

# WORKING PAPER APRIL 2018 SECOND REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SIDA'S PLAN FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Elin Bjarnegård, Fredrik Uggla with the assistance of Hanna Barvaeus

# Second report on the implementation of Sida's Plan for Gender Mainstreaming

Elin Bjarnegård Fredrik Uggla

with the assistance of Hanna Barvaeus

Underlagsrapport 2018 till Expertgruppen för Biståndsanalys (EBA)

The Expert Group for Aid Studies – EBA – is a Government committee analysing and evaluating Swedish international development aid. This report can be downloaded free of charge at www.eba.se
Please refer to the present paper as: Bjarnegård, Elin and Fredrik Uggla (2018), Second report on the implementation of Sida's Plan for Gender Mainstreaming, EBA Working Paper, April 2018, Expert Group for Aid Studies, Sweden.
Printed by Elanders Sverige AB Stockholm 2018
Cover design by Julia Demchenko

# **Table of contents**

Executive Summary	4
1. Introduction	7
2. Method	9
3. Gender integration in Sida's contributions	11
3.1 Our analysis of Sida's contributions	
3.3 Sida's Assessment/Appraisals	
3.4 Approach to Gender Integration	17
4. Gender integration in geographical strategies and reporting	18
4.1 Cooperation strategies	18
4.2 Sida's input to the strategy development	20
4.3 Strategy reporting	22
5. Gender integration as seen by Sida's staff and other persons involved	23
5.1 The focus groups at Sida Headquarters	23
5.2 The field studies	
5.3 Other interviews	31
6. Implementation of the Plan	33
7. Conclusions	35
8. Next steps	37
References	39
Annex 1: Coding scheme for gender integration in the contributions	42
Annex 2: Implementation of the Plan	43
Annex 3: List – participants in focal groups and interviews	44
Anney 1. The Field Studies	47

## **Executive Summary**

This is the second of three reports from the continuous evaluation of Sida's Plan for gender mainstreaming ('the Plan', for short). Due to its intermediary character, the report does not aspire to give the full picture of Sida's work with gender integration and mainstreaming, but rather presents updates and extensions of findings and arguments contained in our first report.

One of the largest challenges of gender integration is to make sure organizational strategies match the actual practices of those working in the organization. Furthering institutional learning is therefore often claimed to be both necessary and difficult. For that reason, the present report gives particular attention to the perceptions of those working in the organization, but that are not directly responsible for gender integration. The report thus addresses the question of whether the implementation of the Plan has led to actual changes in organizational practices, and if so, how the content of such changes can be described?

To address these questions, we below draw on a broad range of data, including documents from Sida and the MFA, panel focus groups at Sida, and field studies in Myanmar and Zambia. As we juxtapose this data (which mainly considers the situation at Sida up through the first half of 2017) with evidence from the period before the approval of the Plan, we find some changes with regard to how gender is integrated into Sida's work. At the same time, however, several of our previous observations regarding how Sida approached the themes of gender integration and women's rights before the implementation of the Plan started still seem to apply.

Among our sources of data is an analysis of close to 50 Sida contributions which we assess in terms of gender integration, and compare them to a previous set of contributions drawn from the period before the Plan's implementation. This analysis reveals small but positive changes towards a more comprehensive integration of gender aspects during the period considered. The changes are generally not large enough to reach statistical significance, but that is at least partly attributable to the small size of the sample and possible declining marginal effects due to the long tradition of gender integration at Sida. On the other hand, although elements of gender analysis now appear to be more frequently undertaken in the contributions, the analyses continue to exhibit considerable variation as to their components and extent.

Similarly, our consideration of the cooperation strategies and the corresponding results reports, which together set and assess the overall parameters for Sida's work also shows some improvement with regard to how systematically issues related to gender equality and women's rights are integrated. However, such observable changes are relatively minor, and it is in most cases difficult to determine whether they can be directly derived from the implementation of the Plan. Furthermore, just as during the previous evaluation phase, a

closer study of these documents reveal a lack of coherence in how gender issues are addressed and where gender analyses are present they are generally not very comprehensive.

There are relatively few expressions of change in the focus group interviews. While some participants claim that gender issues have received a boost following actions undertaken in connection to the Plan (particularly the increased attention given to these issues during the annual planning for 2016), the overall view is still that while gender equality is an obvious Sida priority, most staff members are relatively unaware of relevant guiding documents or support functions. Instead, how gender is actually integrated continues to depend on the individual staff member and her/his direct superiors to a large extent, just as during the previous phase. Furthermore, some participants express doubts as to the suitability of one of the most salient parts of the Plan, namely the aim to increase the amount of funding for contributions that have gender equality as their principal objective, partly at the expense of contributions in which it is an integrated part.

The field studies differ from the other material as they are only conducted once; during this second phase. They indicate similar issues, but often put them in a more stark perspective. Hence, whereas gender equality is stressed by Sida field staff to a very large extent, both internally and in dialogue with partners, the actual implementation of this priority to a large extent depends on the individual staff members and their competence. Sida's National Program Officers, who may not have been exposed to the agency's emphasis on gender integration to the extent that their sent-out colleagues have, sometimes express that it is not entirely clear just what is expected of them. This claim echoes focus group comments concerning the lack of clarity on what a sufficient level of treatment of gender issues would be. In the absence of elaborate instructions regarding how to approach the issue of gender equality, staff members sometimes seems to feel the need to apply what may be called "proxy policies", such as previous policies that are no longer valid or the simple indicators related to the gender marker. Likewise, the two case studies, seem to reveal some scepticism among field staff vis-à-vis some of the other auxiliary functions at Sida, which are often seen as not being sufficiently adapted to local conditions.

In sum, then, whereas there are indications that the Plan has led to some positive changes in how Sida addresses the theme of gender equality and women's rights, the report reveals that there is scope for improvement. But it should be noted that Sida is currently in the process of launching several initiatives (e.g. a new statistics hand-book, specific plans for different units, and the implementation of a global strategy for gender equality) that may change this situation during the coming months. These changes will be mapped and assessed in our final report, due in June 2018, which will to a larger extent focus on the organizational strategies, infrastructure and tools developed by Sida to further gender integration, some of which are have only recently been introduced and implemented, wherefore their effects cannot be expected to be apparent in the present report.

The next phase of the evaluation will also give more attention to the actual mechanisms for the implementation of the Plan, and juxtapose such efforts with their effects in terms of changes in behaviour. We will then assess to what extent the Plan has contributed to a considerable change in how Sida addresses gender integration and women's rights, and whether the agency and its internal systems has been able to adapt to fully match the commitments expressed in the Plan.

#### 1. Introduction

The present document constitutes the second report out of three from the on-going evaluation of Sida's Plan for Gender Mainstreaming (in the following; "the Plan"). The overall task of our evaluation is to follow the implementation of the Plan, which represents Sida's commitment to advancing gender equality and women's rights during the period 2016-2018. While our primary focus is on the Plan and its concrete stipulations, we simultaneously address the broader question of how Sida integrates and mainstreams gender considerations in its work.

In this report, we present an update of our findings from the first report based on a range of additional material, including field studies undertaken in Myanmar and Zambia. The data gathered essentially represent the situation at Sida up through the first half of 2017, and the conclusions have to be read with this in mind as the organisation has subsequently initiated a number of new initiatives in the area.

#### 1.1 The First Report

The evaluation was begun during the second half of 2016, and our first report—representing the situation in Sida before and during the initial stage of implementation of the Plan—was presented to EBA in February 2017. In the first report we drew on material including a random sample of Sida contributions active before the implementation of the plan (i.e., in December 2015), a sample of Swedish cooperation strategies with their corresponding strategy reports, previous Sida and Swedish policies in the area, previous evaluations of gender mainstreaming at Sida, and interview data with Sida staff. Among the interviews, data from three focus groups—the so-called "gender hub", a random sample of unit heads, and a random sample of Sida officers at headquarters—featured prominently.

In that first report, we noted that Sida had a high ambition in terms of gender integration. Even so, evidence from Sida's contributions and reporting revealed a diverse picture when it came to how gender considerations were actually integrated in Sida's work. There was considerable variation as to the performance of gender analysis, the conceptualisation of gender, how the theme was operationalized, and the vision of gender integration that underlies Sida's work. Overall, such variations indicated that there was scope for improvement of Sida's work with gender integration in order to ensure a consistently high degree of quality in this regard.

Similarly, the first report noted that Sida's ambitions with regard to gender equality were matched by a very high level of staff acceptance of gender equality as a prioritized principle,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Sida. 2015. "Plan för jämställdhetsintegrering på Sida 2015-2018".

and a general perception that this theme was already highly present in Sida's work. But staff members were also often unaware of the actual Plan, and instead generally noted that the treatment of the theme was to a large extent determined by factors such as management priorities and available time. Furthermore, some staff members requested more support for gender integration, for instance in the form of concrete examples, and suggested that Sida could do more to promote clear instructions for gender integration.

In sum, the first report tentatively suggested that Sida's actions with regard to gender equality may not entirely have responded to the challenges and opportunities that the agency faces. Furthermore, it put forward the position that if Sida wants to live up to its reputation for being a global leader on issues of gender equality, it may be necessary to consider the challenges posed by potential internal complacency in order to take conceptual and effective treatment of gender integration further.

The report was presented to Sida, both at a meeting with the internal steering committee (ledningsgruppen) and at an open staff meeting, as well as being spread more broadly (e.g. among the members of the gender network). While it was acknowledged that the report only represented initial, tentative observations and that the data from Sida's contributions represented an earlier period prior to the implementation of the Plan, there was general agreement with the findings and the directions of the report. Even so, several commentators also suggested that Sida's achievements and shortcomings in this regard have to be seen in the broader context of Sida's work, as they are to some extent dependent on the capacity of Sida's partners and on the possibility of integrating different perspectives and priorities.

#### 1.2 Theoretical points of departure

Unlike the first report, the present report neither discusses theories concerning gender mainstreaming, nor the general policy framework within which Sida's work with gender takes place. The reader who is interested in these broader aspects of our work is advised to consult our first report, available on EBA's homepage.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the present report contains neither a cohesive analysis of all the components of our evaluation nor general conclusions and recommendations, as these elements will be part of the third and final report, to be presented in June 2018. Accordingly, the present document should be read as an intermediary update, rather than as a full report containing a complete and concluded evaluation of Sida's work with gender integration/mainstreaming.

In order to situate this report in relation to the two other reports of this evaluation, it is, however, important to very briefly reiterate some theoretical points of departure from the first report: Most research on gender mainstreaming has pointed to the important challenges related to its actual implementation. We know that formal rule change does not

<sup>.</sup> 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Bjarnegård and Uggla. 2017. First report on the implementation of Sida's Plan for Gender Integration. Expert Group for Aid Studies.

automatically lead to changes in practice. Changes need to take place at both the systemic and the individual level. Research cautions us to consider that if gender integration becomes a responsibility of all members of staff but it is not followed-up with training and skills development, it may even decrease overall attention to these issues. Implementation is also generally easier when staff perceive the new practices to be in line with existing practices and when they understand their meaning and intent.<sup>3</sup>

Based on these earlier studies, we study the implementation of the Plan both at the systemic and individual level, and by considering the changes in practices and behaviour that this particular Plan has brought about. Because this second phase involved fieldwork, the focus in the report is to a large extent on changes in practices and behaviour at the individual level. The purpose here is thus primarily to assess to what extent the work for improvement has been communicated and understood throughout the organization and if and how practices of staff and partners have changed as a result of the implementation of the Plan. The systemic level will be analysed in the third and final report, and this is also where we will attempt to match formal changes with corresponding informal behavioural changes.

#### 2. Method

The present, second, phase of our work was undertaken between May and September 2017, with most of the written material being collected during the first half of the same year. To a large extent, this phase of our study has consisted in a repetition of the enquiries performed during the first phase. Accordingly, we have drawn a new sample of project documents and cooperation strategies dating from the period between March 2016-April 2017, in order to estimate possible changes over time, and hence the possible effects of the Plan, which came into effect on January 1, 2016. Furthermore, we have repeated the focus groups undertaken during the first phase with the same participants in order to gauge their impressions of possible developments at Sida since the last report. These interviews have been supplemented with a set of interviews with persons who have a particularly important function in the implementation of the Plan.

Crucially, we have also undertaken field studies in Zambia and Myanmar (and this component therefore receives a lot of attention in the present report). In each location, we

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See e.g. 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; Mieke Verloo. 2005. "Displacement and Empowerment: Reflections on the Concept and Practice of the Council 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; 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; 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.

held focus groups and individual interviews with Sida staff (in Lusaka both with the country and the regional SRHR-team), and we also met with a number of Sida partners and other donors in order to obtain their view of Sida and the agency's work in these areas. Together, such material allowed us elements of a field-based perspective on how far the implementation of the Plan may have reached, and to assess how Sida works with gender integration in its country offices and in cooperation with its partners.

The choice of these two countries was partly determined by an interest in identifying contrasting cases. In practice, however, the selection was also influenced by the interest and availability of local Sida staff, and cannot be said to have been completely independent. We do not see this as a problem, however, as our aim was not to evaluate these country programs as such, but rather to obtain examples of how Sida works with issues related to gender issues and women's rights in different settings. Indeed, these field studies have been of crucial importance to understanding how can Sida work with gender issues and women's rights in the field. Short descriptions of each case can be found in the annexes to the report.

The fact that this is a continuous evaluation has important consequences for the method. The fact that we revisit documents and focus groups with similar questions and tools at three different points in time is a crucial component of the continuous evaluation that will hopefully allow us to identify if, when and how change came about. Another aspect is that a continuous dialogue and learning process should be part of the evaluation. The publication of the first report reportedly set in motion several change processes at Sida, which now form part of what we study as components of the implementation process. In the drafting process of this report, there was a change of staff that included the gender advisory posts at Sida, including our contact person at Sida. This was a challenge for the maintenance of a continuous dialogue around the content and findings of this report. We decided to delay the publication of the report in order to be able to take into account constructive comments relating to the focus of this report (i.e. the individual level changes in practices throughout the organization). Comments regarding the systemic level strategic changes will be considered in the third and final report.

In what follows, our primary aim is to assess the extent to which the situation that we described in our first report has changed in any significant way during this period of the Plan's implementation. We are also open to addressing additional issues that have been brought to our attention in field studies and interviews. Yet, it should be reiterated that the present report does not represent our final findings with their corresponding conclusions and recommendations, as these will only be presented in the final report, due in June 2018.

#### 3. Gender integration in Sida's contributions

#### 3.1 Our analysis of Sida's contributions

During the present evaluation phase, we have followed up our analyses of contributions (i.e., of the project documents presented to Sida by partners as well as Sida's subsequent assessments and decisions). In the previous report we established a baseline against which we can now evaluate the progress made during the beginning of the implementation of the Plan. Below, we thus compare our study of gender integration in the random sample of 50 contributions active on Dec 31, 2015 (before the implementation of the Plan which came into effect on January 1, 2016) to a sample of 50 contributions initiated between March 2016 and April 2017. The choice of the first of these dates was to allow sufficient time for the Plan to have come into effect, recognising that assessments normally take place a couple of months prior to the decision on a contribution.

By juxtaposing two relatively small samples, we cannot aspire to pick up more fine-grained changes, as this would have required larger samples. Yet, if there are major changes between the two periods, these should be apparent in the material. Furthermore, even if identified quantitative changes are not statistically significant, our analysis of close to a hundred contributions still gives us considerable qualitative knowledge about Sida's contributions, the way that they are written and assessed, as well as indications of change.

We randomly selected also our new set of contributions, but with an oversampling of contributions from the sectors that were particularly highlighted in the Plan, i.e. productive and humanitarian sectors. This oversampling was carried out in order to ensure that we would receive a large enough number of cases to say something about potential differences in these prioritized areas as compared to other areas. Additionally, as the initial random selection yielded some contributions that were clearly irrelevant (e.g. internal Sida activities or procurement matters), these were replaced with a second batch of contributions randomly selected in the way detailed above.

Eventually, we were able to obtain information on 46 of the 50 contributions (compared to 45 also in the baseline report), but several of them had missing documents (either project documents or assessments).

As Table 1 demonstrates, little has changed in terms of policy markers on gender equality. In the new sample, 17 per cent were projects for which Sida considered gender equality to be the main objective (policy marker 2), compared to 13 per cent in the baseline report. Just like in the baseline, gender was considered to be a significant and integrated objective (policy marker 1) in almost 60 per cent of the contributions, and about a quarter of contributions lacked gender components entirely (policy marker 0). Among the contributions belonging to the productive or humanitarian sectors, the percentage without

gender components is smaller (13 per cent) as is the percentage of contributions where gender is the main objective (also 13 per cent). Projects with policy marker 1 are in majority at 75 per cent.<sup>4</sup>

Table 1: Sida's application of gender equality policy markers in sample

Sida policy marker	Percent of total (N) 2017	Humanitarian/Productive Sectors Special Sample 2017	Percent of total (N) 2015
Gender equality is principal objective = 2	17 (8)	13 (2)	13 (6)
Gender equality is significant objective = 1	59 (27)	73 (11)	58 (26)
Not targeted to gender equality = 0	24 (11)	13 (2)	29 (13)
	N=46	N= 15	N=45

The first goal of the Plan is to increase the amount of funds to contributions that have gender equality as a main target (see Annex 2). However, we find that the differences in this regard are small between the contributions drawn before the implementation of the Plan and in the more recent one drawn about one year after the Plan went into effect. Given the small differences and the relatively small sample size, the 95 per cent confidence intervals are clearly overlapping at every level and there are no statistically significant differences between these proportions.

Furthermore, we are interested in assessing to what extent and how gender considerations were actually integrated in the contributions, apart from Sida's own application of policy markers. More specifically, we asked if gender was mentioned, if there were elements of a gender analysis, if there was a discernible approach to gender mainstreaming, and if specific resources or tools were mentioned in the different project documents. We also made our own assessment of whether the entire project was about gender or not (see Annex 1). We used the same categories and analyses as in the first phase of the project in order to ensure comparability and track changes between the two periods.<sup>5</sup> A gender analysis should thus

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> A Sida representative has suggested that contributions in the humanitarian sector cannot have gender as a main focus, wherefore these categories should not be collapsed. While we agree that future analyses should separate the two sectors to a larger extent, it is also notable that in spite of this commentary the two contributions that do have gender as a principal objective are both from the humanitarian sector (in one of them, the coding seems to have been subsequently changed to a one (1), however). Accordingly, whereas in the productive sectors five contributions had a score of 1 and two a score of 0, in the humanitarian sector six (later seven) contributions had scores of 1, and two (later one) had scores of 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Bjarnegård and Uggla. 2017. First report on the implementation of Sida's Plan for Gender Integration. Expert Group for Development Analysis.

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.

We made our assessments before knowing Sida's own categorisations of the projects, and only added the Sida policy marker at the very last stage, in order not to be biased by this previous self-evaluation by Sida.

Some of the difficulties outlined in our baseline report can be reiterated. There is no common template for either proposals or assessments at Sida, which makes systematic comparison of the contributions challenging. The documents assessed are structured in different manners and are of different length and with different level of detail. The amount of documentation available to us for each contribution also varied considerably. With this caveat in mind, there are still some discernible patterns.

#### 3.2 Project documents

We start by analysing the project applications, written by Sida's partners in order to attract support. It should be mentioned that we do not expect large differences in these documents because Sida's partners are only indirectly affected by the implementation of the Plan. Considering the fact that Sida normally does not hand out templates or guidelines to its partners in order for them to prepare applications, it would therefore be surprising if the Plan had made a large impact on the partners writing the project documents. Still, to the extent that Sida staff has either communicated the contents of the Plan to their partners, or started selecting projects with a stronger gender component as a result of the Plan, an effect could be present.

Just like last time, most, but not all, project applications mention gender aspects. Eighty-five per cent (29 out of 34) of the project documents to which we had access include some kind of reference to gender, women, or equality. In terms of sheer numbers in our sample, this is a slight increase compared to the 76 per cent in our baseline sample, but the 95 per cent confidence intervals are vastly overlapping between the two proportions, so we cannot conclude that this difference is statistically significant. In general, the changes are very small compared to the sample in the first phase. While gender is mentioned in most cases, it is still possible to get a project application approved, regardless of gender policy marker, without even mentioning gender issues and without an argument for why gender aspects need (or do not need) to be considered.

Table 2: Mention of gender per gender equality policy marker (project documents)

Sida policy marker	Percent of total (N) 2017	Humanitarian/Productive Sectors Special Sample 2017	Percent of total (N) 2015
Gender equality is principal objective = 2	86 (6/7)	100 (1/1)	100 (6/6)
Gender equality is significant objective = 1	86 (19/22)	89 (8/9)	83 (15/18)
Not targeted to gender equality = 0	80 (4/5)	NA (0/0)	44 (4/9)
Ali	85 (29/34)	90 (9/10)	76 (25/33)
	N= 34	N=10	N= 33

A majority of the project documents that mention gender (29 in total) also include elements of a gender analysis. The six that do not take the step from a mere reference to an actual analysis are generally project descriptions in which gender is brought up in passing, where it is mentioned as a cross-cutting theme, or where it is simply claimed that gender will be mainstreamed throughout the project without specifying how. Sometimes there are promises of rather vague outputs such a "special analysis of gender and conflict sensitivity aspects of the Ethiopian media landscape", but without further specification.

All projects that mention gender in humanitarian and productive sectors (nine out of nine) have elements of a gender analysis, whereas 70 per cent of the remaining documents do. Yet, there is still a large variation in the quality of the gender analysis, ranging from the very ambitious and thorough to the very brief and superficial. Of the 23 project documents that have elements of a gender analysis, the majority is concerned with issues of similarity (e.g. emphasising that laws and regulations should be gender neutral in form and implementation) or difference (e.g. emphasizing differentiated vulnerabilities based on gender), although quite a few, 15 out of 23, refer to a deeper transformation of gender roles (e.g. changing the underlying power structures). (For a more in-depth discussion of these concepts, please see our first report or the description under Table 5 below.) It is also promising that 18 of the 23 documents with gender analysis mention some kind of resources or tools that will be used to implement the gender aspects in the project.

A relatively high proportion of project applications go beyond mentioning gender to also specify what they mean by this and how they will carry it out. However, there are still several examples of project applications where this is not the case. For instance, half of the project applications that we have been able to analyse say nothing at all about how they are carrying out the gender integration. When gender integration is discussed, there is a large

variation in terms of tools, methods and resources mentioned, ranging from references to CEDAW and a UN Women manual on how to build a gender responsive program to internal workshops or guidelines on gender equality. Only one programme application (on humanitarian coordination) makes a reference to a Sida Gender Analysis Tool. In line with our previous findings, there is thus still little evidence of Sida having communicated a common understanding of what is meant by the term gender to its partners or having advocated for a specific perspective on gender integration.

#### 3.3 Sida's Assessment/Appraisals

Sida's own assessments are produced by Sida staff and should thus reflect the Plan and its goals to a larger extent than project applications authored by partners. And, indeed, gender is mentioned in the vast majority of Sida's assessments, and if anything, there has been an increase compared to the assessments analysed in the last phase, to the point where this now appears all but obligatory.<sup>6</sup>

Table 3: Mention of gender per gender equality policy marker (Sida assessments)

Sida policy marker	Percent of total (N) 2017	Humanitarian/Productive Sectors Special Sample 2017	Percent of total (N) 2015
Gender equality is principal objective = 2	100 (6/6)	100 (1/1)	100 (6/6)
Gender equality is significant objective = 1	92 (22/24)	82 (9/11)	84 (21/25)
Not targeted to gender equality = 0	100 (7/7)	100 (2/2)	50 (5/10)
Ali	95 (35/37)	86 (12/14)	78 (32/41)
	N=37	N=14	N=41

However, simply mentioning gender is, to say the least, a very generous definition of gender integration. In some of the above appraisals, gender is only mentioned in passing, or in a list of possible questions for dialogue. Looking for evidence of a broader contextual analysis involving gender considerations, we have determined the number of assessments that attempt some form of gender analysis beyond mentioning gender aspects or highlighting general gender recommendations. Table 4 lists the appraisals that have made some form of gender analysis based on the project description and/or the context of the project.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Even so, the differences are small and 95% confidence intervals are overlapping so the differences are not statistically significant.

Table 4: Elements of gender analysis per policy marker (Sida appraisals)

Sida policy marker	Percent of total (N) 2017	Humanitarian/Productive Sectors Special Sample 2017	Percent of total (N) 2015
Gender equality is principal objective = 2	83 (5/6)	0 (0/1)	100 (6/6)
Gender equality is significant objective = 1	58 (14/24)	36 (4/11)	32 (8/25)
Not targeted to gender equality = 0	29 (2/7)	0 (0/2)	20 (2/10)
All	57 (21/37)	29 (4/14)	39 (16/41)
	N=37	N=14	N=41

Compared to the last evaluation phase, there is a discernible increase in elements of gender analysis in Sida assessments in which gender is supposed to be an integrated theme (indicator 1). In our baseline report, only 32 per cent of assessments of gender integrated project applications seriously assessed gender aspects, but two years later we see a somewhat different picture with elements of gender analysis in 58 per cent of such assessments. However, while productive and humanitarian sectors often mention gender, only four out of fourteen such assessments have elements of gender analysis. Looking at all Sida's appraisals, there seems to have been an increase in the use of gender analyses, from 39 per cent of assessments to 57 per cent. 8

Elements of such gender analysis include pointing out that gender equality is unevenly carried out in suggested interventions, suggestions to collect gender disaggregated data, or statements that gender analyses and gender plans will be developed, e.g. "The project has a strong emphasis on gender perspectives although it will need to be improved during the inception phase of the project (put as a condition in the agreement) during which a deeper gender analysis and gender plan will be developed." In some assessments there are reflections on the progress of the partner with regard to the understanding of the importance of gender issues. Sometimes assessments mainly repeat and reinforce the analytical suggestions made in the proposal.

In assessments, as well as in the project proposals, gender tends to be mentioned in terms of similarity and difference, and to a less extent in transformative terms. About half of the assessments say something about how gender integration could be carried out, by referring

<sup>7</sup> It must be noted, however, that due to the sample size even this increase does not reach statistical significance at the 95 per cent confidence level.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> This difference actually almost reaches statistical significance at the 90% confidence level, despite the small samples. While we cannot confidently conclude that this change represents a real one, the tendency is pronounced enough to convince us that we should be open to other indications of change in this direction.

to specific resources or tools. The assessments often refer back to the same guidelines that partners themselves have mentioned, including internal or national strategies. Accordingly, manuals and guidelines produced by others (including the World Bank, the Swedish Research Council, IASC, UNRWA) tend to be used, rather than documents, guidelines and tools produced by Sida.

#### 3.4 Approach to Gender Integration

To determine the content of the gender analysis, we analyse the contributions as a whole, i.e. looking at both the project proposals and the respective assessment by Sida. We have attempted to discern the extent to which contributions focus on women's vulnerability or disempowerment (difference), women's rights or gender neutral policies (similarities), or more transformative approaches. Although this is often difficult to determine, the table below gives an indication of our findings. Note that this table builds on both project applications and contributions and that categories are not mutually exclusive; it is fully possible to mention several of the approaches in one and the same contribution (which is why the N of the emphasis is larger than the total number of contributions).

Table 5: Approach to gender mainstreaming 9

Emphasis	Percent of total (N) 2017	Humanitarian/Productive Sectors Special Sample 2017	Percent of total (N) 2015
Difference <sup>1</sup>	35 (23/46)	60 (9/15)	49 (22/45)
Similarity <sup>2</sup>	46 (25/46)	53 (8/15)	22 (10/45)
Transformation <sup>3</sup>	24 (16/46)	40 (6/15)	22 (10/45)
Impossible to determine/n.a.	41 (19/46)	33 (5/15)	47 (21/45)
	N= 46	N=15	N= 45

<sup>1.</sup>Difference here denotes that women are mentioned as different from men, that their particular vulnerability is pointed out.

The table demonstrates that there seems to be a stronger emphasis on emphasizing equality and rights (similarity issues) in Sida contributions in 2017 as compared to 2015. This

<sup>2.</sup> Similarity here denotes that it is pointed out that men and women have the same rights, and that they should be treated equally.

<sup>3.</sup> Transformation here denotes that the root causes of gender inequalities are addressed with the aim of changing them rather than just addressing them.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> 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.

difference is statistically significant. <sup>10</sup> We also see that contributions in the humanitarian/productive sectors tend to integrate gender in a specific and spelled out manner to a higher degree than in the total sample.

Finally, there are few references to Swedish gender policies in the material (including in Sida's own assessments). The overarching Gender Equality Objectives of the Swedish Government are never referred to. Nor are Sida's own tools or resources referred to, neither by partners nor in Sida's assessments (with one exception as mentioned above). In the above material, there are thus few signs of Sida explicitly being used as an authority when it comes to *how* gender issues should be integrated in development cooperation.

# 4. Gender integration in geographical strategies and reporting

#### 4.1 Cooperation strategies

During the first phase of the evaluation, we studied ten cooperation strategies that had been randomly selected from among the ones operational prior to the implementation of the Plan.

Although these documents are not Sida's own products, they do represent the framework within which Sida operates locally, and Sida is in most cases an important participant in their development. Hence, such strategies could provide a complementary perspective to the one provided by the examination of individual contributions.

Our assessment of the strategies that were in force before January 2016 showed a pattern similar to the one found among the projects and programs supported by Sida: no strategy completely lacked attention to gender equality and women's rights, and in several strategies these themes featured prominently. But there were also considerable differences between how the theme was addressed. In part, these differences may stem from the different formats used for the different strategies, but they could also reflect the relatively flexible, or loose, approach to how gender integration was carried out within Sida in the absence of clear instructions.

For this phase of the evaluation, we have reviewed the nine cooperation policies that were adopted by the government since June 2016.<sup>11</sup> The time-delay was introduced to ensure that Sida's input to these policies would have dated from after the Plan came into force. (Admittedly, in some cases, Sida's input was presented in mid-January 2016, but we have nevertheless chosen to include such strategies.<sup>12</sup>)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Forty-six per cent in 2017 with a confidence interval between 39 and 69, and 22% in 2015, with a non-overlapping confidence interval between 11 and 37.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> I.e., the strategies for Africa South of Sahara (Regional), Asia (Regional), Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Iraq, Mali, and Zimbabwe.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> See for instance, Sida. 2016. Communication to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Underlag för Sveriges utvecklingssamarbete med Colombia". Letter. January 12 2016.

Gender is generally included among the objectives of the cooperation strategies. All but one introduce gender as a sub-theme within other goal areas (thematic sectors); only one (Iraq 2017-2021) give the theme status as a separate goal area. In the rest, gender and women's rights are always mentioned in the democracy and human rights sector, and often in the sectors of Peace and Security and Health, in those cases where they are included in the strategy. Conversely, however, specific goals relating to gender equality and women's rights are less common in the productive and—particularly— the environmental sectors, where several strategies fail to set such objectives (e.g., Regional Asia 2016-2021; Regional Sub-Saharan Africa 2016-2021; Mali 2016-2020). Even so, four out of nine strategies specify goals relating to gender and women's rights in all sectors, something that was not the case in the previous phase, in which only one strategy stipulated such goals for all sectors.

Accordingly, the latest batch of strategies shows an increased attention to gender in their formulations of sectors and goals. Whereas only 21 per cent of sector formulations contained references to gender or women's rights in the first phase, that figure has risen to 35 per cent in the recent strategies. Similarly, whereas about a quarter (25 per cent) of the concrete sector goals included such references in the previous set, over a third (36) did so among the latter ones.

Such figures are not trivial. Even as gender and women's rights are almost always mentioned in the discussions under each sector, the sector goals are important for guiding strategic discussions and reporting. However, the above figures also have to be seen in a long term perspective. It is notable that none of the pre-2011 strategies in the sample (of which there are four) included a reference to gender or women's rights in the sector formulations, and that only one specified sector goals related to these themes. If these earlier strategies are discounted, the remaining strategies from the period 2012-2015 contain references to gender and women's rights in 28 per cent of the sector formulations, and in 31.4 per cent of the specified sector goals, meaning that the increase in the recent strategies seems more in line with longer-term developments, rather than being the effect of a discrete attempt to increase its presence.

When it comes to gender analysis, the short format of all new strategies means that any such analysis is by necessity sketchy. Even so, there is some variation between the strategies in the sample. At the one end of the scale is one strategy in which such an analysis is completely absent (Cuba 2016-2020). This is an exception, however, as is another strategy that only mentions the situation for women as part of enumerations of affected groups (Colombia 2016-2020). It is more common that the cooperation strategies provide some particular information on the situation of women, at least in some areas (e.g., Bolivia 2016-2020, Zimbabwe 2017-2021, and Regional Sub-Saharan Africa 2016-2021). Finally, there are some strategies that contain longer discussions regarding the situation for women in different areas (Guatemala 2016-2020, Iraq 2017-2021), sometimes including men's roles in the analysis as well, even if only in the briefest of terms (Guatemala 2016-2020). No document, however, contains a more profound, separate and specific gender analysis. In

that regard, it is difficult to discern any difference to the situation in the previous sample of strategies.

Interestingly, there is considerably less variation among the strategies when it comes to the methods and concrete actions to be taken. Furthermore, in this regard gender issues are much more present in the new sample of strategies than in the previous one. Whereas the latter group exhibited considerable variation in this regard, the new strategies uniformly state that women's rights and gender equality shall be given a prominent place in Swedish development cooperation. Indeed, most of the strategies use the same formulations in this regard, making references to the rights perspective, the need to integrate different priorities, and including the ubiquitous phrase "Gender equality and the empowerment and rights of women and girls are both goals in themselves and a prerequisite and a means for achieving sustainable global development." The result, however, is that while the strategies are remarkably consistent in the high degree of attention and importance that they confer to women's rights and gender equality, this carbon-copy approach means that such statements do not always appear to be connected to the situation in the country as presented in the contextual analysis. Discussions on methods and measures are mainly declarations of intent in relation to different groups, among which women and girls are but two. Indeed, only some of the strategies offer more elaborate, if still brief, discussions containing more innovative approaches, such as the one for Iraq (2017-2021) and Guatemala (2016-2020), which both specify that men and boys are potentially important agents of change for gender equality.

In sum, some positive changes are apparent in the cooperation strategies over time when it comes to the presence of themes related to gender and women's rights and with regard to methods. In the latter case, it is not clear that these will improve Sida's work with gender equality, however. While it is possible to argue that the strategies' formulations clearly indicate the importance of addressing such themes, there is little evidence of such formulations being derived from a gender analysis. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that several of the statements that do address the themes of women's rights and gender analysis are more or less identical formulations whose connection to the contextual analysis is often less than evident. The wide use of identical statements signal the existence of a common informal understanding of why gender integration is important, even in the absence of a general policy where such statements are formalized.

#### 4.2 Sida's input to the strategy development

The cooperation strategies provide the foundation of Sida's work, and are hence important by themselves. Yet, their stipulations cannot be directly attributed to Sida as an organisation. Rather, the strategies are products of the Swedish government and the MFA specifically. While Sida normally provides input to these processes, the extent to which this

is taken into account may vary. (And in one of the cases discussed above, the Cuba strategy, Sida claims not to have provided any such input.<sup>13</sup>)

In order to correct for this, we have also assessed the input provided by Sida to the development of the above strategies.<sup>14</sup> These documents paint a somewhat different picture from the one above.

In the first place, it should be noted that Sida's input in this regard does not appear to follow a set model. The suggestions differ as to whether they propose goals related to gender equality in all sectors (which is the case in five of the eight cases) or only in some (three out of eight). Also, and in contrast to the standard formulations that ultimately find their way into the final strategies, there is little coherence among Sida's propositions. Hence, individual strategies propose singular solutions such as joining the gender and environmental priorities (proposal for the Regional Strategy Asia 2016-2021), or creating a specific goal area called "Women's security and the prevention of violence" (Guatemala 2016-2020). This is consistent with a remark by a field interviewee who noted, in relation to having participated in a recent strategy process, that these processes occur "in a vacuum" as there are no established instructions available for such work. <sup>15</sup> (In this regard, it should also be noted that references to the Plan are entirely absent in these documents.)

Even so, most of the documents provided by Sida contain relatively similar elements of gender analysis, <sup>16</sup> by providing gender disaggregated data and addressing themes related to women's situation in particular. In some documents, such data is grouped into a separate gender analysis (e.g., Colombia 2016-2020), but most documents do not have such an analysis covering all sectors. Perhaps relatedly, themes such as masculinities and/or the convergence of gender and other grounds for discrimination in an intersectional approach are seldom addressed in a systematic and coherent fashion (but on the last point, see Guatemala (2016-2020) for an exception, as that document proposes a particular focus on indigenous women). Finally, it should also be noted that Sida's proposals are often more far-reaching and innovative that the final strategies, but that may be because the latter are often much shorter documents.

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Communication from Sida to Fredrik Uggla, Sept. 27, 2017.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Note that in one case (Mali), Sida's input seems to have been drafted in 2014, even though the strategy was not approved until 2016. Similarly, most of the work on the Latin American strategies appears to have been done in 2015. Or five out of seven, if Mali is disregarded for the reasons given in the previous footnote.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Interview Myanmar. Note however, that the same person also expresses appreciation for the support from Sida HQ for the process.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> The exception in this regard is the Regional Strategy for Asia, but we cannot completely rule out that there may be additional documents/appendices to that document which we have not been given access to. The reason why we suspect this is that the document which we have for Asia is considerably shorter than for the other strategies.

#### 4.3 Strategy reporting

Apart from assessing the strategies themselves, our first report also studied Sida's annual reporting for 2015 related to such documents. In the present phase, we have assessed the subsequent strategy reports for 2016.

The 2015 reports exhibited considerable variation in how they addressed the theme of gender equality, both in contextual descriptions, analysis and results reporting. This variation persists in the 2016 reports, which nevertheless resemble each other in their lack of systematised treatment of gender issues. None of the reports include a coherent analysis of the general situation with regard to gender issues in the country or region under discussion. When such analyses exist, they are performed on individual sectors, with a correspondingly limited focus. Furthermore, reports differ as to whether all sectors include a discussion on the role of gender, or if such discussions are limited to certain sectors. The majority of the reports belong to the latter category (but for exceptions of the former kind, see the reports on Somalia and Bolivia). Moreover, the use of gender disaggregated statistics is uneven, and two of the reports do not contain any such data at all.

Likewise, most analyses are relatively superficial and limited to brief descriptions of the context or specific attained results. Indeed, in a few cases, even the reporting on goals directly related to gender equality (such as the prevention of gender-based violence) fails to present any gender-relevant considerations.<sup>17</sup>

Regarding explicit discussions concerning learning and adaptation related to gender equality and women's rights, there are a few examples of this (for instance, the Bolivia report suggests that more work should concern itself with masculinities). In general, though, more advanced or coherent discussions in this regard are absent.

It is difficult to detect any regional differences in the reporting. An exception in this regard is the fact that the strategies from Africa uniformly contain passages detailing the number of contributions with gender as their main focus/integrated focus, something that may be traced back to the Plan (and the actions that the Africa department has subsequently taken), even though it is never mentioned in connection to such exercises (or anywhere else in the reports, for that matter). Such reporting is not, however accompanied by any more profound analyses of the challenges present in the local context. It may be that a strong focus on such quantitative measurement may "crowd out" more fine-grained and potentially more advanced analyses focusing on preconditions for success (this has been suggested in several interviews, as will be shown below). While we recognize such a risk, it should be noted that there is no evidence that previous reports actually contained such analysis of a more advanced kind, even in the absence of the quantitative measurements on gender markers.

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Sida. 2016. Strategy Report on Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Turkey, p. 7.

Apart from the inclusion of brief discussions regarding the performance of the local portfolio in terms of gender markers, it is difficult to see any significant differences between the 2015 reports and the ones from 2016. While a very generous count would indicate that four out of the ten reports have been improved over the year (and one has possibly regressed), we hesitate to say as much, given that the reports are with few exceptions remarkably similar.

Overall, there are few signs of fundamental changes in the material relating to the cooperation strategies between the two phases. While there have been improvements, the variation between the documents from the same batch is still larger than those between the two phases. Furthermore, and with the exception of the quantitative reporting from Africa, it is hard to see any influence from the Plan on these documents, let alone any explicit reference to that document. To the contrary, the variation seems to be the result of a lack of clear instructions on strategy development and reporting, as well as on how to address the theme of gender equality in these processes.

## 5. Gender integration as seen by Sida's staff and other persons involved

#### 5.1 The focus groups at Sida Headquarters

To follow up on the previous evaluation phase, three focus groups were organised at Sida HQ in June and September to discuss possible changes in Sida's implementation of the Plan, as well as to give participants a forum to express their more general impressions of Sida's work in relation to women's rights and gender issues. These groups brought together members of the so-called "gender hub", HQ-based program officers, and heads of units, respectively. With the partial exception of the members of the first entity, the groups consisted of the same individuals as during the previous phase, giving them a "panel" character. Furthermore, the participants in the program officer and heads of unit groups had originally been selected randomly.

#### 5.1.1 View of the Plan and present developments

The discussions showed that the Plan itself is still widely unknown, particularly among program officers. One participant even claimed, only half-jokingly, that the only time she had heard about the Plan was in connection to the present evaluation (and a similar point was made during the field studies). But in spite of the generalised lack of knowledge concerning the Plan, several of the interviewees acknowledge that they perceive its effects indirectly, particularly through the new stipulations on reporting that are derived from the Plan's goal to increase the number of contributions having gender as a primary focus.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Steven E. Finkel. 1995. Causal Analysis with Panel Data. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Several focus group participants also claimed to see positive developments regarding attention to gender integration and women's issues in general. One head of unit noted that they were still able to build on advances that had come about during the previous year when gender has a more prominent position in the operational planning. One member of the gender network also claimed to see progress in the field, particularly at the embassy level.

Such suggestions reflect a rather uneven progress, as certain departments or units seem to be developing more than others in this regard. The interests and priorities of the individual department or unit head seem to carry more weight than the Plan. Moreover, even while no interviewee claimed that the situation was regressing, several impediments and obstacles to efficient gender integration were noted, including the lack of central directives, internal competence, and internal support. These will be further discussed below.

#### 5.1.2 Discussions concerning the policy markers for gender

Something that emerges strongly from the interviews is that in the absence of any clear instructions for how gender integration shall take place, the policy markers that categorize contributions according to their degree of gender focus (0, 1 or 2) have become very prominent in the discussion concerning gender integration at Sida. In practice these markers, combined with stipulations in the new contribution management system (TRAC), seem to be the most important guidelines for staff officers. At the same time, there is extensive recognition of the fact that this represents a reduced and limited view of gender integration and women's rights. One of the participant program officers notes: "Now it feels as if we are [mostly] talking about the gender markers. But we will miss the target if what matters is whether it is a 'one' or a 'two'." Another participant suggest that Sida today is reactive rather than proactive with regard to gender issues. Similarly, several participants both among the heads of unit and the program officers lament the lack of clear instructions that instruct Sida's work on gender and that establish what is a "good enough" level of ambition.

#### 5.1.3 Challenges, short-comings and Sida's support

It is clear that many focus group participants perceive that there are high expectations on Sida with regard to gender integration. These high expectations come from Sida's own historical emphasis on gender issues as well as from the recent government position on feminist foreign policy. Some express concern that Sida may not always match its vocal commitment to gender equality with concrete and specialised knowledge aimed to bring it about. One head of unit remarked: "We have such a high profile [when it comes to gender equality]. That may lead to a backlash."

Such remarks indicate the need for auxiliary functions that assist Sida's staff members in addressing themes related to women's rights and gender integration and to ensuring

continued high quality as well as improvement. There is a general appreciation of the gender help-desk among the focus groups participants. Still, several participants note the inconsistency in that the help-desk does not serve all of Sida, but only certain departments, meaning that staff in some departments (e.g. Partner Cooperation and Innovation) have been left without such support (see the discussion below). Likewise, although the Gender Tool-box is also generally well regarded, some participants do not use it and others see it as being of less practical use as an actual tool for designing and assessing contributions.

Yet, even with such caveats, the views concerning these support functions are generally positive. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the gender network, regarding which opinions are more divided; whereas some are appreciative of the network and claim that it works well, most program officers feel that they are not up-dated on what it is doing, and that the dissemination of information from the network has not always been effective. Such observations mirror the evident confusion, particularly among the heads of unit, regarding the role of the focal points. Related to this, several of the participants in the focus groups claim to have noted the staffing discontinuity at the two superior gender advisor posts (verksföreträdare and ämnesföreträdare), which will be further described below. Even as this is generally lamented, it is also evident that few of the participants claim that this has had a direct negative influence on them and their work. This point might be taken to demonstrate the extent to which decentralisation has affected gender integration at Sida, making central functions seem less relevant to many program officers.

Finally, when it comes to concrete problems and obstacles that affect Sida's work with gender integration and women's rights, certain problems that were mentioned during the previous phase remain prominent, such as the need for instructions on how to integrate different mainstreaming themes and priorities. Other aspects are more frequently mentioned in this phase. That is the case, for instance, with staff training and education in the area, something that several participants indicate as lacking. This may be due to communication problems, as there is conflicting information claiming that a gender course is offered at headquarters annually. Finally, several interviewees claim that another challenge is in the making, in the form of the announced global strategy on gender issues. While this is celebrated by some of the participants, the majority of program officers and heads of unit express some apprehension vis-à-vis this idea. Even as several of them state that such a strategy may, in best case scenario, have a catalytic effect and elevate Sida's work with gender integration, there is also a common fear that it might just lead to increased confusion and dispersal of efforts, taking resources from support to program officers struggling to integrate gender aspects into their current work.

In sum, while there are signs of progress in the focus group discussions, it is difficult to present this as an established trend in that direction. Rather, even though there is general agreement on the importance of the issue and the fact that it is receiving somewhat more attention, few seem to attribute this to a conscious strategy at Sida to strengthen these issues, let alone to the Plan and its stipulations - with the partial exception of the well-

known shift towards greater emphasis on the gender markers. Moreover, based on the interview material, it is difficult to find traces of qualitative changes regarding how Sida works with these issues. To the contrary, the absence of clear instructions seems to be acutely felt. There are also perceptions that central gender support functions are somewhat unreliable, due to recent staff changes (particularly the senior internal advisors) or because do not reach the entire agency (as is the case with the external help-desk).

#### 5.2 The field studies

In addition to the other material, we have during this particular phase of the evaluation undertaken field studies to Zambia and Myanmar in order to get closer to the project implementation where gender integration is put to practice. Importantly, the focus on specific countries and partners was not undertaken with the intention to evaluate these particular country offices or their contributions, which we made very clear in our interviews. Rather, we tried to ensure variation by selecting contrasting countries and a variety of different projects and partners.

In each location we conducted a focus group interview with Sida staff at the embassy, combined with interviews with individual program officers, heads of cooperation, and representatives of partner organisations, of which we had selected seven to ten before our arrival for closer examination. We also collected available documentation regarding the selected projects.

In general terms, our purpose was to discern whether or not there was knowledge about the Plan and, if so, how it had influenced practices and behavior with regard to gender mainstreaming. More broadly, we also wanted to understand and map the existing discourses and practices relating to gender integration in Sida's work, in order to gauge the level of coherence and common understanding in how Sida approaches gender issues. Our aim is to refer to general tendencies in our analysis. In keeping with this intention, we triangulate the information from respondents, so that we place larger emphasis on views that we hear from more than one person. While the full list of interviewees can be found at the end of this document, we will not cite individual program officers or partners in the following analysis.

The selection of countries to study was partly based on the availability and disposition of the local Sida staff. We do not see this as a problem, however, as the two countries are not strictly compared; rather, they are selected to illustrate various aspects of the same organisation and its gender work in different contexts. It is worth noting, however, that Zambia and Myanmar are different when it comes to context as well as portfolios. The focus in Myanmar is very much one of political urgency, of channelling aid to support the fragile democracy and to work with on-going armed conflicts in different parts of the country. Zambia, on the other hand, has a more consolidated aid sector where many actors have been in place for a long time, working with a more long-term perspective.

In general, our findings from the field visits support the picture we have painted above as well as in our earlier report. Gender equality is very clearly a priority for Sida, but the specific content of this priority, or the methods by which it is carried out, is not always clear, even to the individuals implementing it.

#### 5.2.1 Knowledge about the Plan among Sida's field staff:

The knowledge about the Plan and its content was low, if not non-existent, among Sida staff in the field. Some individuals said they may have heard about it, and a few more had heard about the intention to increase the contributions where gender is a principal objective at the expense of contributions where gender is integrated. The discussion of the Plan as such was therefore generally very brief.

We also encountered the frequent misunderstanding that our objective was, rather, to evaluate the impact of the Feminist Foreign Policy. The Feminist Foreign Policy has clearly been very important for Sida both at headquarters and in the field as a way of furthering Sweden's profile as a consistent supporter with regard to gender equality issues and as a pioneer with regard to feminist vocabulary. Even so, there was no mention of a particular aspect of that policy being seen as important and there are few indications that the Feminist Foreign Policy has significantly changed the way in which staff works with these issues in the field. Instead, the Feminist Foreign Policy was said to have increased the extent to which local offices work with gender, rather than changing the way in which they do it. In Zambia, for instance, the launch of the Feminist Foreign Policy spurred an internal workshop as well as an assessment of gender integration in all contributions.

#### 5.2.2 Gender mainstreaming: Priority or practice?

Sida field staff is no different from the staff at Sida Headquarters when it comes to the attitudes to gender equality in general. Gender equality is seen as the principal profile question for Sweden, it is a priority that staff members are proud of and they express this priority with confidence. There seems to be very little opposition within the organisation to putting this into practice in partner countries. Indeed, the main hurdles mentioned by Sida staff are usually the context and the partners, who are sometimes described as not understanding the value of gender mainstreaming in their projects. Sida staff operating in both Myanmar and Zambia therefore express that one of their most important tasks in order to improve gender integration is to work with the values and attitudes of partners.

There are some discernible differences between individuals, however, as to the extent to which they openly advocate for gender integration in the projects they are responsible for. Working with gender issues is generally seen as something that "comes naturally", and not as something that is imposed from above. There is thus no perceived pressure "from above" to advocate for gender mainstreaming and there is little systematic and regular assessments of gender mainstreaming (although individual units have undertaken "portfolio").

assessments" in this regard). It is also mostly voluntary to make use of the infrastructure that Sida has developed to strengthen gender mainstreaming, such as the gender toolbox and the gender helpdesk. This means that program officers address gender differently depending on their personal preferences and on what time allows. Time constraints are, along with the values of partners, one of the most commonly mentioned hurdles for prioritizing gender issues. This large flexibility on the part of the program officers offers an opportunity to work extensively with gender issues for those individuals who are willing and able to do so. The potential flipside of this flexibility is of course that the focus on gender becomes, at least in theory, dependent on individual ambition and ability (combined with the priority that immediate superiors place on the issue) rather than on organisational strategy and capacity. In the long term, taking staff rotation into account, this renders the special position of gender issues at Sida more vulnerable than it may seem.

There is a stark contrast between the confidence with which program officers state that gender is a consistent high priority and their more hesitant answers to questions about what it entails in practice and how it affects their daily work. Gender integration is interpreted by most people interviewed to signify an increased attention to gender issues and a raised level of ambition when it comes to channelling resources to projects and programmes working to the benefit of women. Most program officers are not able to outline any particular strategy, method or tool that they personally use in order to ensure that gender is a systematically integrated part of their activities. Nor are they able to describe how gender mainstreaming is conducted within Sida, or how it may be different or similar to mainstreaming in other organisations.

This absence of a coherent strategy for gender work is however generally not seen as a problem, because there is a strong conviction that the partners' systems, rather than Sida's own ideas, should be used as a point of departure for efficient development cooperation. Hence, issues like gender integration are often described as something that is tackled through continuous dialogue with the partners. However, such an approach obviously makes Sida very dependent on partners' capacity and interest in these themes (and it is questionable if and how this approach can be reconciled with Sida's ambition to be world-leading not just in prioritizing gender equality, but in the development of analytical methods and tools for improved gender integration?)

In sum, gender equality seems to be a strong and consistent priority in Sida country offices, rather than a perspective that is filled with particular content. It is a telling illustration that in Zambia gender was prioritised to the extent that they decided to recruit an extra resource. The person who was recruited had a background in human rights, but not specifically in gender, and she cannot today remember that any questions were asked about her approach to gender issues, her theoretical background or about the methodological tools she would use to conduct gender analyses at the time of her employment.

Similarly, there is little evidence of a strategy to ensure organisational learning or a process of institutionalisation when it comes to creating a coherent view of how gender issues

should be raised and tackled. In general, few Sida staff members express views indicating that they perceive gender to be a specific field of expertise or that integration of gender issues into project cycles would require a professionalization process or specific tools. Among field staff interviewed, the gender helpdesk has been used to a very limited extent, as their advice is often perceived to be lacking in contextual knowledge. Similarly, very few people are aware of, or have used, the gender toolbox developed by Sida. Gender focal points at the embassies are expected to participate in the Sida gender network meetings, but these meetings are described as being more about information dissemination than about learning, and some – but not all - members of field staff are critical of the network's value.

There is one important difference between two groups of individuals that stands out in our interview material from both Zambia and Myanmar: the attitudes and views of Swedish program officers on the one hand and national program officers (NPOs., i.e., locally employed program officers) on the other. Swedish program officers confidently and proudly state that gender mainstreaming is "ingrained in the walls" of Sida, and that other donors in the country expect Sida to take a lead on gender issues. One person says gender mainstreaming is "deeply anchored in Sida's DNA and our ways of working. Of course we have a way of thinking about these issues – anything else would be strange. It is the kind of mainstreaming that has come the furthest." At the same time, NPOs seem almost perplexed when these views are voiced and are eager to emphasize that they do not fully comprehend what having gender equality "in the DNA" or "ingrained in the walls" actually entails in the absence of instructions or an action plan for gender. The interviewed NPOs agree that their work would be easier if Sida's stance on gender issues was put in writing and widely available as recommended instructions. In one revealing case, an NPO opted to make use of an old (2005-2010) Sida policy on gender equality in order to be able to better communicate to partners what Sida's expectations are. 19 Some NPOs also compare Sida to previous working places where they claimed to have received more training and capacity-building on issues that were considered to be of crucial importance to the organisation. But as one of them noted, "When you come to Sida, the knowledge that you come with is the knowledge that you go out with. We need training. (...) The world is always changing [...] we need to update. We also need some kind of normative training."

It is, again, worth questioning whether the perceived lack of training is real or whether it rather reflects a lack of communication about the available training program. From the headquarter level we were told that there is, in fact, a training programme about gender issues specifically directed to national program officers, but that the demand is quite low. But it should be noted that even NPOs that had attended trainings tended to perceive a gulf between them and their sent-out colleagues with regard to their understanding of the issue.

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Sida. 2005. "Promoting Gender Equality in Gender Cooperation".

It is worth pointing out that most Swedish staff members do not seem to have received or signed up for training or capacity building about gender issues either, and in the few cases in which people remembered such a training it usually took place a long time ago. This is surprising, given that such trainings are regularly offered at Sida, and considering that sent-out staff generally see their organization as one that should remain in the absolute forefront of the field.

In summary, Sida's de facto strategy for gender mainstreaming places a strong emphasis on the theme, keeping gender issues—broadly defined—on the table in all contexts and in most types of projects. This de facto strategy is clearly facilitated by the fact that Swedish program officers strongly identify with gender equality issues to the extent that it is seen as being at the core of Swedish development cooperation. This level of identification is however, perhaps not surprisingly, weaker among NPOs than it is among Swedish members of staff.

#### 5.2.3 Partners' view of Sida and gender mainstreaming

The projects reviewed and the partners visited were very different. In those cases where Sida co-funds projects with other donors it is sometimes difficult to specify the influence that Sida, as compared to other actors, may have had. Even so, most partners describe their partnerships with Sida in very positive terms: program officers from Sida are seen as easy to work with, flexible, and engaged.

Most partners also agree that gender is a prioritised issue in their contacts with Sida. Whereas some partners share Sida's self-image about Sida as an unusually strong driving force for gender equality, others put Sida's engagement in gender issues largely on par with other major donors.

This is actually one instance where we found a difference between the two countries: partners in Zambia are less likely than partners in Myanmar to view Sida as outstanding in terms of its commitment to gender equality. Many, but not all, of Sida's partners in Myanmar could not emphasize enough how the Sida representative consistently was the person who put gender issues on the agenda in the first place - and who made sure they made their way back on the agenda when they slid off - thus helping them to keep these issues present even as attention may have been straying.

This suggestion—that Sida is seen as more of a gender equality champion in Myanmar than in Zambia—needs to be put into context, however. First of all, it is clear that Zambia and Myanmar provide very different contexts when it comes to gender equality work. Zambia has been a target for development cooperation for a long time, and Sida, as well as many other donors, have been present there for many years. Accordingly, development cooperation with Zambia may have reached a stage at which gender issues can perhaps be expected to be emphasized by most donors, and where donors have developed ways of efficiently cooperating around these issues. In Myanmar, on the other hand, development

cooperation at this scale is something new and donors are still getting to know the landscape, including the other donors present. Myanmar also has many acute political and social situations that development cooperation needs to tackle, including continued armed conflict in the midst of a peace process, a refugee crisis and ethnic cleansing in Rakhine state and an extremely fragile political situation. We know from research on gender mainstreaming strategies elsewhere that gender is likely to be forgotten when other issues are seen as more important. If that is the case in Myanmar, Sida might be exceptional in *not* forgetting about gender even in the face of crisis. Thus, the commitment to gender equality may be as strong in Sida in Zambia as it is in Sida in Myanmar, but this commitment is more of a deviation in Myanmar, while it is closer to an emerging donor norm in Zambia.

Second, it is necessary to return to the question of individual versus organisational (or systemic) responsibility. A considerable degree of the praise raised in partner interviews in Myanmar concerns one individual program officer at Sida. This program officer has clearly made it a priority to work consistently with gender equality for an extended period of time, and throughout the political changes in the country. There is no guarantee that gender equality will be given the same level of attention by a successor when this particular program officer is replaced by someone else.

In this regard, it should also be noted that many partners were not aware of the absence of specific Sida instructions on gender. They generally interpreted the actions of the program officers as adhering to an official policy on gender. Some expressed disappointment when they realised that there is no underlying specific policy guiding the work that they have been impressed by.

The interviews with the partners thus further substantiate earlier findings that there is not a strong focus on the 'how' from the point of view of Sida. Partners are rarely, if ever, told how they could or should incorporate gender into their projects. While they appreciate Sida's flexibility, many also express the need for learning processes that perceive would be strengthened if they were given some form of template or guideline regarding how to gender mainstream a project; for their own capacity building in this area, if nothing else. Partners emphasize the need for training and capacity building from Sida, but they also call for a stronger push from Sida to bring its partners together more often so that they can learn from each other. Such an event had in fact been organised in Zambia, and was highly appreciated by all partners.

#### 5.3 Other interviews

Apart from the above interviews, the team has also interviewed persons who have the responsibility for promoting the theme of gender equality at Sida, either internally or by being part of the external help-desk. The development of the gender infrastructure at Sida will be in focus in the third phase, but we briefly comment on it also in this second report.

Apart from the gender network discussed above, Sida has two staff members responsible for promotion of gender equality; one lead policy specialist (*verksföreträdare*) and one policy specialist (*ämnesföreträdare*). During this phase of the evaluation, there were changes to both of these posts. One was vacant for quite some time after the previous staff member moved for an overseas posting for Sida. The other staff member left Sida during the summer 2017. Even though new policy specialists were subsequently recruited for both these posts and temporary assignments made up for staffing shortage in the meantime, this change inevitably led to some discontinuities that did not go unnoticed. As mentioned above, several members of the focus groups as well as other interviewees claimed to perceive a relative weakness of the gender function at Sida during this particular phase of the evaluation.

Based on interviews with the previous policy specialists, there was relatively small difference between their views and the ones expressed in the focus groups. One of the former noted that there is an unevenness in how Sida works with these issues, and that even though the agency considers itself a forerunner, one has to be vigilant and constantly check the quality of work in this area to ensure that it lives up to the standards that Sida sets for itself. While she claims to have a good access to the leadership, she nevertheless describes the situation as lacking in several respects; policy-wise, competence-wise, and also as to instructions on issues such as the role of the focal points.

These and other issues are also expressed by a representative from the help-desk that serves most of Sida's departments. As has been demonstrated above, the helpdesk is a highly appreciated function among headquarter staff, and apparently a crucial one for many Sida officers when they address issues of gender equality and women's rights. It should be noted however, that this helpdesk initially did not serve all of Sida's departments, but only the geographic ones. Even though sources from within Sida claim that a solution to this has been reached, the helpdesk report for 2016 does not show any queries from departments outside of the geographic departments, and the head of the helpdesk still describes its actions as limited to the three geographic departments.<sup>20</sup> The fact that departments such as Partnership and Innovation have not had access to the helpdesk is notable.

In spite of its popularity, it should be noted that the helpdesk is not in constant use. The maximum number of days that can be spent on a query is five, and during 2016, the helpdesk answered 65 queries, and during 2017 (until September) 43. The advice is not evenly spread however, and in 2016, twelve embassies/units did not request any help at all. Among the units that did use the help-desk, most only submitted a single query during the year. This could reflect the point made in some of the field interviews, namely that the helpdesk advice is seen as too removed from their own local conditions to be of much help.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Interview Anja Taarup Nordlund, September 6 2017. Nordic Consulting Group. 2016. First Annual Report from the Global Gender Help Function to Africa, HumAsia and EuroLatin, December 2015 to November 2016, p. 4.

Our interview with the helpdesk also confirms several of the points made above. Hence, the helpdesk representative describes the competence regarding these issues among Sida staff members as very varied, and says that the absence of a policy or instructions means that it becomes difficult to establish what is "good enough". Similarly, she agrees that the extent to which gender integration is taken seriously ultimately depends very much on individual staff members and directors. However, she also points to the advantages of the flexible approach, noting that the absence of instructions allows the helpdesk a wide scope in defining how to approach the issue and what advice to give. Even so, she tells of how the help-desk tries to apply the knowledge and perspectives available in Sida's "Tool-box for gender equality" in their advisory work. (On a related note, this representative also claims that the Plan has not been communicated to the helpdesk.)

Interestingly, the helpdesk representative is also fairly critical of how Sida uses the helpdesk, stating that it often becomes a simple gap-filling measure, aimed more at the formulations in the project documents than at the issues of partners competence and capabilities, in spite of the greater relevance of the latter. Likewise, she claims that a more relevant function would be to coach Sida staff members and help to build internal capacity at Sida regarding these issues, not least because of her impression that internal discussions at the agency regarding these issues are rather weak. Moreover, she is also critical of the simplified approach built on the "ones" and "twos" in the policy indicator/gender marker, noting that if Sida is serious about moving from the former to the latter, it would call for a change of partners rather than a simple re-orientation. If this change does not take place, less competent partners may become responsible for projects having gender equality as their main goal.

In sum, interviews with centrally placed persons again tend to confirm the above view of Sida as an agency whose commitment to gender equality and women's rights cannot be doubted, but in which several things could be done to ensure that action matches this position and that a greater coherence be achieved; such as internal education, clearer instructions, and a more thoughtful approach on how to address the theme.

# 6. Implementation of the Plan

There is considerable variation with regard to the ten concrete goals set forth by the Plan, as can be seen in Annex 2. Accordingly, while there have been advances in several areas, it is hard to see in this any sustained action to achieve all goals over the time-period considered here. That said, however, it is also evident that Sida is at the present preparing to roll out a number of initiatives that may lead to a more broad-based advance in the implementation of the Plan at the systemic level. Whether that is effectively the case will be discussed in the final report.

For the most salient indicator—the increase in the amount of funds going to contributions having gender equality as their main focus—Sida's own calculations show that these

amounts have increased from 17 to 20 per cent of the total during 2016, while registering a larger decrease in the amount going to contributions only having gender equality as an integrated theme (from 73 to 67 per cent).<sup>21</sup> As was seen above, this change has also appeared in our much smaller sample, which is essentially based on the number of contributions rather than amount of funds.

Apart from the above discussion concerning the validity of this measurement, there are some grounds to question its reliability. As was shown above, the extent to which Sida's contributions reflect their gender markers in terms of analysis and components have increased during the time period, but still falls short of a situation in which a particular gender marker is a guarantee of a particular treatment. Several other studies have also noted that the coding on the gender marker is far from consistent, and external assessments regularly tend to take a more stringent view than do the Sida officers responsible. For instance, the 2016 strategy report for Kenya notes that after quality control, the number of contributions in the productive (non-social) sectors having gender as a main focus decreased from twelve to three per cent. It is possible that the current introduction of a new Statistics Handbook for Sida with enhanced criteria and examples will contribute to achieving a more consistent and correct coding in this regard, but we have not been able to assess this, as the new handbook was introduced only towards the end of the period considered here. A new handbook was introduced only towards the end of the period considered here.

That said, however, our assessments of contributions above appears to show that the Plan's third objective concerning the integration of gender aspects in humanitarian contributions have been met to some extent (a point that is also supported by initial views at Sida<sup>25</sup>). Still, we cannot determine whether the current level of integration represents a real and consistent increase or not.

When it comes to the strategic use of new forms of financing to promote gender equality, we have little concrete information on this (the fourth goal of the Plan). When questioned, Sida holds forth the experience of using "challenge funds" and funding in the form of guarantees in this regard, but the evaluation has not yet been able to independently verify this. This could become an issue to which we will devote more time in the coming phase of work.

With regard to the sixth and seventh goals concerning the establishment of routines that ensure that gender analysis is a part of strategy development and contribution management, our analysis above shows that this still remains a challenge for Sida. Particularly for the first of these goals however, the recently introduced system for a multi-dimensional poverty

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Sida. 2017. Portfolio Overview 2016: Gender Equality.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> See the discussion on page 13 in our previous report.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Strategy Report 2016, Kenya, p. 18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> However, specific guidelines on the gender equality policy marker were included in the tool box already in early 2016 (Sida, Gender Equality Policy Marker, internal document, February 2016).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Interview with Sida's lead policy specialist.

analysis together with a "Poverty Tool-kit" could offer a chance to introduce this in a more consistent manner. <sup>26</sup> However, and as with the new Statistics Handbook (mentioned above), we do not yet have evidence to assess the possible effects of such reforms. They will, however, stand at the centre of our coming phase.

The eight goal of the Plan relates to ensuring that "responsibilities, roles and competences within the area of gender equality have been clarified and strengthened". In this regard also, it is clear that the situation at Sida does not yet fully correspond to such a situation. Apparent confusion with regard to the roles and responsibilities of the gender focal points, and the fact that the external help-desk did not serve all of Sida's departments can be given as examples of this, as well as the recurrent observation at Sida that the extent to which gender equality is effectively integrated to a large degree depends on the personal interest of the program officer and the relevant head of unit. However, and as with several of the other goals, change may be underway in this regard. The gender advisors are currently undertaking a mapping of the competence available at Sida in the area, and the intention is to create a helpdesk that will cover all of Sida.

When it comes to dialogue, we lack systematic data to ascertain whether gender equality has been a prioritised subject in Sida's partner dialogues. Data from the field studies and our interviews at Sida suggests that this is the case however, as Sweden and Sida is constantly expected to raise the issue. Whether this is because of the Plan or because of other factors (e.g. the Feminist Foreign Policy) cannot be determined. Yet, it seems that this objective is being met.

In sum then, the attainment of the Plan's goals vary. Some—the prioritisation of gender equality in Sida's dialogue with its partners, and making gender equality a strategic priority for Sida—seems to have been reached, as have the goal to increase the number of contributions having gender equality as their main focus. Furthermore, although there is little evidence to determine definitive improvements with regard to the majority of the Plan's objectives, a considerable number of reforms are underway that may well lead to changes. Whether these reforms will actually lead to the attainment of these goals is still too early to say, and will be the subject of the coming phase of our investigation.

### 7. Conclusions

In this second, out of three, reports, we have come halfway through this on-going evaluation of Sida's Plan for Gender Mainstreaming. About ten months separate the material in this report from the findings of the first one, and we have thus been able to follow-up on the findings presented in the first report, in order to see if there has been any notable change during this time. Ten months is a long time in a three-year implementation period and being in the middle of the latter period, it is a critical time.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Sida. 2017. Dimensions of Poverty: Sida's Conceptual Framework.

However, the findings in this report are mostly similar to the ones that we presented in previous one, and hence reinforce several of the points that we made in the previous report:

The Plan itself is largely unknown both among Sida's partners and among Sida staff, even as the latter are often aware of some content of the Plan, such as the ambition to increase the number of contributions with gender equality as their primary objective. More importantly, there is yet little evidence of the Plan contributing to a substantial change in how and when Sida addresses issues related to gender equality and women's rights. There are exceptions of course, such as the possibly increased attention to these themes among the contributions, and particularly the stress on promoting issues with gender equality as their main objective. But beyond these themes, we have found little firm evidence of a sustainable and far-reaching change in the treatment of gender in Sida's contributions and strategies.

Beyond the Plan, we have also addressed the broader theme of how Sida works with gender integration and women's rights in general. In this regard too, there is little to suggest any significant de facto change in practices and behaviour during the period assessed. Just as in the first report, we find that Sida exhibits considerable duality. On the one hand, documents and interviews testify as to the importance that Sida attributes to the theme, as does the persistent signalling of gender as a Swedish priority, potentially the most important one. It is evident that this emphasis is influential, and that Sida is generally seen as a leading actor in the field.

On the other hand, it is not always clear that this position is matched by actual content. While there is an institutionalised consensus on the importance of gender equality, our study of Sida's documents and strategies does not reveal any clear organisational position regarding the content or direction of gender integration at Sida. Instead, it is up to individual staff members and their immediate superiors to decide how and to what extent to comply with the priority given to gender priority, and this can range from the bare mention of gender to attention to more radical transformative agendas or complex intersectionality approaches. Few interviewees describe any detailed position on gender integration at Sida, beyond constantly signalling its importance. Many instead point to the fact that flexibility in relation to the partners needs to takes precedence over a donor's preferred ways of doing things.

In the absence of an agency policy or instructions, it also becomes difficult for newcomers and outsiders to grasp what Sida's position is, and it is not evident what constitutes a "good enough" analysis or method. Interestingly, in the absence of an agency policy, staff members sometimes appear to grasp substitutes, or what we may call "proxy-policies". Hence the examples above of NPOs applying obsolete Sida policies, the importance given to the gender marker and the instructions in Sida's contribution management system as indicators of what constitutes an acceptable standard. Potentially, the increasing use of copied standard formulations in the cooperation strategies could also be seen as

compensation for the absence of an encompassing policy that would spell out Sida's and Sweden's current priorities.

There are of course other explanations for the current state of gender integration at Sida. Several interviewees have mentioned the lack of time as one important factor, sometimes coupled with the amount of issues that should be considered as part of Sida's work. However, many respondents also claim that gender-related questions still hold a privileged position among these issues, which could call into doubt the extent to which this really is a problem. Conversely, it is notable that no interviewees mention open resistance among partners to women's rights and gender equality as a significant obstacle (even though lack of understanding of the issue and prevailing gender patterns are mentioned as problems). To the contrary, most Sida staff members seem to encounter an expectation that they should advance the theme of gender and integration, and several mention that partners seem to adapt to this as well.

While most of the above observations were made already in our first report, our findings during this period tend to confirm them. In particular, the field studies have demonstrated this duality in clearer contrast, by showing how it becomes even more apparent in Sida's actual operations in the field and in relation to its partners.

Although we have found few signs of significant change when it comes to Sida's work with gender equality and women's rights during the period considered here (i.e., until approximately mid-2017), there are several reasons to expect that the subsequent period could become more decisive, and lead to a faster rate of advancement towards the Plan's goals than before. As was noted above, Sida is currently launching a number of initiatives that may well come to further enhance its work in this area, such as the new statistics handbook, and the multi-dimensional poverty analysis, both which may respond to some of the short-comings noted above. Furthermore, while the implementation of the coming global strategy for gender equality may place new demands on the organisation, it could also bring new opportunities for enhancing the theme of gender equality and women's rights further. Accordingly, we expect that the next phase of the evaluation will be revealing, as it will show whether and how these different initiatives can affect Sida's work.

## 8. Next steps

The third and final phase of the evaluation will take place between April and May 2018. As before, it will rely on the assessment of a random sample of contributions (from the period March 2017-March 2018), examination of new strategies, as well as a repetition of the focus groups/panels with the gender network, heads of unit, and Sida officers. In addition, it will zoom in on the de jure systemic changes by mapping the gender infrastructure at Sida and by tracing the Plan's potential impact on more specific unit plans. In the final report, we will both present a coherent picture of the material from the three phases, and zoom in on

elements that we identify as crucial both for explaining the present situation and for possibly enhancing gender integration at Sida. Moreover, we will address certain issues that have until now only featured indirectly in our assessment, such as competence management. Similarly, and as just noted, the timing of the last phase should allow us to identify effects from current initiatives at Sida which relate to its work in the area of gender equality. Accordingly, we foresee a larger amount of individual interviews during that last phase in order to generate additionally evidence on these issues.

In contrast to the present and the previous reports, our final report will also include more elaborate and firm conclusions, as well as recommendations for how Sida can improve its attention to women's rights and gender equality in the future. As the reader will have noted, we have until now abstained from spelling out concrete suggestions on how Sida could improve the implementation of the Plan. This has not been done because of any lack of data on this issue. To the contrary, the question of how gender integration could be improved at Sida has been at the centre of most of our assessments and interviews. If this has so far not led to concrete recommendations, this absence has been a conscious decision in order to not have too strong an influence on the subject of our enquiry. Accordingly, our positions in these regards will be presented only in the final report. Likewise, we foresee to address the value and the lessons learnt with regard to our evaluation method (continuous evaluation) in that final report.

#### References:

NB: Documents from the contributions assessed are not listed.

Bjarnegård, Elin and Fredrik Uggla. 2017. First report on the implementation of Sida's Plan for Gender Integration. Expert Group for Aid Studies.

Callerstig, Anne-Charlott. 2014. Making Equality Work: Ambiguities, conflicts and change agents in the implementation of equality policies in public sector organisations. PhD thesis, Linköping University.

Daly, Mary. 2005. "Gender Mainstreaming in Theory and Practice." Social Politics 12(3).

Finkel, Steven E. 1995. Causal Analysis with Panel Data. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Government of Sweden. 2016. Strategi för Sveriges regionala utvecklingssamarbete med Afrika söder om Sahara 2016- 2021.

Government of Sweden. 2016. Strategi för Sveriges utvecklingssamarbete med Bolivia 2016-2020.

Government of Sweden. 2016. Strategi för Sveriges utvecklingssamarbete med Colombia 2016-2020.

Government of Sweden. 2016. Strategi för Sveriges utvecklingssamarbete med Guatemala 2016-2020.

Government of Sweden. 2016. Strategi för Sveriges utvecklingssamarbete med Kuba 2016-2020.

Government of Sweden. 2016. Strategi för Sveriges utvecklingssamarbete med Mali 2016-2020.

Government of Sweden. 2016. Strategy for Sweden's Regional Development Cooperation with Asia and the Pacific 2016-2021.

Government of Sweden. 2017. Strategi för Sveriges utvecklingssamarbete med Irak 2017-2021.

Government of Sweden. 2017. Strategi för Sveriges utvecklingssamarbete med Zimbabwe 2017-2021.

Lombardo, Emanuela, Petra Meier, and Mieke Verloo. 2009. The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality: Stretching, Bending and Policymaking. London and New York: Routledge.

Moser, Caroline and Annalise Moser. 2005. "Gender mainstreaming since Beijing: A review of success and limitations in international institutions." Gender & Development 13:2: 11-22.

Nordic Consulting Group. 2016. First Annual Report from the Global Gender Help Function to Africa, HumAsia and EuroLatin, December 2015 to November 2016.

Ostrom, Elinor. 1999. "Institutional Rational Choice: An Assessment of the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework" in Paul Sabatier (Ed) Theories of the Policy Process. Boulder, CO: Westview, p 25-72.

Sida. 2005. Promoting Gender Equality in Gender Cooperation.

Sida. 2014. Underlag till resultatförslag för femårigt utvecklingssamarbete med Mali.

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

Sida. 2016. Communication to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Underlag för Sveriges utvecklingssamarbete med Colombia". Letter. January 12 2016.

Sida. 2016. Fördjupat underlag till strategi för regionalt utvecklingssamarbete i Afrika söder om Sahara 2016- 2020

Sida. 2016. Fördjupat underlag till strategi för utvecklingssamarbetet med Colombia 2016 2020.

Sida. 2016. Fördjupat underlag till strategi för utvecklingssamarbetet med Bolivia 2016-2020.

Sida. 2016. Fördjupat underlag till strategi för utvecklingssamarbetet med Guatemala 2016-2020.

Sida. 2016. Sidas verksamhetsplan 2017.

Sida. 2016. Underlag för det regionala utvecklingssamarbetet i Asien.

Sida. 2016. Underlag för utarbetande av Sveriges strategi för femårigt utvecklingssamarbete med Zimbabwe.

Sida. 2017. Dimensions of Poverty: Sida's Conceptual Framework.

Sida. 2017. Fördjupad strategirapport Resultatstrategi för Uganda 2014- 2018.

Sida. 2017. Portfolio Overview 2016: Gender Equality.

Sida. 2017. Samarbetsstrategi för det regionala utvecklingssamarbetet med Asien med fokus på sydöstasien 2016. Strategirapport.

Sida. 2017. Strategirapport 2016 för regionalt samarbete SRHR i Afrika söder om Sahara 2015- 2019.

Sida. 2017. Strategirapport 2016 för strategi för Bolivia 2016. Strategirapport.

Sida. 2017. Strategirapport 2016 för strategi för utvecklingssamarbetet med Sydsudan 2014-2016. Strategirapport. Sida. 2017. Strategirapport 2016 för strategi för utvecklingssamarbetet med Sudan 2014-2016. Strategirapport.

Sida. 2017. Strategirapport 2016 för strategi för utvecklingssamarbetet med Somalia 2013-2017 År 2016 Strategirapport.

Sida. 2017. Strategirapport 2016 för utvecklingssamarbetet med Kenya 2016-2020. Strategirapport.

Sida. 2017. Strategirapport 2016 för utvecklingssamarbetet med Etiopien 2016-2020.

Sida. 2017. Strategirapport för regionala insatser inom ramen för Resultatstrategin för reformsamarbete med Östeuropa, Västra Balkan och Turkiet 2014-20.

Strategirapport. Sida. 2017. Strategirapport för Sveriges utvecklingssamarbete med Demokratiska republiken Kongo 2016. Strategirapport.

Sida. 2017. Underlag för utarbetande av strategi för utvecklingssamarbete med Irak 20172021.

Verloo, Mieke. 2005. "Displacement and Empowerment: Reflections on the Concept and Practice of the Council of Europe Approach to Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality." Social Politics 12(3): 344-65.

# **Annex 1: Coding scheme for gender integration in contributions**

The following questions were asked of both application documents and Sida's appraisals.

- 1) Is gender mentioned? (Yes/No)
- 2) If yes to 1, are there elements of gender analysis? (Yes/No)
- 3) If yes to 2, which is the discernible approach to gender mainstreaming? (Similarity/Difference/Transformation several approaches possible)
- 4) If yes to 2, are tools, resources or methods mentioned? Which? (Yes/No)
- 5) Is the whole project about gender issues? (Yes/No)

**Annex 2: Implementation of the Plan** 

1. Increased amount of funds to contributions that have gender equality as a main target in all sectors.  2. Gender to receive	Actions taken (new development in bold font).  During 2016, the percentage of contributions having gender equality at the main target has increased from 17 to 20, according to Sida's own calculation.  (no detailed analysis available yet).
particular attention in productive sectors and contributions aimed at environmental, climate and resilience.	
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). Our assessment of humanitarian contributions show a generally strong integration of issues related to gender equality.
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 2018.	This goal has been achieved as gender equality is part of Sida's goals for 2018. <sup>20</sup>
6. Gender analysis permeates routines for development and operationalisation of strategies.	Forms and routines will be developed on the basis of the recently published document on multidimensional poverty-analysis.
7. Gender analysis permeates routines for assessment, follow-up and results (-reporting).	(see previous result)
8. Responsibilities, roles and competences in the field of gender equality have been clarified and strengthened.	The gender advisors are about to perform a mapping of Sida's competences in this regard.
<ol> <li>Gender equality is prioritised in dialogue with partners.</li> </ol>	A course in gender integration has been held for Sida's Swedish partners.
10. Internal attention to equality and pluralism.	A plan for pluralism and equality has been approved at Sida.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> See Sida. 2016. "Sidas verksamhetsplan 2017".

# Annex 3: List - participants in focal groups and interviews

## List of participants in the focal groups:

Ann-Sofie Aronsson

Sofie Berghald

Göran Haag

Anna Maria Oltorp

Anders Rönqvist

Eva Smedberg

Petra Smitanis Dry

Åsa Wallton

Erik Korsgren

Ulrika Holmström

Åsa Eldén

Karin Zetterlund

Veronika Przanovska

### Other interviews:

Anna Collins Falk

Karolina Hulterström

Anja Taarup Nordlund

## Interviews in Zambia (May 2017):

Embassy

David Wiking

Malala Mwondela

Annika Lysén

Pezo Mateo-Phiri

Ngosa Yoram Mbolela

Lusungu Nyirenda Mwami Audrey Mwendapole Muchemwa

Chimfwembe Sichinga

Ulrika Hertel

Zoole Newa

Cecilia Brumér

Dag Sundelin, regional team

Diana Macauley, regional team

**Partners** 

Sally Ross, Acting Director, Auditor General

Danny Harvey, Country Director, Concern

Mary S. Chibambula, team leader of the Sun management unit, CARE

Emmanuel Ngulube, gender advisor USAID

Claire McCrum, gender advisor, DFID

Dr. Mwinche, Ministry of Health

Abigail Musinga, gender coordinator, iDE

Kennedy Mumba, Chief Social Welfare Officer, Ministry of Community Development

Musama Obbie, Principal Planner, Ministry of Community Development

Mwinche Chisha Namubambe, Deputy Director RMNCH, Ministry of Health

Chilufya Chokwe Siwale, NGOCC

Emelda Mwamba Banda, NGOCC

Mandy Manda, National Legal Aid Clinic of Zambia

Arendt Goes, SNV

Shupe Makashinyi, UNDP

## Interviews in Myanmar (September 2017):

**Embassy** 

Tomas Lundström

Ann Stödberg

Anna Åkerlund

Tilda Segerberg

Ghin Mang Shoute

Maria Tropp

Ei Hnin Phyu Htun

Thiri Sun

**Partners** 

Shihad Uddin Ahamad, Action Aid

Tauhid Ibne Farid, Action Aid

Lalmuani, Action Aid

Saw Lin Htet, Action Aid

Orlen Ocleasd, Action Aid

Anki Dellnas, UNDP

Myo Min Htike, Program Manager, IMS

Ellie Swindon, gender adviser, IMS

Hre Bik, 3MDG, UNOPS

Thiha Nyi Nyi, 3MDG, UNOPS

Oren Ginzburg, 3MDG, UNOPS

Taniele Gofers, 3MDG, UNOPS

Swe Sin Mya, 3MDG, UNOPS

Elisabeth Armstrong, Director, PSF

Liz Tydeman, SBC

Silja Rajander, Coordinator Donor Group on Gender Equality

Kaori Ishikawa, Deputy Representative, UNFPA

Janet Jackson, Representative, UNFPA

### **Annex 4: The Field Studies**

## **Country Summary: Zambia**

### **Country context:**

Zambia is one of the world's least developed countries according to the DAC classification. Its HDI rank stood at 139 out of 188 in 2015. The economy is highly dependent on commodity exports and hence vulnerable to external shocks, as happened during 2015 when a severe down-turn broke a record of significant growth during recent decades. A large part of the population still lacks access to proper services and education, problems made worse by the high rate of HIV infection (at 12.5 per cent of the population between 15 and 49).

### Swedish support to Zambia:

In 2015, ODA made up 3.8 per cent of Zambia's total GNI. According to the 2013-2017 strategy, Sweden's annual contributions stands at 350 MSEK, divided between the sectors of health, productive development, and good governance and human rights. In addition to the country team, the embassy in Lusaka also contains the regional team for SRHR in Africa, with a total budget (for the entire region) of another 350 MSEK annually according to its 2015-2019 strategy.

#### The field study:

The consultancy team visited Lusaka in May 2017, staying 3 and 4.5 days respectively. During the visit, a workshop was held with sent-out and local Sida staff, and additional interviews held with key persons from both groups. An interview was also made at the Regional team for SRHR. Apart from embassy staff, the team interviewed representatives from nine Sida partners, and from two other donor agencies.

### **Observations:**

#### From within the Embassy:

Interviews at the embassy both from the country and the regional team reveal a high degree of commitment to advancing gender equality through Swedish aid, and a recognition that this theme is a priority and as something that is very present in its work. Sent-out staff stress that the focus on gender equality is a key component of Sida's work, and that this is constantly integrated in all (but one) of the projects in the two portfolios (and in the exceptional case, this theme will be addressed in dialogue). However, the actual Plan is generally unknown. Rather, increased emphasis has come either from the recently adopted

feminist foreign policy of the Swedish government, or from the particular actions undertaken by the Africa department (which are indirectly a result of the Plan).

There is little appreciation for the concrete tools for gender integration (the tool-box and the gender help-desk, the former of which is described as being too generic). Instead, staff competence combined with instructions in the TRAC instrument for contribution management are emphasised, and more training is often mentioned as a way to advance the theme further.

Conversely, however, some staff members also mention that they find the exact definition and demands that they should fulfil in this regard confusing, and demand more of guidance from HQ. This point is raised by local staff in particular, who explicitly suggest that they should be provided with a policy in this regard. At the same time, there is general appreciation for the local focal point on gender who was recruited as part of a local rise in level of ambition regarding gender issues following the approval of the feminist foreign policy in 2015. However, it is also recognised that not even that person has any formal training in what Sida demands in its gender related work in terms of approach, priorities, or methods. Positive examples are also in demand from staff as a way to inform them about what Sida sees as requirements in this regard.

### Among partners:

It is interesting to juxtapose the above views, with partners' views of the same issues. Hence, while partners generally claim to share the commitment to gender equality with Sida, most of them do not claim that they see Sida as being very different from other donors in terms of its stress of these issues. Rather, Sida—which is generally a highly appreciated partner—is in this regard generally portrayed as being one donor among several for which the issue is important. In part, this could be the result of Sida co-funding several of the projects studied, which means that most points are coordinated with other donors. Above all, however, this seems to reflect that other donors have come as far as Sida has with regard to these issues.

Significantly, several partners also claim that Sida is not very concrete it its demands in this area. Rather, the agency is often portrayed as being relatively hands-off, preferring to stress the importance of the issue in general terms, and leave to the partners to decide how to effectively integrate it. This may be related to the fact that Sida is generally portrayed as a flexible and respectful partner, but it might also reflect a lack of detailed knowledge regarding these issues among responsible staff members. In this regard, it could also be telling that several partners note important differences between different project officers in this regard, which might be another sign of personal competence rather than organisation policy dictating the extent to which this and other issues are effectively integrated.

### Among other donors:

Other donors tell a similar story. While Sida is an appreciated partner who is seen as having a sincere commitment to the issue of gender equality, there seems to be little that actually sets it apart from most like-minded donors, and fellow donor organisations are unable to indicate anything particular that Sida contributes beyond what others do. Neither do other donors claim to perceive any notable shift over time when it comes to how Sida works with these issues. One representative of a like-minded country even goes as far as to lament that Sida does not locally take the same principled stand as it does internationally, and particularly cites the lack of attention to the issue during Sweden's leadership of the larger donor group. The area of SRHR is possibly the one exception in this regard, however, as this is seen as an area in which Sida is particularly advanced.

#### **Conclusions:**

Together, the above observations thus show how Sida on the one hand attaches significant importance to the issue of gender equality, both because of the organisation's internal culture (its "DNA") and because of the strong signals that have come from the Swedish MFA (the feminist foreign policy) and from Sida's Africa department. In comparison, the actual Plan for Gender Integration is mostly unknown even among people who work with these issues.

On the other hand, external observers find it hard to indicate that Sida is notably different from other donors in this respect, and there seems to be little concretion beyond general expressions of support for the issue. While such a detached view is often appreciated, it may also raise the question of how much substance there is behind Sida's and Sweden's vocal commitment.

It is tempting to associate the lack of concretion with some of the needs indicated by parts of the Sida staff. Several of them, particularly NPOs, apparently find it difficult to understand exactly what Sida demands of them in this regard, and while there is general appreciation for the local focal point, there are also frequent demands for more of training and/or clearer instructions (possibly in the form of a policy) in the area. At the present, neither the tool-box nor the help-desk seem very appreciated (or well-known), and instead the instructions contained in Sida's TRAC system are held forward as possible guidance in this regard, in spite of their limited character. Alternatively, some staff members have found even more ingenious ways; at least one staff member is distributing previous Sida policies to partners as an indication of what Sida expects of them.

# **Country Summary: Myanmar**

### **Country context:**

Myanmar is currently in the midst of a triple transition. What used to be a closed, corrupt and dirigiste economic system is currently opening up rapidly. This is bringing investment and growth to a country that had under the previous economic policies become one of the poorest in the region, with poverty rates around 40 per cent of the population. Simultaneously, Myanmar is also undergoing a political transition. The 2015 elections gave the democratic opposition a strong majority, a defeat that the military rulers accepted. Yet, they were not ready to relinquish power completely, and still benefit from numerous constitutional provisions that give them considerable power to steer the country's continued development and to act politically with autonomy and often impunity. Although this complicates the process, Myanmar is also trying to advance with regard to ending the ethnic and local conflicts that have plagued the country for decades.

### Swedish support to Myanmar:

In spite of the extensive poverty in Myanmar, the inflow of development cooperation is rather limited and in 2015, ODA made up only 2.0 per cent of Myanmar's total GNI. Swedish support to the country stands at 150 MSEK per year, and primarily goes to promotion of democracy and human rights, peace-building, and the health sector, with the first being the largest sector. Conflict prevention is integrated throughout the Swedish portfolio, and gender integration through mainstreaming is actively promoted, even as the Plan's stated intention to raise the number of contributions in which gender is a main target has largely been unfulfilled (see below). Moreover, Myanmar has been selected as a focus country for Sweden's work to promote Resolution 1325.

### The field study:

The consultancy team visited Yangon, staying 3.5 and 5 days respectively. During the visit, a workshop was held with sent-out and local Sida staff, and additional interviews held with key persons from both groups. Apart from embassy staff, the team interviewed representatives from seven Sida partners, and from one other donor agency.

#### Observations:

## From within the Embassy:

Just as in the case of other interviews with Sida staff, the interviews at the embassy in Yangon show a remarkable degree of commitment to the promotion of gender equality, and a conviction—primarily among sent-out staff— that this is a theme that is deeply engrained in Sida. At the same time, the subsequent discussions reveal important

differences in how this theme should be addressed. In particular, it is clear that in Myanmar, Sida has largely kept to the mainstreaming model, which means they have not tried to raise the amount of contributions having gender as its principal target, the latter being an approach that is described as being overly rigid and not adapted to Sida's work in Myanmar. Similarly, staff members in Myanmar are at best only vaguely aware of the Plan, and have mostly come across the document indirectly, when being asked to draft specific plans or similar documents to fulfil its stipulations.

The Myanmar team also shares with the Zambia one a noticeable scepticism towards the relevance of current supporting functions at Sida in the area of gender equality among the Sida staff (along with elements of nostalgia for the stronger in-house thematic competence that was previously found at Sida). Suggestions from the help-desk are seen as not being adapted to conditions in Myanmar, the gender tool-box seems to be scarcely used, and the gender network is described as contributing little. Likewise, trainings at Sida are described as too lacking in substance to sufficiently prepare staff members for how to deal with such issues, and to contribute more substantial inputs to projects. There are exceptions, however, as the team reports having received good feed-back on gender issues in its strategy development work, and seems to have more hopes for the envisaged regional help-desk to be set up in Bangkok.

Even as staff members are rather unanimous in their views of Sida and its support for gender integration, a difference between sent-out and local staff in their sense of preparation for and understanding of these issues, is notable in Myanmar too. More in particular, suggestions from the latter group indicate that they feel less confident in knowing what Sida wants and expects in this regard, something that is attributed to lack of training and formal policies on gender. In part, this is made up for in conversations with sent-out staff members, but this is not seen as being enough. The lack of clear instructions from Sida in this regard compares negatively with other donors' approach in this regard.

Finally, most staff members are very clear on the fact that partners (and other donors) are aware of this commitment and priority, which often leads them to adapt their discourse accordingly. This might also be at least partly a result of the strong diplomatic emphasis on the issue as a result of Sweden's feminist foreign policy, a point that is raised by several partners.

#### Among partners:

Even with caveats and reservations such as the above, it should be noted that partner interviews in Myanmar reveal a universal appreciation of Sida's work with promotion of gender equality. Although this is a theme commonly embraced by most donors and partners alike, Sida's insistence on the theme is generally seen as going beyond that of other donors. Furthermore, several of Sida's partners state that this emphasis has allowed them to keep the issue present even as other developments may have induced them to deflect

attention. In some cases, such insistence may even have had an influence beyond the Sidapartner relationship, as there are examples of how Sida's positions in this regard have also led other donors to change their actions accordingly.

Interestingly, several partners also claim that while Sweden is generally a flexible donor which often takes a hands-off approach, this is not the case with gender issues, where it is seen as much more ready to engage constantly and strongly. Moreover, most interviewees appear to see little difference between Sida officers in this regard, even while recognising different personal interests. Furthermore, and in contrast to what Sida officers commonly claim, most partners take it for granted that Sida staff members are able to draw on concrete support and advice from their headquarters for their interventions in this area.

At the same time, several of the partners claim not to have seen much concrete material outlining Sida's priorities, and some of them claim that they would welcome such information, which might facilitate discussion around these issues. Similarly, some partners also suggest that Sida could do more to bring its partners together for discussions around these themes.

Conversely, however, other partners talk about Sida's inputs as very clear and knowledge-based, and some partners claim to see a clear connection between Sida's positions in this regard and its rights-based perspective, which might confer more practical concretion to the issue.

### Among other donors:

In line with partners' suggestions, Sweden is also perceived as being prominently engaged by other donors. More specifically, the consistency of Sweden's message in favour of gender integration and equality is being highlighted, something which is linked to the feminist foreign policy. But even as Sweden's position as expressed locally is being perceived as advanced and consistent, it is also recognised that such engagement is not exclusive to Sweden as most of the major donors take similar positions, and there is a rather broad receptivity among Myanmar counterparts regarding these issues (in spite of the perceived weaknesses of local systems).

#### **Conclusions:**

Sida's work in Myanmar represents something of an anomaly. The local office has consciously had a limited engagement in Sida's network for gender focal points, and it continues to press for a mainstreaming approach even as the official Sida position is to emphasise targeted contributions to a larger extent. Furthermore, and as was seen above, local staff is often critical of the support that is available from Sida centrally in this regard.

Even so, it is clear that Sida in Myanmar has managed to make a difference through its constant emphasis of the theme. All partners stress how Sida has consistently advanced

gender issues in dialogue and insisted on it being integrated into actions, something that several partners acknowledge have prevented them from straying from the issues. Furthermore, even though gender is prioritised by donors generally, Sweden's position in this regard are seen as particularly strong and insistent, a position that may even be described as somewhat anomalous given Sweden's normally rather detached and noninterfering character.

However, while this paints a positive picture of Sida's work, there are also potential limitations. Local staff claims to sense a lack of information and clarity from Sida on these issues, and it seems clear that Sweden's prominent position is to some extent dependent on the commitment of certain persons, and as such might come to differ with time.