out.² Hence, this means that new partnerships have replaced the old ones.

One conclusion from the seminar for the report was that there are several reasons why a donor becomes involved in new countries. These may involve, for example, responses to natural disasters or difficult situations as a result of war and conflict in which humanitarian aid in one phase may transition to

² The stated objective was to reduce the number of partner countries from 67 to just above 30. The number of countries listed in the country strategies in each budget bill amounted to 43 in 2005, 65 in 2006 (it is notable that six of the 23 phase-out countries, El Salvador, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Lebanon, Nigeria, Pakistan were not among these), 50 in 2008 and gradually decreased to 40 in 2014. No list was appended to the budget bill for 2007.

more long-term development cooperation in a later phase. Another explanation to the difficulty of reducing the number of partner countries is foreign policy considerations.

The dispersion of aid between sectors has not been subject to the same discussion as dispersion between countries. EBA believes that the issue of sectoral focus is at least as relevant as the issue of partner countries. Rune Hagen's report indicates that sectoral dispersion has not changed in recent years. However, he has not investigated whether there have been changes to how aid is provided, e.g. whether increased coordination is taking place between other donors that could counteract the increased transaction costs that arise when several donors are active in the same sector. The dispersion between sectors is closely linked to the type of aid contributions that are prioritised. According to the Government, cooperation with civil society or private sector organisations was not meant to be affected by the sectoral focus.³ This may itself be the reason why the dispersion is still large as these actors operate in many different sectors. The Government has also declared that aid is to be catalytic and innovative, which by definition involves a certain dispersion. Aid involving relatively small initiatives may also sometimes make a difference through cooperation of a transformative nature. Such partnerships can take place through, for example, the financing of vocational education and entrepreneurship in the way indicated by Bjorvatn (2015:4).

However, it is not reasonable to expect Sweden to have sufficient knowledge and administrative capacity to be an effective donor within pretty much all areas. As is the case within many other sectors of society, e.g. the business sector, it should be effective to concentrate Swedish aid more on areas in which Sweden has knowledge and expertise and thus a greater chance of making a difference.

One area where Sweden should have expertise is highlighted by Matt Andrews in EBA report 2015:05. This is cooperation concerning reform within the public sector. According to the author, Sweden should have particularly valuable knowledge based on experience gained from its own reforms. Andrews analyses whether Sweden has contributed to improved reforms in the public sector in developing countries and finds that this was true in some cases, but that Swedish experiences could be utilised to a much greater extent. As an understanding of context is vital to good results, Andrews argues that

³ P. 63.

the ability to be a relevant partner is dependent on combining several different types of expertise (experience of reforms, knowledge of aid and understanding of the context in question).

In conjunction with the seminar at which the report was launched, the issue was raised of how Sweden can best meet the expressed demand by making use of its “comparative advantage”. At the time of writing, it appears to be difficult to put together a “team Sweden” containing all the expertise that may be required. The required expertise with respect to reforms within administration, financing issues and economic policy is often possessed by people who do not work with or are not financed by aid funds. EBA believes that there should be scope here for taking the initiative politically and reviewing how Sweden could build up a structure at the national level that makes it possible to provide the requisite knowledge in a better and simpler way than is the case today.

One alternative to reducing transaction costs by concentrating aid that has been highlighted by Hagen is to increase the proportion of aid provided through multilateral organisations. The benefit of this would be that initiatives are coordinated with other donors. In EBA report 2015:09, the authors show that the development in the area of climate has been the opposite, with an increase in the proportion of bilateral aid.

One prerequisite for the ability to contribute to development is that the aid is long-term. The burden of proof should therefore be high for those who want to lead Sweden into new engagements. The same type of consideration should also form the basis of the aid cutbacks that will be necessary as a result of the increase in costs associated with receiving refugees.

Photo: UN Photo/Logan Abassi



The role of aid

As we mentioned in the introduction, we are now in a transitional period with new conditions globally and nationally that, in various ways, will affect the prospects for international development cooperation. At the same time, global challenges require global solutions; if aid has ever been seen as a miracle cure for solving problems related to poverty, this time is now long in past. Climate change and conflict have a decisive impact on people's ability to get out of poverty. Consequently, it is becoming even more important for other policy areas to contribute to fighting poverty and generating development. At the same time, there is a pressure for aid funding to be used for such ends as addressing climate change.

Over the course of the year, EBA has drawn attention to the issue of aid initiatives addressing double goals and what implications this might have for future aid. In EBA report 2015:09, Köhlin, Pattanayak and Sills, among others, analyse what is currently known about the feasibility of “killing two birds with one stone” within one initiative; both reducing the climate impact and improving people's living conditions. The report states clearly that we still know very little about the effects of initiatives with double goals. The approach of multiple goals undeniably raises questions about future aid. Is it fundamentally a good idea that initiatives aim to achieve such diverse goals? Is there not a risk with this approach that neither goal is achieved in the most effective way? What is the best way to unite the poverty goals with other goals?

Another question that EBA highlighted last year is whether the focus and character of aid will change in the long term as low-income countries' economic development increases; will it focus more on global challenges such as research, control of infectious diseases and antibiotic resistance? A number of global challenges, among them antibiotic resistance, have an impact on the living conditions of both poor and rich. One risk involved in using aid funding for these challenges is that the poorest people, who are the hardest and most costly to reach with aid, will have to bear a disproportionate part of the burden of these global challenges.

At the same time, international aid funding is a drop in the ocean when it comes to meeting global challenges. This has led to expectations that

international aid has to be both innovative and catalytic. There are great expectations that collaboration with the private sector will result in a greater return on aid funds in terms of development and poverty reduction. In EBA's report on collaboration with the private sector (2015:06), de Silva, Kokko and Norberg state that this type of interaction is hardly a miracle solution, and call for reasonable expectations of what such aid initiatives can achieve. There are good examples, but also the opposite. In a report concerning business and human rights (EBA 2015:08), Kløcker Larsen and Atler demonstrate the importance of having good knowledge and good procedures in place so that initiatives that aim to promote entrepreneurship do not risk leading to human rights violations.

In summary, we note that the circumstances for international aid are undergoing change, at the same time as the expectations are high and it is therefore important to take a position on the role of aid. It is of course vital to draw attention to the global challenges and make a contribution to tackling them, but the question, which is ultimately political, is to what extent this should affect traditional aid. It is vital that the focus on fighting poverty and humanitarian need is not crowded out.

Photo: UN Photo/Philip Teuscher



Evaluation of Swedish aid

International development cooperation has distinct requirements in terms of knowledge bases, critical perspectives and learning. One important instrument for this is evaluations of aid interventions.. In 2015, EBA has surveyed the Swedish “evaluation landscape”. In addition, evaluations that have been conducted have formed an important foundation for several EBA studies.

A survey from EBA (2015:02) shows that a large number of evaluations of various programmes and projects are produced each year. In 2013, close to 300 evaluations of Swedish aid were conducted by many different actors and a large and heterogeneous group of consultants.⁴ The report estimates that half of the bilateral aid initiatives were evaluated at some point. The majority of these evaluations adhere to a set pattern in which external evaluators are commissioned to assess interventions on the basis of similar criteria and using a similar method. The evaluations are normally conducted mid-term or at the end of a project or programme period. All in all, this means there is a measure of standardisation and ritual in the evaluation of aid, which raises the question of whether the evaluation efforts meet the needs of aid practitioners and the groups being targeted.

Another question is how accessible the results of evaluations are to those with a general interest in learning more about Swedish aid. EBA notes that the evaluations commissioned by Sida are normally easily accessible, but that evaluations commissioned by Sida's partners, civil society organisation and central government authorities are less accessible as they rarely publish their evaluations on the internet. Very few evaluations contain summaries in Swedish. All in all, the system's decentralised structure makes it difficult to gain an overview of the evaluations of Swedish aid.

The majority of evaluations concern individual projects and programmes and the primary target group is, in this respect, a small group of people (often officials at embassies or people in the regional offices of civil society organisations) who are responsible for the project or programme. Such evaluations are primarily used as a basis for decisions concerning the project

⁴ A total of 267 evaluations of Swedish aid were identified for 2013. Evaluations of multilateral organisations and EU aid are not included.

or programme in question. Both Sida and EBA have conducted or plan to conduct synthesis studies summarising the results from a range of evaluations. This is one way to make use of the results from a larger number of evaluations and disseminate them to a wider group. It is also a good approach, which will afford an overview of existing knowledge in a certain area.

One example of this type of study is the EBA report on climate-related aid interventions (2015:09). In this report, the authors argue that although a large number of evaluations of climate-related initiatives have been carried out, there are relatively few studies analysing the effects in a robust way. In addition, the report indicates that there is a gap between aid practice and research, a so called know-do gap. This means that the research conducted is not necessarily focused on the questions and efforts prioritised by aid actors, but also that getting researchers interested in efforts and questions of direct relevance to aid is a challenge. There is of course a dilemma here in a situation given that donors want to do the right things and obtain a return on their aid-financed interventions.

The authors also argue in favour of more effort being devoted at an early stage in order to lay the necessary groundwork for both analysis and learning. It is difficult to say whether the gap between research and practice is large or not in other areas before the situation has been analysed. Nevertheless, according to EBA, there appears to be a general challenge in terms of utilising research results, and that the interest in and ability to evaluate and assess long-term impact of aid should be strengthened.

One observation from EBA's survey of Swedish evaluations (2015:02) is that an assessment of the impact is often demanded in conjunction with the procurement of evaluations, but that more established methods for studying such impacts are seldom or never used. At the same time, the survey shows that there are limited opportunities for the evaluators to conduct impact assessments. The evaluation assignment often contains a large number of questions alongside impact assessments and the budget for conducting an evaluation is often far less than what a well-implemented impact study can be expected to cost. Furthermore, the procurement is normally undertaken far too early for it to be possible to assess the impact. One consequence of this is that we still know quite little about the impact of individual Swedish aid initiatives. In order to assess impact retrospectively, it is essential to set up the initiative in a way that allows it to be evaluated. In particular, this involves



Photo: UN Photo/Tobin Jones

specifying the project's goals, which affects the possibility of achieving good results. The importance of thinking through at an early stage how the impact will be evaluated and what expertise may be required is something specifically highlighted by EBA's report on climate-related aid interventions.

Rigorous evaluations are costly. If there is a desire to learn more about the impact of aid initiatives, it is better to conduct fewer but more rigorous evaluations than many small evaluations that lack the qualifications to say anything of substance about the results. It should be possible to obtain greater benefit from the evaluations conducted by others. EBA's survey indicates that many evaluations are conducted as one-off initiatives. At the same time, we know that in many cases evaluations of very similar initiatives are conducted internationally and that they can provide relevant knowledge and information about what results to expect from a certain project or programme. International development cooperation has distinct requirements in terms of knowledge bases, critical perspectives and learning. One important instrument for this is evaluations of aid interventions.. In 2015, EBA has surveyed the Swedish "evaluation landscape". In addition, evaluations that have been conducted have formed an important foundation for several EBA studies.

Experiences and future activities

EBA is to conduct analyses and evaluations that can contribute to building up knowledge as a basis for policy decisions. Such a mandate brings with it a clear duty: identifying interesting and relevant questions for which studies may be justified. One ambition since the formation of EBA has been to supplement analyses and evaluations conducted by others.

Evaluations are particularly important in international development cooperation as the initiatives are implemented in countries other than those from which they are financed. Swedish tax payers have limited opportunities to observe how aid funds are used and what results it leads to. In addition, in many cases aid recipients lack opportunities to influence decisions on how money is allocated and used. In other words, learning about the results of aid is made more difficult by geographical distance and how operations are organised.

One question that lingers following the mapping conducted by EBA of all the evaluations for 2013 is what impression these have made in terms of changing the focus and implementation of aid. To what extent do organisations within the Swedish aid community take in information and learn lessons from evaluations? Who is to learn from the evaluations produced and which target groups are the evaluations tailored for? According to EBA's assessment, there appears to be a gap between the quantity of individual project evaluations and the need for more aggregated knowledge for policy decisions-. Here, we hope that the EBA will be able to play an important role.

A single evaluation will rarely provide definitive answers on what works. This is something the EBA has taken on board. In addition to studies with an evaluative approach, we have also commissioned studies that systematically review research and established knowledge within various fields. Over the course of 2016, EBA will publish the experiences and lessons learned from at least three evaluation reviews; two focusing on conclusions from evaluations of education aid and one focusing on the long-term sustainability of aid interventions .We hope thereby to contribute new perspectives in relation to



Photo: Partick Tomasso

the evaluations of Swedish aid that have already been carried out by others. We will also continue to work on publishing analyses of evaluation methods.

Just as important as our studies are our seminars at which we present the results of a study. The intention is to place the report in context and allow for alternative analyses, experiences and perspectives. The idea is for the seminars to stimulate discussion of the themes of the studies, provide a forum for researchers, decision makers and practitioners and thus contribute to the dissemination of the results. Although the report may often be quite narrow in order to be sufficiently in-depth, it is not unusual for the seminar to result in a wider discussion about the applicability of the report.

To carry out our task, we have to relate to current changes within international development cooperation both internationally and domestically. The adoption of Agenda 2030 and the relaunch of the policy for global development involve both an opportunity and a clear challenge for Swedish aid. As noted, it is a challenge that the agendas contain so many dimensions of development that the need to focus and concentrate aid may be made more difficult. Consequently, the question of how Sweden can make a difference through its assistance within the scope of Agenda 2030 and what role international development cooperation is to have in relation to the policy for global development and broad development agendas become even more important. In future, many of EBA's studies will tie in to the questions and agendas that

have been in the limelight thanks to the major conferences in 2015, as well as the policy for global development.

Some trends from last year continue. In 2015, there were historically large humanitarian needs and the humanitarian system remains under great strain. Humanitarian issues will need to be prioritised internationally and they will be discussed in conjunction with a major international conference in Istanbul in May 2016. Contributing through relevant analyses that can lead to improvements in Swedish humanitarian aid is something that EBA considers vital.

Several low-income countries may be expected to become middle-income countries in years to come. Consequently, Swedish aid may come to focus increasingly on what are known as fragile states, including areas in conflict and in post-conflict states. The importance of having good knowledge of how to target and implement initiatives in such contexts is therefore of great significance to Swedish aid. This is one theme where EBA expects to be able to contribute with greater knowledge in 2016.

The large streams of refugees that we have seen in 2015 are expected to continue in 2016. Migration and refugee issues will thus be high on the political agenda, which will also have an impact on Swedish aid. In this context, EBA would like to contribute to an objective discussion on what role aid should have in relation to migration issues.

At the same time as EBA strives to be current, its operations have a long-term perspective. Gender equality and women's role in development have been prioritised issues in Swedish aid for many years. The Government has emphasised this priority by launching a feminist foreign policy and aid policy. The importance of investing in gender equality is confirmed in several EBA reports published in 2015. However, the question is how to work in order to achieve the best results. One way the Government has chosen is to reinforce efforts involving what is known as gender mainstreaming. The EBA intends to contribute to improving knowledge of what methods of achieving greater gender equality actually work.

In 2015, we have been through a number of learning experiences when it comes to the opportunities, but also the risks, for the state of cooperating with other actors within the Swedish aid community. We have highlighted support to and through civil society, as well as interactions with the private sector. Cooperation with large multilateral organisations has previously been

acknowledged by EBA. Given that this type of organisations, including multi-bi support, accounts for more than half of Swedish aid, it is important that EBA is also able to contribute with studies leading to greater knowledge in this area.

The changes in the world around us involve not only new challenges, but also new opportunities. One example highlighted in the World Development Report 2016⁵ deals with information technology and how this can be used in a development context. One observation is that a modern development agenda should address the fact that digitalisation may be a fundamental aspect of the capacity building required in many parts of the world.

In 2016, EBA plans to continue publishing studies that link directly to questions about the focus, implementation, results and effectiveness of aid. In the 2015 Aid Review, EBA highlighted the poverty focus of Swedish aid. We are now undertaking further work with this theme through, for example, two evaluations that focus on the impact of Swedish aid on poverty reduction. One of these evaluations focused on the more than 50-year-old bilateral aid to Tanzania. The second evaluation aims to study the impact on poverty reduction of Swedfund's investments.

If EBA's reports, seminars and other knowledge-based activities are to remain relevant and useful, it is important that the quality of our products remains high. We will therefore continue our efforts involving broader analyses and dialogue with relevant stakeholders and actors so as to identify appropriate questions. In addition, we will continue to safeguard the quality of our reports by always using reference groups with a broad expertise to the studies that are carried out.

⁵ World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends

Table: Current studies. Please note that EBA's reference groups have a strictly advisory role and are neither responsible for the content of reports nor necessarily agree with their conclusions and recommendations.

Theme and Description	Author(s)
<p><i>Synthesis evaluation of education aid</i></p> <p>The study synthesises experimental and quantitative evaluations of international education aid.</p> <p>Reference group: Stellan Arvidsson Hyving (Sida), Anna Tompsett (SU)</p>	<p>Paul Glewwe, Amy Damon, Suzanne Wisniewski, Bixuan Sun</p>
<p><i>Capturing complexity and content: Evaluating aid to education</i></p> <p>The study synthesises various types of evaluations of international education aid. The study has a specific focus on the complexity and context of initiatives.</p> <p>Reference group: Stein-Erik Kruse, Penina Mlama, Aaron Benavo, Gerd Hanne Fosen, Stellan Arvidsson Hyving (Sida), Gustav Petersson</p>	<p>Joel Samoff, Jane Leer, Michelle Reddy</p>
<p><i>Who makes decisions concerning Swedish aid funding?</i></p> <p>A survey of the financial governance of aid.</p> <p>Reference group: Christine Annemalm (ESV), Eva Hagwall (Fi/BA), Ulrika Meyer (Swedish National Audit Office)</p>	<p>EBA</p>
<p><i>Evaluation methods – opportunities and challenges involved in QCA</i></p> <p>A step-by-step guide to the application and quality assurance of the qualitative comparative analysis method in the evaluation of aid operations.</p> <p>Reference group: Jos Vaessen (Maastricht Univ.), Laura Camfield (Univ. of East Anglia), Lennart Peck (Sida), Rick Davies (independent consultant)</p>	<p>Barbara Befani</p>
<p><i>Sustaining a development policy. Results and responsibility for the Swedish Policy for Global Development.</i></p> <p>A study about how to understand the challenges involved in implementing the Swedish Policy for Global Development.</p>	<p>Måns Felleesson, Lisa Román</p>

<p>Reference group: Ulrika Grandin (Ministry for Foreign Affairs), Peter Sörbom (CONCORD), Jan Landahl (ex-Government Offices/Swedish National Audit Office), Daniel Tarschys (SU)</p>	
<p>Management approaches for enhancing results in development cooperation</p> <p>A study about the results agenda in international aid and possible alternative approaches to working as an aid actor in order to ensure results.</p> <p>Reference group: Anders Ivarsson-Westerberg (Södertörn), Janet Vähämäki (SCORE), Rebecka Kitzing Ivarsson and Joakim Molander (Sida), Ray C Rist (consultant)</p>	Cathy Shutt
<p>Aid to regional development in southern Africa – what works and why?</p> <p>This study looks at how regional development and integration in southern Africa can and should be encouraged using external support.</p> <p>Reference group: Elling Tjønneland (CMI), Fantu Cheru (African Studies Centre), Therese Sjömander Magnusson (SIWI), Johanna Teague (Ministry for Foreign Affairs)</p>	Fredrik Söderbaum, Therese Brolin
<p>The UN Sustainable Development Goals and Sweden's Post-2015 Responsibility</p> <p>This study analyses the coordination and division of responsibility between the national actors responsible for realising the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).</p> <p>Reference group: Åsa Persson (SEI), Hanna Hansson (Concord)</p>	Kristina Jönsson, Magdalena Bexell
<p>Swedish aid in a new age</p> <p>A study of what forms of aid have the highest likelihood of contributing to the aid policy objectives and what should be prioritised. The analysis is based on social science development theory.</p> <p>Reference group: Stefan de Vylder, Torben M Andersen (Århus Uni.), Jan Bjerninger, Christer Gunnarson (LU)</p>	Per Molander
<p>Evaluation of Sweden's Long-term Development Cooperation with Tanzania</p> <p>Evaluation focusing on the impact on poverty of the aid Sweden has been providing to Tanzania for just over 50 years.</p>	Mark McGillivray, David Carpenter, Oliver Morrissey, Julie Thaarup

<p>Reference group: Arne Bigsten (GU), Samuel Wangwe (Uni. of Dar Es Salaam), Göran Hydén, Gun-Britt Andersson (EBA), Bertil Odén, Verena Knippel (Tanzania), Eva Tobisson (Ministry for Foreign Affairs)</p>	
<p>Evaluation of Sweden's Development Cooperation with Uganda</p> <p>Evaluation focusing on the significance of internal factors to the effectiveness of aid.</p> <p>Reference group: Nilima Gulrajani, Opira Otto, Pamela K. Mbabazi, Stefan Swartling Peterson (UU), Måns Fellessen (NAI)</p>	Stein-Erik Kruse
<p>Combating poverty – anti-discrimination measures; an inventory of knowledge</p> <p>A study that analyses the impact of anti-discrimination measures on groups that are subject to discrimination.</p> <p>Reference group: Composed of the CPAN; Julia Schalk, EBA</p>	Andrew Shepherd
<p>The one per cent target – a critical review</p> <p>This study is an analysis of the one per cent target's origin and impact. It's advantages and disadvantages are identified with the aim of stimulating debate.</p> <p>Reference group: Anders Forsse, Annika Sundén, Gun-Britt Andersson, Hans Rosling</p>	Lars Anell
<p>Evaluation of the impact of Swedfund's activities</p> <p>This evaluation studies the impact on poverty of Swedfund's investments.</p> <p>Reference group: Karin Kronhöffer, Henrik Schaumbürg-Muller</p>	Stephen Spratt, Chris Barnett, Charley Clarke
<p>Is Swedish aid sustainable?</p> <p>This study synthesises conclusions concerning Swedish aid initiatives' long-term sustainability on the basis of recently conducted evaluations.</p> <p>Reference group: Not yet appointed</p>	EBA
<p>Animal health in development cooperation</p> <p>This study focuses on the significance of animal health to poverty reduction and food security.</p>	Ulf Magnusson, Arvid Uggla, Jonathan Rushton

<p>Reference group: Andreas Davelid (Swedish Board of Agriculture), Inge Gerremo (consultant), Mats Åberg (Sida)</p>	
<p><i>The Local Turn of Peacebuilding – Revising a Dogma?</i></p> <p>This report studies how local perspectives in peacebuilding relate to a number of prioritisations in Swedish development cooperation such as local democracy, gender perspectives and the role of civil society in post-conflict countries.</p> <p>Reference group: Kristine Höglund (Uppsala University), Joakim Molander (Sida), Chris Coulter (Ministry for Foreign Affairs)</p>	<p>Joakim Öjendal</p>
<p><i>Aid Evaluation: Learning from experience?</i></p> <p>A study that uses a multi-disciplinary approach to search for explanations to the difficulties involved in contributing to learning and change in international aid on the basis of evaluations.</p> <p>Reference group: Not yet appointed</p>	<p>Hilde Reinertsen, Desmond McNeill, Kristian Bjørkdahl</p>
<p><i>Research Aid Revisited: Understanding Swedish research aid in the current state of world development – a historically grounded analysis of future policy options</i></p> <p>This study analyses Swedish research aid as one aspect of Swedish development cooperation from a historical perspective, but in relation to current global challenges.</p> <p>Reference group: Måns Lönnroth, Rolf Carlman, Lena Johansson De Chateau (Faugert), Sylvia Schwaag Serger (Vinnova)</p>	<p>Sverker Sörlin, David Nilsson</p>

Activities in 2015

In 2015, EBA decided on nine reports, the majority of which were presented in conjunction with seminars. In addition to these reports, EBA has launched a new series of publications – Development Dissertation Briefs (DDBs); summaries of new dissertations. We published seven DDBs last year. EBA delivered 12 seminars over the course of the year. In all, the audience has been mixed and just over 600 people attended our seminars.

EBA reports:

- 2015:01 *Rethinking Civil Society and Support for Democracy*, Richard Youngs
- 2015:02 *Utvärdering av svenskt bistånd – en kartläggning*, Expertgruppen för biståndsanalys
- 2015:03 *Concentration difficulties? An analysis of Swedish aid proliferation*, Rune Jansen Hagen
- 2015:04 *Youth, entrepreneurship and development*, Kjetil Bjorvatn
- 2015:05 *Has Sweden injected realism into public financial management reforms in partner countries?* Matt Andrews
- 2015:06 *Now open for business: joint development initiatives between the private and public sectors in development cooperation*, Sara Johansson de Silva, Ari Kokko och Hanna Norberg
- 2015:07 *Making development work: the quality of government approach*, Bo Rothstein och Marcus Tannenberg
- 2015:08 *Business and Human Rights in development cooperation – has Sweden incorporated the UN Guiding Principles?* Rasmus Kløcker Larsen och Sandra Adler
- 2015:09 *In search of double dividends from climate change interventions: Evidence on forest conservation and household energy transitions*, Gunnar Köhlin, Subhrendu K. Pattanayak, Erin Sills, Eskil Mattsson, Madelene Ostwald, Ariana Salas, Daniel Ternald

Development Dissertation Briefs (DDB):

DDB 2015:01	<i>Institutional impediments and reluctant actors – the limited role of democracy aid in democratic development, Agnes Cornell</i>
DDB 2015:02	<i>Aiding science: an analysis of Swedish research aid policy 1973-2008, Veronica Brodén Gyberg</i>
DDB 2015:03	<i>Transformative social policy in development? Demystifying conditional cash transfers in Latin America, Johan Sandberg</i>
DDB 2015:04	<i>Public participation in constitution building: an effective strategy for enhancing democracy? Abrak Saati</i>
DDB 2015:05	<i>Stronger than justice: armed group impunity for sexual violence, Angela Muvumba Sellström</i>
DDB 2015:06	<i>Causes of communal conflicts – government bias, elites and conditions for cooperation, Johan Brosché</i>
DDB 2015:07	<i>Aiding the end of conflict? Reintegrating ex-combatants in Colombia, Michael Jonsson</i>

Seminars:

20 jan	<i>Svenska biståndsformer (DDB 2015:01 – 2015:03)</i>
11 feb	<i>Internationellt bistånd till politiska partier – spelar det någon roll? (EBA 2014:03)</i>
23 mars	<i>What Role for the African Development Bank in a New Africa? (EBA 2014:05)</i>
22 april	<i>New conditions and new actors – time to rethink civil society support? (EBA 2015:01)</i>
12 juni	<i>Utvärdering av svenskt bistånd – för många eller för få? (EBA 2015:02)</i>
20 aug	<i>Blir det bättre om man koncentrerar sig? (EBA 2015:03)</i>
1 okt	<i>How can Sweden contribute to institutional reform in partner countries? (EBA2015:05)</i>
8 okt	<i>Conflict, sexual violence and statebuilding in Sweden's development cooperation (DDB 2015:4 - 2015:7)</i>
23 okt	<i>Jobb och entreprenörskap i Afrika – hur kan bistånd bidra? (EBA 2015:04)</i>
6 nov	<i>Concentration, Cash and Corruption – what can policy makers learn from development research? (three EBA-rapporter)</i>

- 19 nov *Now Open for Business: Joint Development Initiatives between the Private and Public Sectors in Development cooperation (EBA 2015:06)*
- 15 dec *Time to reconsider the development agenda and to address the enemy number one? (EBA-report 2015:07)*