ON-GOING EVALUATION OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING AT SIDA - FIRST REPORT

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- First report

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Summary

This report presents the outputs and primary findings from a first phase of an on-going evaluation of Sida's Plan for Integration of Gender Equality. It draws on a broad range of material, ranging from previous studies and in-depth studies of random samples of Sida contributions and cooperation strategies to data from interviews and focus groups. Yet, in spite of the amount of available data, findings are only preliminary, and will have to be further developed and confirmed/verified during subsequent phases of the evaluation.

Sida has a high ambition in terms of gender integration, which is matched by a broad acceptance of the theme among its staff. Even so, evidence from Sida's contribution management and strategy/reporting reveals a very varied picture when it comes to how gender considerations are integrated. Significant differences in this regard include the performance of gender analysis, treatment of gender as a category, how the theme is operationalized, and what vision of gender integration underlies Sida's action. Overall, such variations indicate that there is scope for improvement of Sida's work with gender integration.

The Plan for Integration of Gender Equality was approved in 2015. It contains ten separate goals to be achieved during the period 2016-2018, primarily relating to increasing the number if contributions that have gender equality as their primary target, and improving Sida's procedures for integrating gender considerations in contributions and strategies. Several of these goals are diffusely expressed, and the Plan contains few concrete guidelines on how gender integration should be performed at Sida. In part, such deficiencies are compensated for by Sida's support systems, particularly the 'Gender tool-box' that was launched the same year as the Plan.

Interviews with Sida staff show a very high level of acceptance of gender equality as a principle, and a generalised perception that this theme is highly present in Sida's work. But staff members are also often unaware of the Plan, and note that the treatment of the theme is to a large extent determined by internal factors, such as management priorities and time available. Furthermore, although there is a level of appreciation with the support systems in the theme, some request more support for gender integration (e.g. concrete examples) and suggest that Sida could do more to promote an internal gender policy.

In sum, while gender equality is very present in Sida's work, the evaluation suggests that the agency's present actions in this regard may not entirely respond to the challenges and opportunities that the agency faces. Sida has to confront a possible internal complacency and try to take the conceptual and effective treatment of gender integration further, if it is to live up to its reputation for taking gender mainstreaming seriously. Its level of ambition notwithstanding, the Plan falls short in this regard. For coming phases of the

evaluation, a key question will be whether other systems (support networks, the tool-box, new procedures for strategy development) can ameliorate this deficiency.

1. Introduction[1]

The present report summarises findings from the first of three stages in the evaluation of the implementation of Sida's plan for gender integration 2016-2018 (below simply referred to as "the Plan").[2] During this stage, the following components have been developed:

1. An overview of theories and previous studies of gender mainstreaming for the purpose of providing initial input for questions and an analytical foundation for the evaluation.

2. A baseline of Sida contributions, cooperation strategies, and country reports from the period immediately before the Plan entered into effect. Below we provide a rapid overview of the findings from this review, and compare them to other portfolio analyses performed by Sida. Yet, the full value of this exercise will be realised only during subsequent steps, when the data collected can be juxtaposed with material from after the Plan's adoption.

3. An analysis of the Plan along with other tools for gender integration at Sida (in particular, the Gender Tool Box). Likewise, we briefly describe the implementation of the Plan during 2016. This should not be seen as a definitive appraisal of the Plan's effectiveness, however, as such a judgement cannot not be made until the end of the third period.

4. Composition of three focus groups at Sida, consisting of gender advisors, unit directors and program officers, respectively. Some points raised in these discussions are highlighted below, along with information from individual interviews with other Sida staff. While these groups has provided us with important inputs for the present stage, their full value will materialise during the coming steps as we return for follow-up discussions and interviews.

5. Conclusions and a plan for the coming months. While the former are necessarily tentative, the latter outline the performance of the next phase, including the field studies to be undertaken as part of the study.

Below, we briefly describe each of these outputs, and relate them to the issue at hand. After a short discussion of the evaluation's method, the report discusses theoretical perspectives on gender mainstreaming and the integration of women's rights. Following that, samples of Sida contributions, strategies and reports are analysed with regard to if and how gender considerations are integrated in them. Subsequently, the Plan itself is

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2. Sida. 2015. "Plan för jämställdhetsintegrering på Sida 2015-2018".

discussed along with other support documents, and its implementation progress. The following part presents relevant statements and findings from interviews and discussions with Sida officers. Finally, overall conclusions and next steps in the evaluation are spelt out.

It should be noted that the analysis performed is by necessity incipient and tentative. While we indicate a number of issues and findings, a full analysis of our material will require it to be juxtaposed with findings from future phases of the evaluation. Accordingly, the following pages should be seen as a basis for discussion rather than a definitive assessment.

Similarly, the present report is primarily intended for internal discussions with Sida (in line with the discussion below on how to use continuous evaluation as a method) and with the reference group, and has been written with this function in mind. Hence, the general reader may find it "light" when it comes to descriptions and explanations of Sida's work in general and with regard to gender integration in particular. We hope to include such information in the final report from the evaluation, which will be aimed at a broader audience.

2. Method

The methodology chosen for the present assignment is a 'continuous' or 'on-going evaluation', i.e., an evaluation performed in parallel to the process to be examined. This method entails advantages as well as challenges.

The primary benefit of the method is that it allows evaluators to follow a process over time, which enables the collection of evaluation data over several points in time. Accordingly, evaluators can assess and compare different stages of the implementation, which can provide a more valid and possibly deeper view of the process at hand. This trait can also lead the evaluation to take on a formative character by allowing for reflection and interaction between the evaluators and implementers.[3]

However, the method has certain potential drawbacks, which are exactly associated with such interaction between evaluators and the process that they are set to study. In particular, too close engagement with the subject of evaluation might risk the evaluators' independent position and introduce a possible positive bias vis-à-vis the issue at hand.

In order to minimise such risks, we will try to maintain a level of separateness that can allow us to provide unbiased inputs and assessments during subsequent phases. In order to maintain our analytical distance, we will abstain from making concrete

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3. Göran Brulin and Lennart Svensson. 2016. "Managing Sustainable Development Programmes: A Learning Approach". Routledge. For an example, see Marcus Herz and Josefin Aggestam. 2015. "Följeforskning: Frivillighet för delaktighet". Malmö högskola.

recommendations before the final report. Instead, we hope that our report can be used in processes of joint reflection and possible reorientations at Sida, even as it does not contain concrete suggestions in this regard.

3. Gender mainstreaming and integration of women's rights

In 1995, the United Nations' World Conference for Women in Beijing adopted Gender Mainstreaming as a goal. As an overarching concept, gender mainstreaming means that instead of focusing on gender equality as a separate issue, a gender perspective should be applied at every stage of the policy process – design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – in order to promote equality between women and men. The origins of the concept lie in feminist development work, and it remains particularly accentuated in global and transnational institutions and international cooperation. [4] Since then, the strategy has been introduced across the world, including in Sweden where it was adopted as the main strategy to achieve the national gender equality goals.

The following two decades have also allowed for a large literature on the gains and challenges of mainstreaming to emerge. We will use some of these theories as a starting-point for our evaluation.

At the basic stage, gender mainstreaming takes place in two stages: 1) adopting a formal gender mainstreaming policy and a language of gender equality; 2) implementing the gender mainstreaming policy.[5] Focusing on these two stages one at a time allows us to identify and acknowledge progress (moving from one step to the next), and to focus on the most relevant stage. Gender mainstreaming is, however, often described as a process where one stage is never fully 'completed'.[6]

3.1 Gender mainstreaming policy

Most development institutions have adopted a terminology of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in line with the definition applied by the United Nations:

> "Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and man of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design,

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4. Sylvia Walby. 2005. "Introduction: Comparative Gender Mainstreaming in a Global Era." *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 7:4: 453-470.

5. Caroline Moser and Annalise Moser. 2005. "Gender mainstreaming since Beijing: A review of success and limitations in international institutions." *Gender & Development* 13:2: 11-22. Moser and Moser discusses this as three steps - language, policy, and implementation – but we have decided to analyze language and policy as one step, and implementation as another.

6. Judith Squires. 2005. "Is Mainstreaming Transformative? Theorizing Mainstreaming in the Context of Diversity and Deliberation". *Social Politics* 12:3, 366-388. Indeed, Squires has been suggests that it would be useful to increase the use of gender as a verb, rather than a noun, in order to emphasize that gender mainstreaming is about affecting a constantly ongoing process of 'gendering'.

implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.[7] "

While definitions of gender mainstreaming often adhere closely to this definition,[8] much research has demonstrated how these general aims of gender mainstreaming are so broad that they can encompass everything from transformative values and detailed instructions for change, to the instrumental use of "buzz words" that change very little in practice, but render activities legitimate by the use of gender terminology.[9]

The fact that a gender language has been adopted does not imply a clear definition of what is meant by a "gender perspective". Sometimes the distinction is made in this regard between practical and strategic gender needs where practical gender interests are identified because of women's subordinated role in society. Addressing the former may alleviate women's situation but does not address the root of the inequality. Strategic gender needs, on the other hand, can be identified by an analysis of women's subordinate roles, and addressing them implies challenging unequal gender structures.[10] This line of thinking has been further developed by Judith Squires, who introduces different conceptions of gender mainstreaming.[11] If gender mainstreaming focuses on the *difference* between men's and women's perspectives—the fact that vulnerabilities, challenges and opportunities are unevenly distributed over the sexes—the relevant strategy becomes a matter of consulting with and incorporating new actors and previously marginalized voices. Conversely, if gender mainstreaming is conceptualized as the achievement of *similarity* between men and women, it rather tends to be associated with gender neutral strategies and policies to facilitate broader inclusion. When gender mainstreaming is seen as a *transformative* strategy, finally, it aims to fundamentally change gender structures in society by questioning policy norms through inclusive deliberations. In turn, such a

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7. UN Economic and Social Council for 1997. 1997. "Gender Mainstreaming".
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/GMS.PDF
8. Moser and Moser, "Gender mainstreaming since Beijing", op. cit.
9. See e.g. Mieke Verloo. 2005. "Displacement and Empowerment: Reflections on the Concept and Practice of theCouncil of Europe Approach to Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality." *Social Politics* 12(3): 344-65; Mary Daly. 2005. "Gender Mainstreaming in Theory and Practice." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender,*
State & Society 12(3); Emanuela Lombardo, Petra Meier, and Mieke Verloo. 2009. *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality: Stretching, bending and policymaking.* London and New York: Routledge.
10. Maxine Molyneux. 1984. "Mobilisation without Emancipation? Women's interests, state and revolution in Nicaragua", *Critical Social Policy* 4; Caroline Moser. 1993. *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training.* London and New York: Routledge.
11. Squires, "Is Mainstreaming Transformative?", op. cit.; see also Ann-Charlott Callerstig. 2014. *Making Equality Work: Ambiguities, conflicts and change agents in the implementation of equality policies in public sector organisations.* PhD thesis, Linköping University.

strategy requires going beyond a focus on women only, and problematizes the gender roles of men, male practices, and institutions supporting male dominance.[12]

Thus, even where a language of gender equality and gender mainstreaming is adopted and accepted, a focus on the content and meaning of the language used can reveal important differences between different approaches to the issues at hand. Such content-related issues are rarely expressed openly; indeed, they are often implicit even to actors working with gender mainstreaming. But by studying problem formulations (explicit or implicit) we can better understand how a problem is viewed, and why certain solutions are favoured over others.[13]

Moving beyond language and towards the prerequisites for effective implementation, the adoption of a formal policy is, in itself, a step forward. It is a document that specifies organizational intentions, and that can be used to work towards greater efficiency. The impact of a policy, however, is likely to increase if its content is specific on what kind of action should be taken and by whom. Gender mainstreaming policies often outline a dual strategy of mainstreaming gender combined with targeted actions for gender equality. Furthermore, they typically specify what is meant by gender analysis, what type of training is needed for staff members to accomplish the goals set out in the plan, and what type of support is expected from gender specialists. In addition, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the plan should be outlined, and, ideally, gender equality goals should pertain to the implementing organisation itself, not just to its activities.[14]

3.2 Implementation of gender mainstreaming

Even as gender equality language and policy adoption are on-going processes in most development agencies, it is the implementation of gender mainstreaming that is often the most complicated stage.[15] A review of gender mainstreaming in fourteen organisations demonstrated that success often relied on a number of key individuals, and that making gender issues a responsibility of all staff could actually decrease attention to them. This was particularly the case when policy introduction was not followed-up consistently and repeatedly with training and skills development.[16] Organisational culture runs deep and is not easily changed by formal policies, even in highly bureaucratised organisations.[17] Efficient implementation of new policies is easier when the policies are in line with and

12. Elin Bjarnegård. 2013. *Gender, informal institutions and political recruitment. Explaining male dominance in parliamentary representation.* Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
13. Carol Bacchi. 2009. *Analysing Policy. What's the problem represented to be?* Frenchs Forest: Pearson.
14. Moser and Moser, "Gender mainstreaming since Beijing", op. cit.
15. Callerstig, *Making Equality Work*, op. cit.; Lombardo, Meier and Verloo, *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality*, op. cit.
16. Moser and Moser, "Gender mainstreaming since Beijing", op. cit.
17. Elin Bjarnegård and Pär Zetterberg. 2016. "Political Parties and Gender Quota Implementation. The Role of Bureaucratized Candidate Selection Procedures." *Comparative Politics* 48:3, 393-417.

build on existing practices in an organization, and will be more challenging if and when they are at odds with the ways in which the organization presently functions.

Change in formal institutions (rules-in-form) does not necessarily bring about change in informal institutions (rules-in-use).[18] Studying implementation thus means looking at changes in practices and behaviour brought about by reforms of formal documents (policies, guidelines, plans). The match between such formal stipulations and informal behaviour is key when assessing implementation.[19] The field of feminist institutionalism[20] has demonstrated how 'sticky' informal rules about gender can be, and how persistent practices informed by informal understandings about "how things are done around here" are.[21]

It has also been suggested that that apart from distinguishing between formal and informal aspects, assessing implementation implies determining whether specific change is expected to take place at the systemic or the individual level, both of which are likely to be necessary for successful integration of gender equality.[22] If the systemic level is not targeted, an increase in the responsibility and leeway afforded to individual staff members will make policy implementation vulnerable to staff commitment or to changes in staff.

Similarly, while systematized routines and practices can ensure implementation across an organisation, they may be less than efficient if individuals do not understand or agree with them. Hence, an individual consciousness of what gender equality is and implies is necessary among staff members, as are knowledge and skills needed for implementation.

Moreover, systems for conducting gender analyses need to be in place at the organisational level, so that the same general questions are addressed throughout the organisation, albeit generating specific and contextually appropriate answers relevant for the project or program officer in question.

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18. See e.g. Elinor Ostrom. 1999. "Institutional Rational Choice: An Assessment of the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework" in *Theories of the Policy Process* ed. Paul Sabatier. Boulder, CO: Westview, p 25-72.; Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky. 2004. "Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda", *Perspectives on Politics* 2(4): 725-740; Douglass C. North, 1999. *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
19. Bjarnegård and Zetterberg, "Political Parties and Gender Quota Implementation", op. cit.
20. See e.g. Mona Lena Krook and Fiona Mackay. 2011. *Gender, Politics and Institutions. Towards a Feminist Institutionalism.* Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
21. Vivien Lowndes. 2014. "How Are Things Done Around Here? Uncovering Institutional Rules and Their Gendered Effects", Politics & Gender 10:4, 685-691.
22. Aruna Rao and David Kelleher. 2005. "Is there life after mainstreaming", Gender and Development, 13:2, p. 60.

4. Gender integration in Sida's contributions

4.1 Previous analyses

Sida's own data show a remarkably positive picture in terms of gender integration in Sida's projects. For 2014, Sida estimated that 87 per cent of contributions had gender as either a principal or a significant objective, with the former group amounting to 17 per cent of the total, a figure that had increased rapidly during the preceding years.[23] In 2015, the positive trend continued, with 73 per cent of disbursements came from contributions marked as having gender as a significant objective, and an additional 17 as having it as a principal objective.[24] (For a description of the definition of the different categories, see Annex 3.)

However, more in-depth studies of Sida's contributions often reveal a less positive view. Accordingly, portfolio analyses (both internally performed and made by external consultants) of smaller number of projects in the same area or theme quite consistently find shortcomings in the integration of gender and women's rights.[25] More specifically, the common conclusion is that while gender is often present in projects, there is considerable variation in how it is addressed.

Unfortunately, such variation has a rather negative slope, as only a few contributions contain a thorough treatment of gender issues based on a proper gender analysis. The knowledge and skills for devising specific strategies to address different aspects of gender inequality thus seem to be lacking in several cases. Likewise, several analyses indicate a fundamental lack of clarity as to how to perform gender mainstreaming beyond simply mentioning the issue. As noted in one (internal) memo:

> *Although a majority of the programme documents identify several problems related to gender inequality, the means of how to address the problems are vaguely expressed, or simply absent from the documents. Problems are often listed followed by a statement concluding that these should be counteracted. However, how this is to be done tends to be rather unclear.*[26]

23. Sida. "Gender Equality 2014: Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Women's Rights", portfolio overview.

24. Sida. "Gender Equality 2015: Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Women's Rights", portfolio overview. Note however that while the 2014 figures appear to be based on the number of contributions, the 2015 ones were based on disbursements.

25. Henny Andersen. 2015. "Gender Review as Basis for the Regional Strategy of Asia, 2016-2020"; Henny Andersen. 2015. "Analysis on Swedish Support to Gender Equality in Cambodia"; Sofia Dohmen (Sida). 2015. "Gender Review Myanmar 2015"; "Lesley Abdela. 2016. "Brief portfolio analysis and review of the regional strategy for Sweden's Cooperation MENA 2016-2020"; Alexandra Håkansson Smith. 2016. "Gender Portfolio Analysis: Kosovo"; Sophie Fryk. 2016. " Women's Economic Empowerment – Portfolio Analysis".

26. Alexandra Håkansson Smith (Sida?). 2016. "Gender Portfolio Analysis: Kosovo", p. 6.

Furthermore, some of the analyses put the above figures into perspective, as they indicate a much larger percentage of "gender-blind" interventions that lack attention to gender aspects entirely.[27] Similarly, a recent study of gender and environmental integration in programs for Russia, Belarus and regional cooperation found that "numerous projects that were marked as gender integrated (1) on the gender equality policy marker did in fact not meet the minimum requirements of gender integration according to the new minimum criteria recommended by the OECD-DAC".[28]

Yet, it should be noted that most of the portfolio analyses draw on relatively small samples, and focus on the work of single Sida units. Furthermore, it is somewhat difficult to compare them as they apply different definitions and use different methodologies.

4.2 Our analysis of Sida's contributions

In order to establish a baseline against which we can subsequently evaluate the progress made as a result of the implementation of the Plan, we have conducted a study of the extent and forms of gender integration present in Sida's contributions. This study is based on a random sample of fifty contributions active on Dec. 31, 2015.[29] Our analysis reveals some main points, several of which agree with the previous findings cited above.

For each of the fifty contributions we have gathered and analysed both the project documents presented to Sida and Sida's subsequent assessments and decisions. Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain information on all cases, and in the end only 45 were coded, of which several had missing documents (either project documents or assessments of parts of them). Furthermore, as there is no common template for proposals presented to Sida, the project documents are often differently structured, and vary in length and detail. Taken together with the absence of documentation in some projects, this has complicated systematic comparison between contributions. Nevertheless, we have no reason to believe that the missing data in this regard conceal any systematic variation.

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27. Ibid.

28. Stina Lindström. 2017. "Gender Mainstreaming and Environment and Climate Mainstreaming – Portfolio analysis". (Sida/Eurolatin). In fact, with the application of the new criteria, the number of contributions without a gender focus (0) increased from 24 to 39, with a correponding decrease in the number in which the area was supposedly an integrated component. Rather than being the result of a radical change in the criteria, it is possible to interpret this as an indication of low validity for the gender indicator in the first place, particularly when it comes to the category to which the majority of contributions are assumed to belong.

29. The sample was constructed on the basis of a complete list of Sida contributions, from which we excluded purely internal projects and secondments. Likewise, separate component numbers were discarded, so that each contribution was represented by a single continuous number in an Excel file. The total number was introduced into a random number generator on the Internet, which returned the fifty unique numbers that constitute our sample.

As Table 1 demonstrates, in the sample, six out of 45 contributions (13 per cent) were projects that Sida considered to have gender equality to be the main objective (policy marker = 2). Twenty-six of them (58 per cent) were considered to have the issue as a significant and integrated objective (policy marker = 1), and 13 (29 per cent) lacked gender components (policy marker = 0). (For a description of the definition of the different categories, see Annex 3.)

Table 1: Sida's application of policy markers in sample (n=45)

Sida policy marker	Percent of total (N)
Gender as principal objective	13% (6)
Gender as significant objective	58% (26)
Gender is not an objective	29% (13)

(For a description of the definition of the different categories, see Annex 3.)

Of particular interest for the present study is the extent to which gender considerations were effectively integrated in the contributions, and more specifically, whether their inclusion was the result of a proper gender analyses. Our evaluation in this regard has been made independent of Sida's categorisation of the projects, and is based on a set of theoretically derived analytical questions (see Annex 1), applied to both project documents and Sida's own assessments and decisions.

These questions allow for an assessment of the extent to which elements of gender analysis are present in these documents. The main purpose of a coherent gender analysis functioning at the organisational level is that it should ask general questions that produce specific answers relevant for the project in question. A gender analysis should be able to specify what is gained or rendered visible by mainstreaming gender into a specific project, and, counterfactually, what the consequences would likely be of not gender mainstreaming the project. A gender analysis should be able to make this trade-off visible (and could therefore also arrive at the conclusion that a gender perspective may not be needed in some projects).

If a proper gender analysis has been conducted, the question of if and how gender should be integrated into a project or not, should be relatively straightforward. On the other hand, if general phrases regarding gender integration have only been added as "buzz words" without an underlying analysis, posing such a question would potentially reveal significant absences in this regard.

4.3 Project documents

Given Sida's broad geographic and thematic reach, the diversity of themes and methods involved in the different contributions is expected to be high. Even so, the scope of the variation regarding gender integration in the project documents must be considered as substantial given the one factor that the projects have in common, namely that they have eventually received Swedish support.

Even so, most, but not all, contribution documents mention gender aspects. A first question in this regard is whether projects even speak of individuals in a gendered way. A large majority, 76 per cent (25 of 33) do so, but far from all. Less than half of the project applications that do not have a gender focus do not even mention individuals in gendered terms and contains no explanation for why a gender focus is not necessary or warranted. Even more remarkably, however, not even projects categorised as integrating gender considerations necessarily mention individuals by their gender, as more than a third of them omit such references.

Table 2: Mention of gender per policy marker (project documents) (n=33)

Sida policy marker	Percent of total (N)
Gender as principal objective	100% (6/6)
Gender as significant objective	83% (15/18)
Gender is not an objective	44% (4/9)

(For a description of the definition of the different categories, see Annex 3.)

In the group of 25 contributions that at least mention gender there is, however, little consistency in the level and form of gender analysis employed.[30] In many of the projects, the theme is brought up in passing, such as noting that "gender equality will be mainstreamed throughout the project," by continuously referring to "women and men (boys and girls)", or by simply mentioning gender equality as one of several cross-cutting issues. The theme is almost never discussed or defined in relation to the project goal, and there is virtually no evidence of Sida having communicated a common understanding of what is meant by the term gender or a systematic application of a gender perspective to its partners.

Moreover, gender is generally taken as synonymous to women, only. This limits the possibility for suggested solutions to be transformative, and explains the bias towards a

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30. For example, there seems to be no systematic way in which to collect and assess gender/sex disaggregated data.

focus on gender/women as an "add-on". This is made particularly clear when we look at whether men's and women's positions/roles are made visible in the proposal, and if so, potential consequences of these roles are highlighted. In the few cases in which gender roles or gender structures are mentioned, they almost always concern women without including a larger contextual analysis involving men (or boys), their roles, and the consequences of these roles. In a majority of cases the roles of men are never mentioned.

Likewise, the desired outcome of the gender integration is rarely explicit, and thus the discussion of relevant strategies to match a particular problem description is generally underdeveloped or entirely absent. Similarly, there are few discussions on the concrete reasons for and possible consequences of integrating gender equality in the project. While this is implicit in some instances (e.g. women will have more access to education, positions of power etc.), this absence is likely to affect follow-up negatively.

Not surprisingly, the contributions with the most holistic gender analyses are those with an outspoken focus on equality. Examples include a contribution that discusses power relations and discrimination, and one that mentions patriarchal structures as a reason for discrimination against women. But there are also cases in which the project does not have a specific gender focus, but in which the consequences for women are nevertheless briefly brought up in relation to living in male dominated societies.

4.4 Sida's assessments

Weaknesses in project applications such as the ones described above seldom merit a longer discussion in Sida's assessment or decision documents. Examples of a more critical assessment of the proposed projects from a perspective of gender integration are rare, and several assessments limit themselves to noting whether or not there are any elements of gender integration in the proposed project. Likewise, it is very unusual to find a discussion of the concepts and methods applied by the organisation for such integration or of what goals/objectives are supposed to be reached.

The previous point may reflect the broader finding that it is difficult to find any pattern when it comes to Sida's assessment of proposed projects. Hence, the absence of a uniform understanding of what is meant by gender and/or gender equality extends to Sida's own assessments. There are few signs of a common language for analysing these issues or of commonly used methods/strategies and tools. Even when gender aspects are mentioned as important, it is often surprisingly difficult to decipher what is seen as the problem from a gender equality perspective, and thus to assess what a suitable solution should be. Likewise, the approach even differs when it comes to mentioning about gender, as can be seen in Table 3 (compare with Table 2 above).

Table 3: Mention of gender in assessments in different categories (n=41).

Sida policy marker	Percent of total (N)
Gender as principal objective	100% (6/6)
Gender as significant objective	84% (21/25)
Gender is not an objective	50% (5/10)

(For a description of the definition of the different categories, see Annex 3.)

Of course, simply mentioning gender is, to say the least, a very generous definition of gender integration. Indeed, in some of the above assessments, gender is only mentioned in passing or as part of a list of possible questions for dialogue. When a more stringent criteria is applied the picture changes, as can be seen in table 4, which shows the extent to which assessments include some form of more elaborate gender analysis based on the project description and/or the context of the project. (Even in this regard, our coding allows for considerable variation in terms of ambition and thoroughness though, which is not captured in the table.) As in the previous tables, there are clear differences between different categories as to the levels of ambition with regard to gender analyses.

Table 4: Elements of gender analysis among Sida assessments in different categories (n=41)

Sida policy marker	Percent of total (N)
Gender as principal objective	100% (6/6)
Gender as significant objective	32% (8/25)
Gender is not an objective	20% (2/10)

(For a description of the definition of the different categories, see Annex 3.)

What is perhaps most remarkable in the above table is the relatively large amounts of contributions in which gender is supposed to be an integrated theme, but in which few elements of a gender analysis are present. In more that two thirds of the contributions that have gender as a significant or integrated component, there are no elements of a gender analysis in Sida's assessments. This is an indication of coding on the gender indicator being done without proper regard for what integration of gender requires. Similarly, it could also indicate that facilitating resources are not consistently put to use.[31]

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31. It should be noted that most contributions were developed prior to the implementation of Sida's current gender tool-box (early 2015). Hence, it may be that we will in subsequent phases of the evaluation

Instead, it seems as if each project officer has to make do as s/he sees fit. In many of these documents, however, there is an explicit mention of *dialogue* in order to ensure the continued attention to gender issues during the implementation phase. Still, it is doubtful whether the emphasis of dialogue is always based on a conscious selection of this method, or whether it is sometimes used as a way to defer the discussion for later. In no case have we found a deeper discussion about the content about such dialogue. Furthermore, there is little evidence of any correlation between this choice of this method and gender ambition: Of the ten contributions in which "dialogue" is stipulated, two belong to the highest category, six to the middle one, and two to the lowest one. Given the documents assessed, we have had no way to assess whether dialogue has indeed taken place and with what results. We hope to address this question in the coming field studies, however.

On a different note, it is notable that assessments and decisions contain few references to Swedish gender policies. The Swedish government's overarching gender equality objectives are never referred to.

4.5 No systematic approach to gender integration in contributions

Analysing the contribution documentation taken together, i.e. looking at both the project proposals and the respective assessment by Sida, it is difficult to discern a systematic approach to gender integration. In terms of what is implied by gender, we have tried to summarize the extent to which contributions focus on women's vulnerability or disempowerment (difference), rights-based approaches (similarities) or more transformative approaches. Although this is often difficult to determine, the table below gives an indication of their relative use among Sida's contributions. Note that this table draws on both project applications and contributions and that categories are not mutually exclusive; it is possible to mention several of the approaches in one and the same contribution (which is why the row sums are larger than the total number of contributions).

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find an effect of these tools, which could well contribute to a more uniform treatment of gender issues in contribution management.

Table 5: Approach to gender mainstreaming[32] (n=45)

Emphasis	Percent of total (N)
Difference	49% (22/45)
Similarity	22% (10/45)
Transformation	22% (10/45)
Impossible to determine/n.a.	47% (21/45)

In most cases in which an approach is spelt out in some way, it is formulated in terms of women's vulnerability or women's disempowerment. Accordingly, strategies focus mainly on the difference (e.g. women are more vulnerable), as can be seen in Table 5 above. Another notable result from the table above is that in almost half of the contributions, gender is treated in such an abstract or general way that it is impossible to determine what is implied in more substantial terms.

Such differences seem to reflect a more general point about gender integration among Sida's projects, namely the wide variation in how and when it is performed. The gender indicator is evidently able to capture some of this variation, but not all of it. Our findings in this regard are similar to what has been noted in other portfolio analyses at Sida (see above). While the contributions in which gender is a main focus (with minor exceptions) generally contain elements of gender analysis and an appropriate treatment of the issue, the contributions in which it is one target among others (albeit a significant one) is a very diverse group. In some contributions from the latter group, gender analysis is entirely absent and it is difficult to see why they would even merit a 1 (one) on the indicator for gender equality.

Disaggregating the material, we do not find any obvious differences between different themes, geographical areas, whether the counterpart is Swedish or foreign, or over time (some of the active contributions date back as far as 2005, meaning that we can assess the latter factor as well). The exception is, not surprisingly, the projects that thematically focus on gender rights, which are the only ones where gender is systematically integrated across the board. Overall, though, there are few such explanation, which supports the interpretation that the amount of gender integration possibly depends on staff interest and commitment rather than on objective considerations.

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32 Quite a few contributions can be categorized in several ways, because they deal with gender differently in different sections. Therefore, the sum is larger than the total number of contributions.

5. Gender integration in geographical strategies and reporting

5.1 Cooperation strategies

A cooperation strategy sets the priorities and Sida's guidelines in a country or a region, and is hence of fundamental importance for its work in a particular context. Whereas these strategies are formally instructions from the Swedish government to Sida, the latter tend to be highly involved in their production.

During this part of the evaluation, we have examined ten randomly selected cooperation strategies in force on December 31, 2015.[33] These documents thus combine a brief description of the situation with a specification of Swedish priorities and how these shall be addressed. Their size varies from the Sudan one (two (2) pages of text) to the Ethiopian (thirty pages).

There is less variation in the treatment of gender integration between the strategies compared to the contributions examined in the previous section. No strategy completely lacks attention to gender equality, and in several strategies it features prominently. That said, however, there are also considerable differences between how the theme is addressed. In part, these differences may stem from the different formats used for the strategies, but it also seems likely that this is again a reflection of a relatively flexible, or loose, approach to how gender integration is carried out within Sida.

When it comes to contextual gender analysis, there are elements of this in virtually all strategies.[34] Yet, the gender analysis often concerns women only, and the analysis of women's situation is generally limited to a few sentences, sometimes supported with relevant statistics. In the most extreme cases, the situation for women is only described in the most cursory terms.[35] Typically, however, the theme receives somewhat more attention, but no strategy contains a coherent gender analysis included in the strategy or references to such a document Likewise, it is relatively common that it is discussed only in a couple of sentences spread between different sectors.

In terms of the inclusion of gender equality in the concrete objectives for Swedish development cooperation, there is only one strategy that limits such discussions to one sector only (Regional strategy Asia), but even in that case it is stated that the theme

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33. The strategies selected were: Sudan 2014-2016, Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Turkey 2014-2020, DR Kongo 2015-2019, Uganda 2014-2018, Bolivia 2009-2013 (extended), Somalia 2013-2017, Ethiopia 2003-2007 (extended), Kenya 2009-2013 (extended), regional strategy Africa SRHR 2015-2019, and regional strategy Asia 2006-2021.

34. The exception is the one on Sudan, in which discussion of the situation for women is limited to noting that "women and children in Darfur have been among the most vulnerable". But then the Sudan strategy is extremely short, just a couple of pages.

35. In addition to the Sudan strategy, the regional strategy for Southeast Asia (2010-2015) could be mentioned in this regard.

should nevertheless be kept present in all sectors. In the remaining strategies, gender considerations either constitute a sector focus in their own right or are included as sub-goals or priorities under each sector.

The latter model is the most common one, and among this set of strategies a majority specifies sub-goals relating to gender equality for all sectors (e.g. DR Congo and Uganda), and others in which women primarily feature in lists of groups that should be given priority (for instance, the strategy for Kenya, and to a certain extent the one for Ethiopia; both among the eldest strategies in the sample.

Conversely, in a smaller group of strategies, women's rights and gender equality are goals at the sector level; a particular example in this regard is the Sudan strategy, in which one of the three goals for the entire strategy is defined as "greater knowledge and opportunities for women to assert their human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, and greater respect for children's rights". Likewise in Uganda, where the only goal for the Peace and security sector is "Enhanced capacity to prevent gender-based violence".

5.2 Strategy reports

Turning from the strategies to the annual strategy reports provides a closer view of how the theme of gender equality and women's rights is effectively integrated in Sida's work and considerations. In contrast to the strategy documents, these reports are Sida's own products. We have examined the ten strategy reports for 2015 that correspond to the strategies above.

In general, a similar variation as above is found in these documents. In spite of the relatively set format, gender considerations feature very differently. Whereas certain reports contain more of context analysis and coherent integration of the issue, others limit themselves to providing examples of gender integration without any broader analysis or reflection.

In terms of gender analysis, the variation ranges from no mention of the general situation faced by women,[36] to specific (although brief) sections devoted to the team. In most reports, there is little scope for such analysis however, as it is either included as individual statistics on women's situation in a broader contextual description, or discussed at somewhat more length under each result.

When it comes to reporting on goals, there is generally more attention to the issue even though results reporting on gender integration differs considerably, and ranges from simple headcounts to discussion and examples of more transformative approaches along

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36. E.g., Regional Strategy Asia.

with the differences described above. Nevertheless, several reports address both results and the context in which they have occurred at length.[37] At times, though, ambitions set in the strategies are not matched by reporting. For instance, even a formulation highlighting women in the strategy (as in "women and men are given increased access to…") does not seem to guarantee that reporting is done in a gender-disaggregated way.[38]

6. Baseline

The preceding sections have attempted to set a baseline against which possible changes following the Plan's implementation can be compared. Overall, the available evidence present a scattered picture, but one that does not entirely correspond to the positive aggregate figures presented by Sida.

Above all, the documents examined reveal a large variation both when it comes to the inclusion of gender considerations, the extent to which gender analysis is performed, and in how goals are set for gender equality and women's rights. Several project documents disregard the issue entirely or address it as simply an add-on.[39] While Sida's own documents generally give more attention to gender aspects, even they exhibit considerable difference in how they approach the theme both operationally and analytically.

Apart from the above observations, it should also be noted that there are few systematic variations responding to sectors or geographic locations. This would seem to indicate that differences in this regard, might in the first place respond to individual characteristics of the project owners, Sida staff members or Sida managers.

7. The Plan for Gender Integration

7.1 Background

Sida's current Plan for Gender Integration was approved at the end of 2015, and will be implemented during the period 2016-2018. As is noted in the document, gender equality has been a prioritised theme in Swedish development cooperation since 1996 (and an integrated element of Sida's and its predecessors' work since 1983), and the current plan both represents a response to the enhanced emphasis placed on this theme by the Swedish government, and a continuation and strengthening of Sida's previous work.[40]

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37. E.g. the reports on Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Turkey, and Somalia, respectively.

38. For instance, even as an explicit strategy indicator in Uganda is "Number of women and men reached by legal aid services supported by DGF", the country report makes no attempt to distinguish between women and men in terms of actual beneficiaries (Strategy report 2015, p. 6).

39. Anecdotally, we found a project document in which long passages on gender equality had a slightly different font size that the rest of the document, leading to the suspicion that they had indeed been added-on as a possible response to criticisms in this regard (Flacso-Guatemala. "Programa: Capacidades Humanas para Gestionar y Promover el Desarrollo Humano y en Localidades Rurales". Undated program document, p. 5.)

40. Sida, "Plan för jämställdhetsintegrering på Sida 2015-2018", op. cit., pp. 4 and 1, respectively.

Accordingly, the Plan's stated overall objective is to ensure that Sida's work has an impact on gender equality, allowing for follow-up and a focus on results, as well as an open and inclusive culture of organisation and leadership.[41] Moreover, the Plan relates these goals to the superior goals for gender equality set by the Swedish government.

7.2 Contents and components

The Plan notes that Sida's experience is that the best results can be expected from contributions in which gender equality is the principal objective, and that the challenge for effective integration of gender equality lies in "steering, resources, implementation and follow-up", i.e., in a set of factors internal to the organisation.[42] Moreover, the plan stresses that gender integration remains the main strategy for Sida's work on the theme, and that this requires a context-specific gender analysis as a basis for subsequent actions, which can be either "integrated interventions", "targeted interventions" or "dialogue". [43]

Accordingly, the Plan calls for raising the proportion of contributions that have gender equality as their principal target, in particular in sectors in which their presence has previously been limited (non-social and productive sectors as well as environment, climate and resilience). Moreover, the Plan stresses the use of new forms of financing for development for enhancing gender integration, and makes this theme a priority in internal processes for planning, analysis and follow-up. Finally, the document stipulates that Sida's high ambitions for its external work must be matched with a similar focus in its internal organisation and leadership.

Linking the content of the Plan to the above theories on gender mainstreaming, it is possible to see positive signs as well as some caveats. The closest approximation to a definition of gender equality in the Plan can be found in the goals for gender equality.[44] A definition of gender equality that stipulates that men and women have the same power to shape their lives and society is indeed in line with most definitions of gender equality. But it is also rather vague and can encompass any number of strategies. This echoes some of the warnings found in the literature on the subject: while there is nothing wrong with most definitions, they are often so abstract that it is impossible to evaluate whether they are mere buzz-words or a real express a real commitment to change. Even so, it is clear that a terminology of gender equality and gender mainstreaming has existed at Sida for a long time, and corresponds to a view on gender mainstreaming as something necessary,

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41. "Svenskt utvecklingssamarbete har genomslag vad gäller jämställdhet, är uppföljningsbart och fokuserat på resultat för kvinnor, män, flickor och pojkar. Sida präglas av en jämställd, öppen och inkluderande organisations- och ledarkultur."
42. Ibid., p. 10.
43. Ibid., p. 7.
44. "Målet för jämställdhetspolitiken är att kvinnor och män ska ha samma makt att forma samhället och sina egna liv. Utifrån detta arbetar regeringen utifrån fyra delmål: en jämn fördelning av makt och inflytande, ekonomisk jämställdhet, en jämn fördelning av det obetalda hem- och omsorgsarbetet och att mäns våld mot kvinnor ska upphöra."

important and generally accepted in the agency. Accordingly, the first step of adopting a language of gender equality and putting formal gender mainstreaming policies into place has been accomplished at Sida for a long time, and the present Plan is a clearly a continuation of this on-going work.

Regarding content, this Plan departs somewhat from the common dual strategy of mainstreaming gender combined with targeted actions for gender equality,[45] as it stresses the importance of targeted actions, which in Sida's experience are the most effective. This can, in itself, be seen as a sign of that gender mainstreaming has been difficult to accomplish, and that gender often tends to disappear among other objectives if it is not made a primary goal.

The gender analysis that the Plan builds on consists of an analysis of the status of gender equality globally, and situates Sida in this context analysis. It points to the gap between stated ambition and actual operations as one of the biggest challenges for achieving gender equality, along with too few resources for women's organising.[46] The conclusion of the analysis is that Sida needs to work with many different actors at once and focus on implementation and results.

In terms of responsibilities, the Plan does point to a shared responsibility of Sida's staff members for the integration of gender equality in all processes, in planning and preparation as well as in the reporting system. In terms of staff resources, however, the gender specialists and how they are organised are particularly highlighted, whereas less attention is given to how the skills and capacity of all staff is to improve. There is no specific mention of further gender training, apart from a mention of skills development in the environment and climate sector. The plan states a need to raise the ambition with regard to gender equality at Sida as a working place and an organisation. There are few specific recommendations relating to monitoring and evaluation.

The overall objectives of the Plan are operationalized in ten concrete goals (see the list in annex 2). Several of these objectives are diffusely formulated, particularly those related to the strengthening of Sida's processes, examples of which are "gender analysis permeates routines for strategy development and operationalization" (goal six) and "responsibilities, roles and competences in the work for gender equality have been made clearer and strengthened" (goal 8).

Based on the Plan it is impossible to say to what extent gender equality at Sida implies working with similarities (rights and gender-neutral policies), difference (focus on

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45. Moser and Moser, "Gender mainstreaming since Beijing", op. cit.
46. Sida, "Plan för jämställdhetsintegrering på Sida 2015-2018", op. cit., p. 6.

marginalized or vulnerable groups), or transformation (fundamentally challenging existing norms, rules, and roles). The plan for gender integration focuses on the form of work, rather than the content of gender mainstreaming. It says more about *how* gender mainstreaming is going to be implemented at the organizational level, less about *what* it will imply.

In other words, the "how" refers to the organisation. It is clear, as noted above, that Sida strives to increase the number of contributions that target gender equality specifically that focus on gender equality. Yet, how staff will implement this is not made clear. The same is true for many of the other goals—it is clear what the ambition is at the organisational level, but seldom at the individual level.

The aim to increase the proportion of interventions for which gender equality is a principal goal can be interpreted both as the reaction to a partial failure of earlier gender mainstreaming effort, and as a step forward to strengthen the commitment to gender equality by giving resources to the ways of working that have proven to be most effective. It is, however, difficult to discern how this will be implemented, and how the strategy will avoid a mere cosmetic change in which the principal goal is said to be gender equality but where few things change in practice.

Given that implementation is the biggest challenge, the Plan does surprisingly little to demonstrate what is at stake and how individuals working for and with Sida are going to be affected by the plan. By not being more concrete, there is a risk that established informal practices take precedence over rather vague formulations in the new plan.

7.3 Support documents: the Gender tool-box

Part of what the Plan lacks in detail and definition, can be found in the "Gender tool-box" that was launched by Sida in 2015. In line with the metaphor, this is a compilation of a set of separate documents divided into tools, briefs and thematic overviews. While the six tools consist in relatively short documents that present methods and approaches (e.g. mainstreaming or the gender equality policy marker), the ten briefs discuss the challenges and possibilities related to specific areas (e.g. 'gender and ICT' or 'women and food security'), along with examples and advice on how to approach the theme in question. Finally, two 'thematic overviews' present the themes of gender-based violence and women's economic empowerment in considerable depth.

In several respects, the gender toolbox thus contains components that would normally be associated with a policy document, and which sets out how to promote gender integration and women's rights. In those respects, the approach that it contains is entirely in line with the Plan, as the two documents share a stress on mainstreaming, the

importance of gender analysis,[47] and the division of Sida's interventions into three different fields (targeted, integrated and dialogue).[48]

This toolbox is ambitious in scope as well as practical and concrete, with a step-to-step guide about what should be considered, why, and how. It focuses on content-related issues such as practical vs. strategic gender needs, it outlines how to work with integration, targeted activities and gender-aware dialogue together or separately, and has concrete questions that should be asked for appraisal, monitoring, and reporting. In short, as a resource in itself, it is impressive. A systematic use of the toolbox would probably make it impossible for contributions to surpass gender integration without a developed argument and well-grounded analysis for why it is not needed.

Our concerns in this regard, instead relate to the match between this toolbox and the existing practices and routines at Sida. It is unclear to what extent the above documents is used, if there is compulsory training given on how it should be used, and if staff as well as partner organisations are using templates and reporting systems that gives the incentive to - or even requires – the use of the methods outlined in the tool box.

7.4 Implementation of the Plan

During its first year of implementation the plan for integration of gender equality has advanced with varying speed towards its different goals, as detailed in annex 2. While one goal (number 5: Gender equality is a strategic priority for Sida 2016-2018) can already be said to have been achieved, and several are believed to be advancing (particularly numbers 1, 2 and 3: Increased amounts to targeted interventions; Priority to the inclusion of gender equality in productive/non-social sectors, and in relation to environment, climate and resilience; and Gender equality in Sida's humanitarian contributions), others are stalled or still at an incipient stage (e.g., number 7: Gender analysis permeates routines for assessment follow-up and reporting on results). For some goals, the actions that have been taken are few and scattered, and while they may well be relevant it is hard to see how the goals can be met at the present rate of implementation (e.g., number 9: Gender equality is prioritised in dialogues with Sida's cooperation partners). In general, it can be said that while the goals connected to the first objective of the Plan ("Increased attention to gender equality as a main target, and gender integration in specific areas") have been addressed well, implementation of the goals related to the second objective "Enhanced quality of work practices and routines for gender integration at Sida" seems less advanced.

Furthermore, there is some evidence that attention to the theme may be decreasing. Whereas for 2016, gender equality along with other crosscutting issues were included in a special implementation plan to the Sida's annual plan, that has not been repeated for 2017.

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47. Sida. 2015. "Gender Analysis – Principles and Elements"
48. Sida. 2015. "How Sida Works with Gender Equality".

At the same time, it is evident from comparing Sida's latest annual plans that while gender equality still remains a very prominent theme, priority for the present year is given to environmental and climate issues.[49]

Finally, whereas responsibility for the different goals of the Plan is distributed across Sida, Sida's thematic policy specialists have overall responsibility for follow-up. But recent staff changes have led this function to be severely understaffed at the moment.

8. Gender integration as seen by Sida's staff

Through focus group discussions with three different groups and interviews with selected interviewees, we have gathered the views and experiences of gender mainstreaming in general and of the new Plan in particular from close to twenty persons at Sida. One of the objectives of this exercise has been to study the informal practices—the rules-in-use—and to what extent they have been altered by the new Plan—the rules-in-form. In spite of their differences in position and opinion, a number of common themes emerge from these interviews.

8.1 View on gender integration

There is a general recognition of the extent to which gender integration has been assumed at Sida. "It is part of our DNA", was a phrase repeated by several interviewees.[50] While opinions differed as to how real and extensive such a commitment is, there is nevertheless considerable agreement on the general acceptance of the theme among staff and in Sida as an organisation. As several participants note, of all the themes and priorities that Sida has, gender equality is possibly the one which the organisation handles best, and the one that best survives the competition over staff members' time from other themes.

Yet, several interviewees note that they are uncertain as to what extent this "DNA" is being transferred to new members of staff. Previously, there were introductory courses for all new staff members, but many interviewees express uncertainty regarding what type of introduction to gender equality work new co-workers are offered, and seem uncertain about whether there is a core course on the subject that everyone is required to take.

Moreover, most interviewees express their dedication to gender mainstreaming in relatively vague terms, and refer to it as something that is attended to almost automatically. Very few, if any, refer to a special set of skills or expertise that is needed in order to carry out gender mainstreaming efficiently. Accordingly, neither interviews nor focus groups demonstrate anything approximating a specific view on what staff at Sida mean by gender mainstreaming, and it is difficult to discern a position as to whether mainstreaming is to be inclusive or transformative, and whether practical gender needs or

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49. Sida. "Sidas verksamhetsplan 2017".
50. "Det sitter i ryggmärgen." Actually, the exact same expression was used in another interview. Another expression used was "det sitter i väggarna".

strategic gender needs should take priority. While there seems to be virtually no resistance to talking in terms of gender at Sida, the gender equality language used is rather vague and there seems to be a predominant idea that this is something that Sida already handles well, and few people indicate a need to develop their own skills or techniques in order to improve gender mainstreaming further.

8.2 Facilitating and constraining factors

When it comes to the factors that constrain the effective integration of gender equality, there is strong general agreement on the objective constraints on staff members' time, and how this affects the inclusion of a theme such as gender.[51] There is also a general perception that there are too many vague policy documents "floating around". As notes one interviewee at the management level. "Everything is a priority". Similarly, several staff members also talk about the difficulty in incorporating abstract guidelines in the practical day-to-day work.

The multitude of perspectives and priorities also appears linked to another point on which there is general agreement; the fundamental role of the managers for emphasising the issue, and "to make things happen". Yet, as noted by one interviewee, gender integration "will always depend on persons, who the director is and how much they emphasise Sida's issues and priorities". Conversely, however, the same person notes that each director has her or his priorities, which means that gender integration will be treated differently in different units.

When it comes to external relations, several participants mention how gender has become more accepted outside of Sida. Whereas the theme was previously met with resignation or irony, even rather conservative organisations and partners today assume it. The present Government's "Feminist foreign policy" is perceived in different ways: some interviewees sees it as a further promotion of the agenda that Sweden and Sida have already worked with and a concrete chance for working together with colleagues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Still, others tell of how they still find it difficult to incorporate a feminist terminology in the work with their local partners.

8.3 The Plan and the support available for gender integration

One of the most striking findings from the focal groups was how little is known about the Plan. Staff officers seemed mostly unaware of its stipulations (apart from the demand to raise the number of targeted interventions), and that extended to several unit directors as well. Even as this can be explained by the nature of the plan (i.e., it is neither a policy nor primarily directed at staff officers or directors), it could be argued that this means that a possibility for launching the issue and indicating Sida's level of ambition in this

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51. Similarly, several interviewees from different groups mention how contributions decided on towards the end of the year often devote less time to the issue. (Because of the pressure to finalise agreements and disburse funds before the end of the fiscal year.)

regard has been lost. Indeed, this point was also made by some of the interviewees, who expressed their belief that more could have been done to advance the theme; "more internal advocacy" as one interview put it. Likewise, even with the relative prominence enjoyed by the theme of gender integration at the present, several participants also suggested that Sida might have been a more forceful advocate for gender integration before, and should still be in a position to do more in this regard.

With regard to the support available for gender mainstreaming, the views are mixed. Some staff officers appeared generally satisfied, and expressed appreciation both for the Gender toolbox, support from the Gender help-desk and the instructions contained in the Sida's contribution system (TRAC). Among other staff members, however, the gender toolbox is not used or not known, or being seen as "too ambitious", with corresponding less relevance for day to day work. In comparison, the gender network or the advisors were relatively seldom mentioned in this regard, and some interviewees claimed to perceive a less active engagement and support today if compared with before. In another group there were several complaints as to the lack of a clear and unified structure, instead each department and unit has to create their own "mini-Sida".

Additionally, some interviewees from both the directors and the program officer groups expressed a demand for more feedback on gender integration "lest someone sits in Zambia working with this, but lose interest when there is no feedback". Likewise, several participants asked for more concrete examples and experiences, for instance with regard to the application of the gender indicators, which some felt was less than clear.

9. Conclusions

Our assessment of the situation of gender integration at Sida prior to the adaption of the Plan shows a diverse picture. While the overall impression is one of strong and generalised commitment to the theme in the agency, examination of Sida's contributions and internal documentation also reveals significant variation when it comes to how and to what extent gender is assessed and integrated in Sida's contributions, strategies and reports. In spite of the impressive figures given for gender integration among Sida's contributions as a total, closer examination (both by us and by others) frequently reveal a lack gender analyses and a relatively incoherent application of mainstreaming as an operational strategy. Moreover, when gender is addressed there is no evident consensus on what a gender analysis should include or on how to integrate gender issues. Accordingly, and in spite of the prominence generally accorded to the theme, there is still scope for improvement in how Sida works with gender equality.

Through its emphasis on increasing the number of contributions with gender as a main focus, and enhancing the quality of Sida's treatment of gender issues, Sida's Plan for Gender Integration constitutes a response to this situation. In this respect, the Plan is

presented as an attempt to raise Sida's level of ambition with regard to gender integration.[52]

In other aspects, however, the Plan appears less ambitious. The goals that it contains are often diffuse, particularly when it comes to the processes of improving Sida's internal routines and processes (an area in which there appears to have been relatively few advances during the first year of implementation of the plan). Furthermore, the document abstains from calling for a qualitative change in how Sida addresses the theme of gender; for instance, by addressing more transformative issues or by clearly addressing existing shortcomings in Sida's current treatment of the theme. Neither does the Plan contain any added resources or additional training or functions for enhanced treatment of the theme.

It is too early to say how such weaknesses will affect Sida's work with gender equality during the coming years. Additional instruments (e.g. the Gender Tool-box) may compensate for some of them, as could efforts by gender advisors and members of the gender network. Still, there may be room for scepticism in this regard as the record of achievements during the past year shows that a coherent approach to raising the issue of gender equality is still some way off, particularly when it comes to the goals associated with improvement of Sida's routines and internal processes.

The interviews and focus groups confirm several of these points. While noting the importance given to the theme at Sida, a large number of participants are also relatively unaware of the Plan and its contents, and some regret that more concrete steps have not been taken to advance the theme, or claim to perceive a loss of attention in this regard. While this might be explicable given the Plan's rather technical character, it also means that Sida lacks a clear, well-known coherent guideline for these issues. Similarly, interviews and group discussions indicate that the reasons for why Sida continues to operate at a high level when it comes to attention to gender equality, are located in the organisation's history and internal culture rather than in the current policy.

Yet, this also implies some potential risks for Sida. First of all, a generalised belief that gender awareness is ever-present in the organisation could lead to a certain complacency with regard to the theme, as staff assume that this is something that is well known and sufficiently well handled, which available evidence indicates is not the case. Second, and relatedly, the same point could reinforce the variation in treatment of gender equality that we have seen in several aspects of Sida's work. If the guiding document in this regard lacks sufficient specification, or if staff believe that they do not need to consult this document, this is likely to lead to a relatively scattered approach, in which the theme is

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52. Sida, " "Plan för jämställdhetsintegrering på Sida 2015-2018", op. cit.

treated in accordance with the interest and competence of the individual staff members (or their managers).

Returning to our theoretical point of departure, we would say that the individual thus overtakes the systematic side, and that informal practices take precedence over new formal rules. Whereas for many organisations the challenge might be to make individual staff members' beliefs and interests fit overall policy, Sida could be said to face the reverse problem, as the organisation's policy struggles to keep up with its internal culture. In that regard, the rather general and somewhat timid statements of the Plan, might actually be a missed opportunity for re-taking the initiative and advancing the issue of gender integration and women's rights further, by indicating concrete measures to raise the quality of Sida's gender assessments and analysis, or to possibly integrate a more transformative view of gender relations in the Plan, for instance. As it is, such aspects are instead present in Sida's Gender toolbox, where they generally receive good treatment. Yet, as we have seen above, staff officers differ in their views and use of this instrument, and the fact that it does not have the status of a policy document, or is referred to in the Plan, may well decrease the extent to which it is effectively used.

Yet, it must again be stressed that our findings in this regard are only tentative, and will have to be developed, tested and possibly falsified during the coming year and a half. Possibly, Sida will manage to keep up the initiative and high ambition with regard to gender equality and women's rights that has characterised the agency's work for more than two decades. But the above findings indicate that this would possibly demand more than is stipulated in the present Plan.

10. Next steps

During the next month, we will arrange a workshop at Sida to present this report, and invite comments and reflections concerning its findings. This feedback will be documented and included in the next (second report). Subsequently, we plan to deepen the analysis of how gender considerations are integrated into Sida's competence, assessment and documentation systems. We also hope to interview representatives from the helpdesk for gender issues.

We will then proceed to prepare for the coming phase, particularly by gathering and analysing a new set of fifty contributions, this time from the period after the Plan's implementation (i.e., from 2016), together with new strategies and reports from the same year. With this second material, we hope to be able to perform a more elaborate quantitative analysis of the contributions, even if only descriptive.

In parallel, we will prepare the field visits that will take place during the spring. Preparations will take place by telephone interviews with relevant Sida staff, and gathering

of relevant material (strategy reports, data on contributions) from each of the two countries.

Field studies will take place in Myanmar and Zambia. After the presentation of the initial report and feedback from Sida, five countries were selected for contact, and from these contacts we received positive answers from Myanmar and Zambia. While the procedure has thus contained an element of self-selection, this need not be a problem as our focus is not the work of these two embassies per se, but rather using them for field input on Sida's implementation of the Plan.

While the choice of Myanmar and Zambia departs from our initial intention to select countries facing very different gender and development contexts (tentatively one from Eastern Europe and one from Asia), we believe that these two countries nevertheless exhibit sufficient variation in terms of portfolio structure, political and social context to make them relevant.

In addition to the field studies, we will in May and June reconvene our three focus groups for follow-up discussions.

The second report from the evaluation will be presented in August 2017, and could hopefully be discussed with the reference group in September.

Annex 1: Coding scheme for gender integration in the contributions

Gender Analysis: are the consequences of incorporating gender aspects explicitly juxtaposed to the consequences of not incorporating gender aspects?

1) **Is gender relevant for this project?**

   Even where gender is not considered important, this consideration should be based on a basic gender analysis, at the very least answering questions: about who the project is impacting. *Is the project about individuals? Are individuals gendered? Are the implications of the individuals' gender discussed? Is the entire project about gender/gender equality?*

2) **What are the project implications of the discussion on gender and gender equality?**

   In an ambitious gender analysis, gender should not just be mentioned in passing, but concretely connected to the specificities of the project design.
   Are the different positions/roles of men and women relevant for activities made visible? Are potential consequences of these different roles/positions discussed in relation to the project?

3) **What is the problem represented to be?**

   Every solution builds on an underlying problem description. In this description lies a lot of information about what is perceived as the most problematic aspect of gender inequality in a particular situation.
   What is the problem that the gender perspective is going to solve?

4) **Does the problem description lead to a strategy emphasizing similarity, difference or transformation?**

   Is there a mention of rights-based approaches or policy neutrality (similarities), the particular vulnerabilities of women or women as a marginalized group (differences), or gender roles that need to change and assumptions that need to be challenged (transformation)?

5) Are specific strategies or tools mentioned? Which?

Annex 2: Implementation of the Plan

Goal	Actions taken during 2016:
1. Increased amount of funds to contributions that have gender equality as a specific target in all sectors.	Instructions to this effect were included in Sida's annual plan for 2016. There is thus a strong possibility of this goal being met for the year, although data is still not available.
2. Gender to receive particular attention in productive sectors and contributions aimed at environmental, climate and resilience.	(as above).
3. Gender equality to be integrated into Sida's humanitarian contributions.	A provision to this effect was included in Sida's annual plan 2016. Theme is also to be raised in relation to the development of the recently approved strategy for humanitarian contributions (which is not yet public).
4. Strategic use of new forms of development finance to further gender equality.	During 2016, an initiative in this regard has been undertaken in relation to 'challenge funds'.
5. Gender equality to be a strategic priority for Sida 2016-2018.	This goal has been achieved as gender equality is part of Sida's goals for 2018.[53]
6. Gender analysis permeates routines for development and operationalisation of strategies.	Advancement is reported to be stalled due to staff changes.
7. Gender analysis permeates routines for assessment, follow-up and results (-reporting).	Processes are said to be underway, but with few results yet.
8. Responsibilities, roles and competences in the field of gender equality have been clarified and strengthened.	It is unclear who has overall responsibility for this goal.
9. Gender equality is prioritised in dialogue with partners.	A course in gender integration has been held for Sida's Swedish partners.
10. Internal attention to equality and pluralism, based on an analysis of the situation at Sida.	A plan for pluralism and equality has been approved at Sida.

Annex 3: Gender equality policy markers

Both in the Plan and in several previous studies, the key indicator of gender integration consists in the Gender Equality Policy Marker that is used by DAC members to categorise the extent to which contributions and projects integrate such aspects. Its scores are: (2) = gender equality is a principal objective; (1) = gender equality is a significant objective, and (0) = gender equality is not an objective. (It is possible for contributions to have more than one principal objective.)

Sida's Gender Toolbox (see above) further outlines what these scores imply. If gender equality is a principal objective (indicator = 2), the contribution should directly aim at advancing gender equality, and the contribution would not have been undertaken without this objective. If gender equality is a significant objective (indicator = 1) the contribution

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53. See Sida, "Sidas verksamhetsplan 2017".

partly aims at advancing gender equality, but the contribution would be implemented even if this objective were absent. Where contributions do not have gender equality as a target, they are given a policy marker of 0.[54] Note that in Sida's Tool Box there is no middle-ground between gender equality being a significant objective (1) and not being an objective at all (0). These indicators are consistently used by Sida, and all contributions are assessed according to these markers, which makes it possible to compare Sida's assessments with our own, albeit at a crude level.

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54. Sida. Gender Equality Policy Marker. Gender Tool Box. February 2016.
http://www.sida.se/globalassets/publications/import/pdf/en/tool_gender_equality_policy_marker_web.pdf
. See also http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-gender-equality-marker.htm

Annex 4: List of persons who have been interviewed or who have participated in the focal groups

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Sofie Berghald

Charlotte Bobjer

Magnus Cedergren

Kerstin Cissi Jonsson

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Göran Haag

Ulrika Holmström

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Anders Rönqvist

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