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Support to Regional Cooperation and Integration in Africa: What Works and Why?

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Sweden's Support for Development in Africa



Background & motivation for the study

- Long history of support to African integration, esp. to AU, RECs and other regional organizations (ROs)
 - ROs extremely donor-dependent (60-80 % of budgets)
1. Lack of systematic knowledge about when and why external support to regional integration works
 2. Input to design and implementation of Swedish regional development cooperation with SSA (2016-21)
 3. Input to regional programs of other donors



Main questions

1. Why and how does external funding **promote positive development outcomes and poverty reduction?**
2. Why and how does external funding **improve RO performance, esp. close the “implementation gap”?**
3. What funding strategies and aid modalities are most **effective?**



Methodologies and sources of evidence

1. Academic and applied research
2. Aggregate results from 12 donor evaluations
3. In-depth case study of Swedish regional support to SSA (2010-2015)



Swedish regional strategy with SSA (2010-15)

- SEK 3,260 million
- Three priority areas:
 1. Regional economic integration;
 2. Peace and security; and
 3. The environment and climate
- Core feature: Institutional development and capacity-building of intergovernmental ROs, esp. AU & RECs
- Growing “indirect support” via other ROs and actors



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Results and recommendations for Swedish regional support



Some general remarks

- Regional support is necessary & probably not better or worse than country/national support
- Some problems to generalise across sectors
- Limitations of evidence-base (including quality of reporting) makes it easier to say what does **not** work rather than what works!



Q1: Poverty reduction and development impact

1. Weak evidence about "development impact"
2. Reporting focused on "activities" & "outputs" instead of "outcomes" and "development impact"
3. Clarify ends and means — integration & strengthening
RO are not the same as development & poverty reduction
4. Improve conceptual precision — "regional development cooperation", "regional development" and "support to regional integration" etc.



Why support to AU & RECs is so difficult and slow — according to Sida's reports

Organizational problems

Inefficient, hierarchical or dysfunctional organizational structure; weak mandate; lack of competent staff; few permanent staff

Relations with member states

Member countries bypass ROs; underfinancing; conflicts btw members

Relations with donors

Donor dependence; poor communication with donors/Sweden

Reporting and results

Lack of results framework; poor reporting



How to understand poor results of AU & RECs & ROs?

- 1. Institutionalism and pan-Africanism:** in spite of many obstacles, states-led and top-down ROs are only means — **support to ROs must continue!**
- 2. Critical and new regionalism:** top-down ROs are needed, but can also be manipulated or be dysfunctional; market and civil society actors must also better involved — **qualify or revise support to states-led ROs and recognize importance of bottom-up regionalization!**



Q2: Recommendations

- Problematize AU, RECs and top-down regionalism
- Stop or qualify funding of dysfunctional ROs and projects
- Ensure involvement of private market actors & civil society actors through "bottom-up regionalization" and flexible designs
- Understand regional context better (cf. PERIA studies)
- Learn more from other donors



Q3: Aid effectiveness & funding strategies

- Bridge gap between Swedish regional and national aid
- Donor coordination should continue (and be improved)
- Increase African ownership
- TMEA versus EAC? — Gain more knowledge about trade-off between project implementation and sustainability/ownership



Some improvements of the new strategy (2016-21)

- Emphasis on expected outcomes instead of activities
- Recognizes need to clarify how regional capacity-building should contribute to long-term development results
- Focuses on "regional actors" — beyond AU and RECs
- Adopts a "holistic" view — seeks synergy between regional and national development cooperation



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Q & A