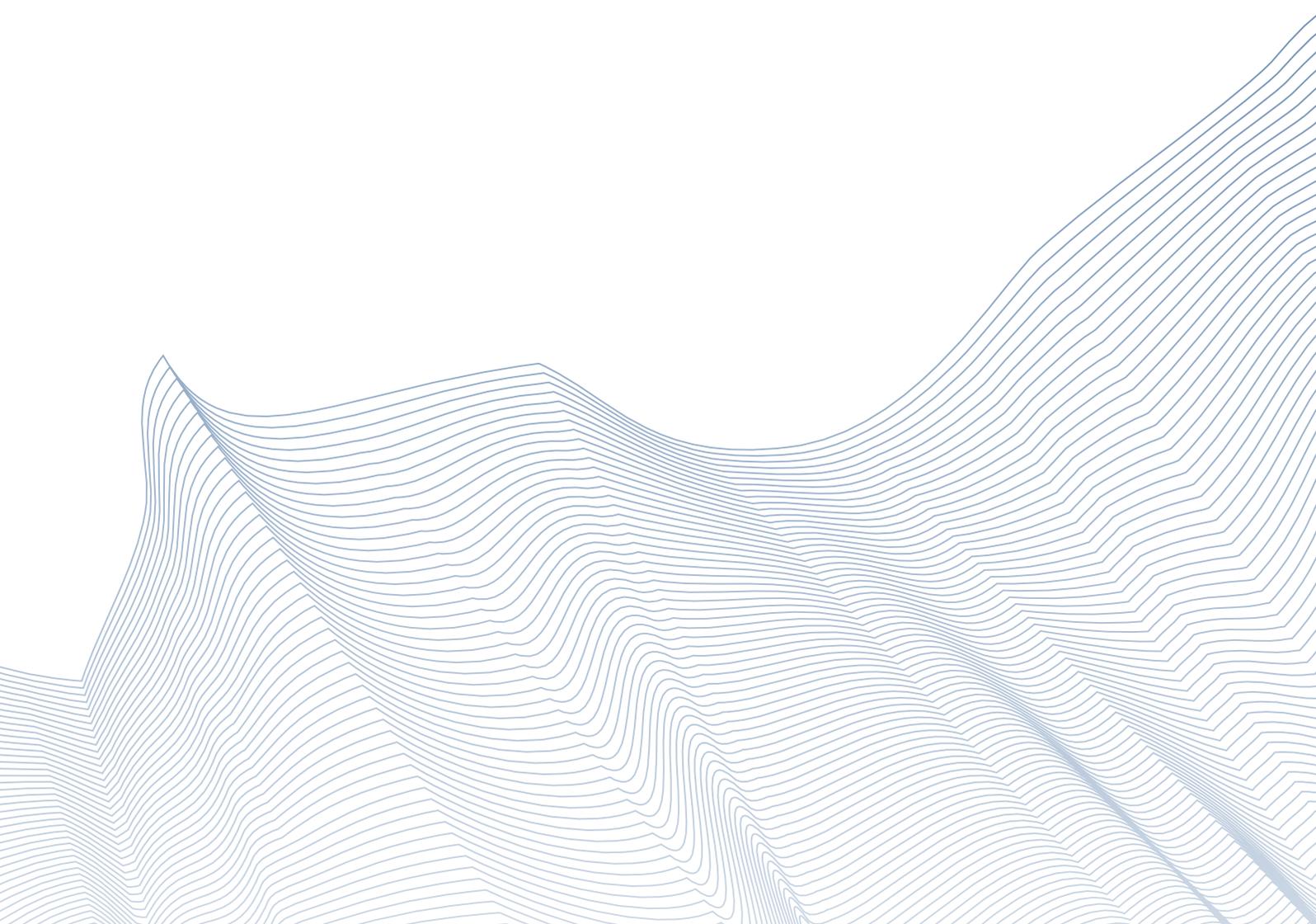




**EXPERT GROUP
FOR AID STUDIES**

2017

THE EBA AID REVIEW



This report can be downloaded free of charge at www.eba.se.

Design: Emma Andersen Design & Art Direction

Printed by: Elanders Sverige AB

THE EBA AID REVIEW 2017

Annual report from the Expert Group for Aid Studies for the year 2016.

The Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA) is a government committee set up to contribute to the improvement of Sweden's development cooperation. In collaboration with researchers and other experts EBA analyses and evaluates Swedish international development assistance, including issues that are not given adequate consideration in the formation of policies or their implementation. The Expert Group focuses primarily on overarching issues within Swedish development assistance, not on individual projects.

The Expert Group decides independently which studies are to be conducted and authors are solely responsible for analysis and recommendations. EBA is responsible for final quality assurance.

EBA builds bridges between policy, research and practice – worlds that do not always communicate with each other. EBA's seminars provide a forum for dialogue and discussion of pertinent issues within development cooperation. These seminars place our reports in a broader context, discussing them from both a policy and practical perspective. The objective is to contribute to good aid that is implemented effectively.

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PREFACE

It is just over four years since EBA was created. Its activities have subsequently grown and taken on increasingly clear forms. EBA is now an established actor – also internationally. In the revised terms of reference from July 2016, the Government specified that EBA’s activities are to be viewed as long-term.

In 2016, sixteen reports were accepted for publication by EBA. A further twelve are in progress. In addition, ten *Development Dissertation Briefs* were published. Twelve seminars have been held over the past year.

EBA wants to be policy-relevant. For example, three of the studies from 2016 dealt with Sweden’s support to Africa. One constituted a direct contribution to the Government’s effort to draw up a new regional strategy for cooperation with sub-Saharan Africa. The other two studies, focusing on Tanzania and Uganda, were undertaken not simply to evaluate Sweden’s support to these countries, but also with the intention to identify forms in which country-based bilateral aid may be evaluated in a cost-effective way.

To enhance the work on a policy for migration and development, EBA has also produced a study that looks into how the sharp increase in migratory flows has affected Swedish development cooperation. This places Swedish policy in a European perspective. Reports concerning Sweden’s Policy for Global Development (PGU) and concerning the division of responsibility between various Swedish actors in the implementation of Agenda 2030 have also been published.

EBA’s seminars are well-attended and often overbooked. Over one thousand people have participated in these seminars over the course of the year, many of them on more than one occasion. These have ranged from members of the Riksdag, employees from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sida and other authorities, to people from civil society organisations, the media and others with a general interest in aid.

EBA maintains an ongoing discussion with various stakeholders in the aid community in order to provide them with policy-relevant analyses and evaluations. At the same time, EBA safeguards its dual independence: EBA decides independently which studies are to be conducted and gives authors a free hand to draw conclusions and make recommendations. Quality review is and will remain the structural backbone of activities.

Disseminating and discussing the content of EBA reports is perhaps just as important as the reports themselves. Seminars are often structured as a means by which to develop reports further – the aim being to create a conversation about an important issue or to discuss how conclusions and recommendations might affect Swedish aid. At a training seminar on 11 May, a model was

tested that involved participants being divided into smaller groups, which was new to EBA. The main aim of this was to provide space for a more in-depth discussion of well-defined subjects. This is in line with the ambition to better promote learning from the reports, as highlighted in *The EBA Aid Review 2016*.

EBA's reports are widely seen in the media, usually in channels focusing on aid such as *Om Världen* and *Biståndsdebatten.se*. Every now and then, EBA's studies are mentioned in editorials and op-ed articles.

These sometimes state that EBA is responsible for the conclusions and recommendations in the reports, in spite of the fact that it is actually the reports' authors. In other words, EBA has room for improvement in terms of declaring its dual independence. At times EBA members also express shared opinions – such as here in *The EBA Aid Review 2017*.

Our intention with this report is to highlight the more important lessons learned from EBA's reports and seminars. All reports accepted for publication in 2016 are included. This means that the report also includes five studies that were only launched in early 2017.

We hope that *The EBA Aid Review 2017* will inspire you to read our reports and move the conversation about the direction and structure of aid a few steps further.

Stockholm, *March 2017*



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GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

The world is facing major challenges in the years ahead. These involve security, the climate, human rights, women's right to healthcare and much more. Global development largely depends on how these challenges are tackled. Understanding what drives development and why some countries and interventions are more successful than others are issues that EBA constantly brings to the fore in its reports and seminars.

Agenda 2030, which has seventeen global sustainable development goals, urges cross-border cooperation. The idea is that no one should be left behind in the effort to make the world peaceful and sustainable. The goals are both “universal” and “integrated and indivisible”. The Government’s stated ambition is for Sweden to be a leader in the implementation of Agenda 2030. Aid is an important component in achieving these goals, but there is also the question of what role aid should have in relation to other policy areas in this work.

Leaving no one behind is an ambitious goal that requires aid and other development interventions to be inclusive. In their systematic review (*EBA 2017:02*) Marcus, Mdee and Page examine which anti-discrimination measures are effective in fighting discrimination and poverty. However, they find that the studies reviewed usually lack the long-term perspective that poverty reduction involves. According to the authors, discriminated groups are included most effectively by prioritising general systems that include everyone to the greatest possible extent. Secondly, targeted measures, for example quotas or financial support, should be put in place in order to counter structural barriers. Anti-discrimination measures should also be combined with campaigns aimed at changing attitudes in order to prevent backlashes.

The Policy for Global Development (PGU) is based on policy coherence. It has been given a fresh start in

2016. PGU is a key tool for enabling the implementation of Agenda 2030. Nevertheless, there is a lack of clarity in terms the relationship between PGU and the global sustainable development goals. What are the means and what are the goals exactly?

Despite the ambition of a coherent Swedish development policy, it is clear that this is primarily a matter for the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs. A lack of clarity on factors including conflicts of objectives and conflicting interests appears to have contributed to the lack of engagement among politicians in the Riksdag. But if Sweden’s highest representatives for various policy areas do not feel they have ownership of PGU, what are the implications in terms of its implementation?

Måns Fellesson and Lisa Román (*EBA 2016:08*) foresee several challenges for Swedish politics when PGU is to be put into practice. They are of the opinion that clear political leadership is a factor that is important to increasing the impact of PGU among politicians and officials. Policy coherence can have a more powerful impact if there is a division of responsibility and accountability for implementing measures, rather than for achieving certain goals. It is the Government that bears the primary responsibility for establishing and leading this process.

According to Jönsson and Bexell (*EBA 2016:04*),



The new Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, and Deputy Secretary-General, Amina J. Mohammed, on the first day in their new posts, January 2017. Photo: UN Photo/Mark Garten

the Government has been relatively weak in terms of taking action in this regard. For example, the Riksdag has not been sufficiently involved in building a long-term and cross-party policy. In addition, the Government has neither created sufficient conditions in which to manage conflicts between the objectives of different policy areas nor taken the necessary responsibility for resolving such conflicts.

Political leadership includes the ability, and courage, to prioritise. Critics believe that the aid policy framework launched in 2016 is excessively broad and lacks sufficiently clear guidance on what is to be prioritised. Per Molander (*EBA 2016:11*) argues that Sweden should increase the aid it provides to education and public administration. Furthermore, the Government should prioritise interventions that promote global public goods. Accordingly, there are strong grounds for raising issues of both Swedish tax policy and trade policy within the scope of PGU.

Health is one of the large central areas in a global perspective. This was addressed as early as in *EBA 2014:02*. Health is also a clear PGU issue where it should be in Sweden's own interests to seek cooperation with researchers in low and middle-income countries – and to finance cooperation outside the

aid budget. Animal health is an area where global research collaboration is of vital importance and where there are major opportunities to improve the role of aid. Ulf Magnusson et al. (*EBA 2017:03*) show that better animal health has a positive effect on poor people's chances of improving their living conditions. EBA intends to shed further light on the role of global health in global development and in Swedish aid.

The humanitarian system is not able to meet all the needs of the world's many humanitarian crises. More people than ever are living as refugees from war, conflict and human rights violations. The majority are refugees in their own or neighbouring countries. A smaller proportion is fleeing to Europe.

This has had consequences for development cooperation, as shown by Knoll and Sheriff (*EBA 2017:01*). For example, there is greater interest today in attempting to address the root causes of migration. We need to learn more about how collaboration between long-term development efforts and humanitarian aid can be strengthened – and about how this should be linked to migration issues. EBA will be active in this area.



Two children on their way to school in Timbuktu, Mali.
Photo: UN Photo/Marco Dormino.

EDUCATION – CENTRAL TO DEVELOPMENT

Education is a key factor for individual as well as societal development. This is something on which researchers agree. Nevertheless, the aid Sweden provides to education, particularly support for primary education, has been falling for many years, as shown by Per Molander in his EBA report (2016:11).

Globally, most aid funding for education goes to lower middle-income countries – not to low-income countries. This is at odds with the goal of taking a leading role in realising Agenda 2030 (in which no one is to be left behind). A decisive factor in reducing the gaps between rich and poor is ensuring that the poorest children, especially girls, are given the opportunity to go to school at an early age. This was underlined by Professor Pauline Rose at a seminar to launch two education-related studies ([EBA 2016:02](#) and [EBA 2016:03](#)).

Interventions in education are studied from various perspectives in several EBA reports from 2016. EBA commissioned two systematic reviews in order to gain an idea of what appears to work best in interventions to promote education. One study ([EBA 2016:02](#)) by Amy Damon et al. is based on synthesising (mainly) randomised control trials¹ and concludes that conditional grants² work best both for improving school results and for increasing children's school attendance. The other study ([EBA 2016:03](#)) by Joel Samoff et al. paints a more complex picture and places more emphasis on the context in which interventions take place. The analysis is expanded to encompass what works for whom, under what circumstances and on what terms.

Interventions that have proved effective take social problems and how these problems affect pupils, teachers and schools as their starting point. Accordingly, the authors are of the opinion that it is necessary to assess

the value of education interventions in the social, economic and political environment in which they are to function.

Education is also included in Marcus et al. ([EBA 2017:02](#)), a systematic review about anti-discrimination. It is indicated in this report that education in particular is one of the most important measures for counteracting discrimination. Girls belonging to marginalised groups are particularly vulnerable. They are often discriminated against on several grounds, for example gender, ethnicity and language. Besides this, investments in education for girls contribute to the ability to achieve many of the global sustainable development goals. For example, educated girls do not get married as early as their less-educated peers. They also do not have children as early, they invest in their own children's health to a greater extent and are more inclined to send their children to school. This creates a virtuous cycle that has both local and global effects, argue Molander ([EBA 2016:11](#)) and Vimefall ([EBA DDB 2016:04](#)).

Education is about lifelong learning where primary and higher education are intertwined. For this reason, EBA is continuing to focus on education in 2017 through two forthcoming reports on Sweden's research aid. We hope to obtain answers to a number of questions such as: What effects has Swedish aid had? Is research aid in tune with today's societal challenges?

¹ Randomised controlled trials (RCT) is an experimental method of scientific evaluation used to determine whether an intervention has an effect. It is decided randomly which of the two groups receives a specific intervention, with the other group (that does not receive the intervention) constituting the control group.

² A conditional grant means that the recipient, in this case families, receives money from central government / donors in exchange for the recipient agreeing to a number of demands, in this case the family sending their child to school.

STEERING AID

Several EBA reports over the course of the year have focused on steering, decision-making and the reporting of results, particularly in connection with international development cooperation, but also in relation to Agenda 2030 and PGU.

Mark McGillivray et al. (*EBA 2016:10*) point to the constant conflict between the principle and practice of aid. The political requirement for donor countries to justify their own aid expenditures often leads to a focus on short-term results – at the expense of sustainable long-term effects.

The same problem is described by Samoff et al. (*EBA 2016:03*), who criticise the consequences this “mismatching” has when conducting evaluations. Short-term aid cycles require rapid evaluations, which are often made long before the intended results even become noticeable. Not surprisingly, such evaluations are often superficial. These are devoted more to factors that are easily and quickly measured (e.g. how many teachers have participated in a workshop or how many books have been delivered) rather than to scrutinising more long-term effects (e.g. whether teaching and learning have improved).

EBA’s conclusion is that evaluations need to be adapted more to the central issues that those who structure aid are grappling with and less to Sida’s interventions and administrative procedures. The design of interventions must also – much more than today – create conditions for follow-up and evaluation from the very outset. Just as with all other public assignments, it is important to clearly establish aims, goals and results. Evaluations should have a greater focus on the long-term effects and sustainability of aid and it is often desirable to conduct them some time after the entire financing has ended.

One fundamental problem is that Sida and other clients, when ordering evaluations, want answers to too many questions at the same time (see *EBA 2015:02*). It would be good to widen the circle of evaluators.

STEERING THE SCOPE AND FOCUS OF AID

Sweden has long had an ambitious aid agenda and has since 1975 been allocating one per cent of its gross national income to aid. Such a clear goal has its advantages, but might also have negative effects. The risk is that the debate will be more about volumes than on the focus and content of the aid. The structure of aid is also affected in practice when an expenditure goal is allowed to steer. Paradoxically, the policy may become more “clear” at the same time as the quality may suffer when the ambition to reach a certain level of expenditure is allowed to dominate.

In his essay, Lars Anell (*EBA 2017:04*) points out how important it is to place a greater focus on discussing content before setting an aid framework – and devoting less energy to a framework that is to be filled with content. He proposes determining the scope and focus of aid for a four-year period in much the same way as the research budget is determined. This provides room for a debate about the content of the aid and the opportunity to achieve desired goals, which then form the basis for decisions on the size of the appropriation.



A woman in Juba, South Sudan learning to use computers through the UN Women's education programme. Photo: UN Photo/JCMcIlwaine.

Migration is increasingly being included in the aid policy agenda, for example, as a target of Agenda 2030 and in the aid policy framework. Knoll and Sherriff (*EBA 2017:01*) examine how aid funding has been used in Sweden and some other European countries to finance the reception of asylum seekers. The authors point out that countries have interpreted what might be classified as aid in different ways. The definitions established by OECD-DAC (OECD Development Assistance Committee) need to become clearer and are to be respected.

Knoll and Sherriff see no clear trends as regards the support of donors to special “migration-related” projects, but note an increased focus on humanitarian aid and on countries that are strategically relevant from a migration perspective.

Besides this, the donors probably place greater emphasis on interventions that perhaps do not directly concern migration but are focused on the root causes of today’s increased migration. However, the statistical basis needs to improve in order to capture these and other key dimensions. This demands an increased exchange of experience between the EU countries. Knoll and Sherriff highlight specific issues that should be followed up and shows that the relationship between migration and development should be analysed in more detail.

Swedish aid has a broad approach. OECD-DAC has previously criticised Sweden for spreading its interventions too thinly over too many countries, themes and programmes. This issue was also discussed in *The EBA Aid Review 2016* on the basis of Rune Hagen’s report (*EBA 2015:03*). The studies looking at Uganda (*EBA 2016:09*) and Tanzania (*EBA 2016:10*) provide more examples of the wide dispersion of Swedish aid.

Decision-making is highly decentralised – which is shown by EBA’s mapping of the formal structure of decisions concerning Swedish aid (*EBA 2016:06*). Decentralisation might impede prioritisation and the building of thematic expertise. EBA would like to return to this issue. What effect does this decentralised decision-making have on the focus and quality of aid?

STEERING THROUGH STRATEGIES

Steering in the form of strategies is addressed in several reports. Kruse (*EBA 2016:09*) calls attention to the importance of linking strategies more clearly to

the country level. He wants to involve local partners more in the process of developing strategies in order to increase country ownership.

Strategies also need to be linked to each other more clearly. In their report concerning regional aid to southern Africa, Söderbaum and Brolin (*EBA 2016:01*) argue in favour of a more holistic approach in which Sweden’s regional and bilateral strategies are better integrated (and where multilateral support is also integrated, where appropriate). If the regional perspective is not reflected in the national strategies, successful regional integration and cooperation becomes more difficult. A basic prerequisite for effective coordination is of course the existence of a national sense of ownership of the regional issues – which is not always the case. EBA has not yet evaluated the link between thematic strategies and country strategies, but this may become pertinent in the future.

Are the strategies always strategic? Söderbaum and Brolin argue that Swedish support for regional development in southern Africa has been too strongly focused on the African Union and various regional economic communities. The development and capacity building of regional institutions has been central. However, there are few signs to suggest that this regional focus has contributed especially manifestly to poverty reduction and sustainable development. Investments in regional cooperation risk marginalising the private sector and civil society – both of which can play an important role in regional integration. On the other hand, intergovernmental bodies can be valuable in terms of conflict management and conflict prevention, etc.

In recent years, Swedish bilateral strategies have become increasingly brief and general. This gives scope for greater flexibility and better adaptation to local conditions, but also risks weakening the steering effect of these strategies. The strategies contain goals (expected results) at an overarching level, at the same time as the interventions financed by Swedish aid contribute to results at a different level.

Kruse (*EBA 2016:09*) calls for more realistic strategies. Does the weaker overarching steering improve aid? This is a subject that deserves a more in-depth analysis.



The UN Headquarters, New York. Photo: UN Photo/Mark Garten

EFFECTIVE AID

On paper, there is an almost global consensus that effective development cooperation should adhere to principles such as ownership, predictability and a focus on results achieved. This consensus can be found in previous agreements on aid effectiveness (Rome 2003, Paris 2005, Accra 2008, Busan 2011, Mexico City 2014).

Unfortunately, this is not the case in practice: these noble principles have not been observed to an especially high degree. In recent years, there has even been talk of “the death of the Paris Agenda”. The Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation is to use monitoring, learning and joint commitments to achieve the global goals. The partnership’s high-level meeting in late 2016 established that the donor community has not delivered in line with its commitments. Consequently, a new commitment was made to develop time-bound action plans in relation to these commitments.

Four aspects of aid effectiveness – ownership, proliferation, predictability and results – have been brought to the fore in EBA reports. These aspects are discussed below.

OWNERSHIP

The principle of ownership has long been viewed as a fundamental component of Swedish aid. Ownership means that partner countries pursue their own development policy, have their own strategies and also steer their own development efforts in the field. At the same time, aid has changed considerably in recent years. New actors have entered the arena and, in many countries, the importance of aid has decreased in comparison with other financial flows.

Today’s Swedish aid focuses greatly on controversial issues, such as gender equality, human rights, LGBTQ issues, democracy and freedom of the press. Such issues are often sensitive in our partner countries. When the government of a country is not sympathetic to working with such issues, Swedish interventions are often implemented through local civil society organisations. At the same time, the scope of civil society is currently shrinking in many countries, as shown by Youngs (*EBA 2015:01*).

This requires more concentration on the question of ownership in Swedish aid. This is an overall conclusion from the EBA reports published in 2016. At the same time, ownership provides no universal solution for aid effectiveness. Stein-Erik Kruse (*EBA 2016:09*) has written a report that focuses on Swedish development cooperation with Uganda. He believes that the content of the Swedish strategy would have needed to be more “bottom-up” and “owned” by Ugandans themselves. There should have been “a more active involvement of and consultation with country partners and other donors”.

Söderbaum and Brolin (*EBA 2016:01*) also see “strong evidence that [regional support] that [is] not well integrated into national agendas or locally owned [is] usually unsustainable or even detrimental likely to fail”.

However, ownership is not always a direct or unproblematic route to effective aid. McGillivray et al. (*EBA 2016:10*) have studied Swedish experiences from fifty years of development cooperation with Tanzania and highlight the necessity of donors to relate to the shifting levels of ownership. Donor investments in projects outside of the partner government’s systems by definition lack national ownership. Central government ownership that lacks the capacity to implement projects also jeopardises ownership at the local level. Promoting ownership at a given level thus does not guarantee ownership at another level. Öjendal et al. (*EBA 2017:05*) demonstrate both the importance of and problems with local ownership in peace-building processes and how local ownership often conflicts with national ownership.

One problem with the principles of the Paris Declaration is that support delivered in accordance with those principles remains ineffective if a recipient country is pursuing a misdirected policy or if the local capacity for development is too weak.



Rainforest in the Amazon. Photo: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe.



These lessons raise a question: Whose ownership is it that is to be promoted? This question should be seen in the light of the fact that aid has increasingly been delivered through civil society in recent years. Is it realistic – as in the case of Uganda (*EBA 2016:09*) – to achieve results in a country strategy despite almost no cooperation taking place via central government? Who is it that must own the development in order for it to point the way forward?

There are obviously central and difficult issues that would benefit from more in-depth analysis. In 2017, EBA is initiating a major study that focuses on how ownership is managed in Swedish aid and how it should be managed in a new era of development cooperation.

PROLIFERATION

Reduced dispersion compared with today's (high) levels would increase aid effectiveness. Rune Hagen (*EBA 2015:03*) finds evidence of this in the research that supports the Paris Agenda's reasoning. Aid is given to too many countries, to too many sectors, and is apportioned in the form of many small individual interventions.

This creates high transaction costs and administrative costs for aid (especially for the recipient), at the same time as it impedes learning and transparency.

The Swedish Government's focus on increased concentration yielded some effect up until 2009, but Hagen argues that dispersion has increased again somewhat



Power lines in the mountainous area of Sapa, Vietnam. Photo: UN Photo/Kibae Park.

in recent years. These conclusions can be complemented with information at the country level.

The evaluation of the long-standing cooperation with Tanzania (*EBA 2016:10*) shows how Sweden has actively contributed to the great dispersion of aid in that country. The authors argue that this “places enormous pressure on the Tanzanian government” (p. 19). Kruse (*EBA 2016:09*) notes that annual Swedish aid to Uganda – the volume of which corresponds to the cost of building a medium-sized bridge in Scandinavia – is implemented in many small interventions aimed at strengthening democracy, increasing employment opportunities, improving basic health, safeguarding human security and to take into

account overarching issues such as discrimination against marginalised groups, gender equality and gender-based violence. Both country reports argue that Sweden should more actively concentrate its aid through greater coordination with other donors.

In the new policy framework, the Government writes that “[t]here is a need to regularly review where the added value of Swedish development cooperation is highest. Countries must be chosen based on an overall assessment and a clear basis for assessment founded on where Sweden is particularly well-placed to carry out effective development cooperation” (p. 49).

It remains to be clarified how this review is to be carried out and what the grounds for the overall assessment are. EBA considers this to be a particularly central issue as neither the new policy framework nor the new global sustainable development goals create any sort of clear grounds on which to prioritise aid.

PREDICTABILITY

Aid volatility and its negative effects have been discussed for many years and this has resulted in international commitments to make aid more predictable. McGillivray et al. (*EBA 2016:10*) show that Swedish aid to Tanzania has been relatively volatile over the past fifty years. At the same time, aid to Uganda has been relatively predictable since 1998, and there have usually been specific reasons for large changes in its level or when support has been withdrawn (*EBA 2016:09*).

In 2016, the Swedish National Audit Office drew attention to the increase in aid volatility resulting from the deductions for migration costs. This problem is also highlighted in Knoll and Sherriff's report on the sudden increase in migration and refugee flows (*EBA 2017:01*) and is described in Anell's study (*EBA 2017:04*) as a negative effect of the expenditure goal.

Lack of predictability is not just a problem for recipients in partner countries. It also affects the planning and implementation among aid organisations in Swedish civil society, for example, as these are often dependent on central government funding. How can aid volumes be made less volatile? EBA is working more on this issue in 2017 and this will include investigating how exchange rate fluctuations affect aid flows.

RESULTS ORIENTATION

Effective aid is a subject that has been high on the international agenda ever since the first Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey in 2002. The 2005 Paris Agenda calls for an increased focus on results as one of five principles of the effort to make aid more effective. Over the past ten years, many donors have made increasing use of results-based management

(RBM) in order to gain a better grasp of what works – but also to ensure results and improve decision-making.

However, there is a certain inherent conflict in results-based management. On the one hand, donors want to continuously follow up activities for the purposes of learning and being able to make adjustments as needed. On the other hand, there is the ambition to demonstrate results in the short term. As the Uganda report (*EBA 2016:09*) highlights, there is also a risk that extensive work with follow-up and feedback at the embassies displaces the all-important dialogue with local partners.

The report shows that the format used for feedback is also problematic. For example, results have to be reported on such a general level that it becomes difficult to see how the results relate to aid financed by Sweden. And the feedback templates often lack space in which to report the actual results of individual interventions. There is therefore increasing scepticism among aid actors and researchers towards today's forms of results-based management – these are considered to be based on simplistic assumptions about the inherent nature of development.

Several EBA reports see challenges with this form of steering. Matt Andrews (*EBA 2015:05*) and Cathy Shutt (*EBA 2016:07*) show that there are alternative methods for the planning, follow-up and evaluation of aid and the reporting of its results. It is often a case of gradually finding solutions to problems in individual projects, taking into account the local environment. Furthermore, it is important to build relationships in development cooperation and to find the right combination of trust and critical dialogue. Reaching this point requires planning, monitoring and follow-up to assume to a greater extent that development processes are complex and unpredictable.

At the same time, it remains important to have a clear picture in advance of what is to be achieved and how this can be measured.



Bricks being laid in the wall of a new house in Kabul, Afghanistan. Photo: UN Photo/Jawad Jalali.

EVALUATING AID

Aid evaluation encompasses a number of dimensions. This section focuses mainly on learning.

EVALUATION FOR LEARNING

Evaluations are often “technically sound, extensive, perhaps expensive and largely ignored”. Joel Samoff et al. (*EBA 2016:03*) contend this in a systematic review of evaluations of aid-financed investments in education. An earlier report (*EBA 2015:02*) shows that evaluations are often intended for an inner circle. If the conclusions and recommendations of these evaluations do not reach their intended recipients, their ability to contribute to learning and serve as a basis for designing policy and programmes is reduced. How an evaluation is disseminated and used is thus an important dimension that may require further attention.

UNDERSTANDING AND ASSESSING CAUSAL LINKS

There are several ways in which to assess causal links using scientifically reliable methods. Each of these ways has its advantages and disadvantages, depending on the object being studied. In the search for appropriate knowledge, EBA has produced a number of reports that describe, develop or test different models for evaluation.

EBA’s first report (*EBA 2014:1*) concerned the question of when it is desirable and possible to use randomised controlled experiments to evaluate aid-financed projects and programmes. Barbara Befani (*EBA 2016:05*) claims that the question of “what works” is often too narrow. It must be supplemented: What works for whom, under what circumstances and on what terms? In many cases, it is impossible to work with control groups, and there are often too few observations to allow a statistical analysis. In such situations, qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) can be applied.

Another method for impact evaluation is based on geocoded data (geographically specifying where in a given country aid interventions are implemented, when the interventions are of a type that allows this to be established). In 2017, Ann-Sofie Isaksson will be completing an EBA study into the feasibility of using this method to evaluate Swedish aid.

The majority of Swedish aid is steered through strategies. Building up a model for the cost-effective evaluation of steering through strategies was a subsidiary aim when EBA launched two studies of the cooperation with Uganda and Tanzania, respectively, in 2016.

Stein-Erik Kruse (*EBA 2016:09*) constructs a model for assessing the impact of different factors on the donor side (policy and programme development, aid steering and implementation, follow-up and evaluation) on effectiveness. The model is then applied to Sweden’s development cooperation with Uganda 2009–2015. Kruse also proposes how this approach could be developed – for example by examining the interaction between the parties involved in the projects’ implementation.

In the second study, Mark McGillivray et al. (*EBA 2016:10*) apply the AQEF (*Aid Quality Evaluation Framework*) model in order to assess what contributions the long-lasting development cooperation between Sweden and Tanzania has had on poverty reduction. AQEF is a framework for evaluating the probable results of interventions. The authors’ starting point includes the Paris Declaration’s principles for aid effectiveness. Although the AQEF model may require further development, the report shows that it is entirely possible to use a well-designed evaluation to address such a complicated issue.



On the way to the rice fields early one morning in the village of Maos, Indonesia.
Photo: UN Photo/Ali Mustofa.

LEARNING THROUGH SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS

Every year, a large number of studies and assessments focusing on development and aid are conducted all around the world. Much would be gained if this knowledge can be harnessed effectively as a means of promoting learning and making it easier for decision-makers involved in Swedish aid. There are several international organisations conducting such studies. However, these do not cover all of the areas that are relevant to Swedish aid. Consequently, EBA has been producing systematic reviews that focus on aid to education (*EBA 2016:02* and *EBA 2016:03*), climate aid (*EBA 2015:09*) and, most recently, anti-discrimination measures (*EBA 2017:02*).

Perhaps the most important aim of many systematic reviews is compiling knowledge about which interventions have proved to result in good goal fulfilment. Such studies can reduce the risk of similar mistakes repeated in development work. In the future, EBA will focus on making the systematic reviews more relevant and useful to Swedish aid. To achieve this,

we want to involve aid actors in both formulating questions and participating in our reference groups. In spring 2016, EBA arranged a workshop focusing on how systematic reviews should be performed.

EBA believes that systematic review is a productive method of identifying knowledge gaps in an area. The anti-discrimination study is a good example; it shows that we know almost nothing about the effects of anti-discrimination programmes aimed at people with disabilities.

It has to be said that basic systematic reviews can be relatively expensive. EBA cannot finance this type of study alone – except in exceptional cases. It is thus important to weigh up the potential benefits against the cost. Taking advantage of systematic reviews conducted by other actors internationally by connecting those studies to Swedish aid is a cost-effective solution. This is a method that EBA wants to apply more often in the future.



DATA AND STATISTICS – KNOWLEDGE WITH FRAGILE FOUNDATIONS

Reliable statistical data is often a prerequisite for making well-founded decisions. Developing countries are faced with a challenge when – in accordance with, for example, Agenda 2030 – they have to collect new statistics covering a large number of indicators. Of course, many countries can, in addition to gaining knowledge about the indicators themselves, greatly improve their capacity to collect statistics. However, EBA believes there is also a risk that the cost of this reporting displaces other important domestic statistical work.



View of the Greenland landscape near Uummannaq, where climate change is clearly evident in the natural environment. Photo: UN Photo/Mark Garten.

For this reason, support for building up statistical expertise in partner countries should be prioritised. Within the DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet), of which EBA is a member, there is discussion about how such support can be designed in the most suitable way.

Evaluations often use secondary data without sufficient consideration being given to its quality. This often leads to inadequate evaluations, as noted by both Samoff et al. (*EBA 2016:03*) and Molander (*EBA 2016:11*).

EBA has repeatedly pointed to the need for accurate and appropriate data concerning Swedish aid. Deficiencies in the coding of interventions reduce the

usefulness of the material. In a background report for EBA (December 2016), Ulrika Ahrsjö examines the reliability of the data concerning Swedish bilateral aid. She starts out from the hypothesis that similar forms of aid are given different names as political priorities change.

It is not possible to establish that this is done systematically, but this does not mean that such effects do not exist at all – the data is not sufficiently informative to answer this question. EBA continues to work with statistics and is pursuing the creation of better and more accessible data in the field of aid. Migration and development is an area that needs better criteria for the reporting of statistics to DAC.

EXPERIENCES AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES

At present, EBA publishes an average of one report and holds one seminar per month. This is in line with the budget EBA is currently working with.

At the beginning of 2017, EBA has issued a pilot call for proposals in a thematically important area – ownership – which provides an opportunity to propose a somewhat more extensive study than has hitherto been allowed. The intention is partly to increase the possibility to collect primary data.

Our hope is to issue at least two major calls for proposals per year in areas of central importance to Swedish aid.

Two country evaluations were conducted in 2016: Tanzania and Uganda. One subsidiary aim was to test different methods for the cost-effective evaluation of

the results of country cooperation. EBA wants to continue focusing on this type of evaluation and intends to initiate at least one or two such studies in 2017.

In 2016, EBA initiated a project with a much longer duration than normal studies. The project encompasses ongoing evaluation (close collaboration between practitioners and researchers when evaluating projects and investments), and focuses on Sida's gender mainstreaming. The study will be completed at the end of 2017.

The following table lists EBA's current projects.

CURRENT STUDIES (31/12 2016):

WORKING TITLE AND DESCRIPTION	REFERENCE GROUP*	AUTHOR(S)
<p>Is Swedish aid sustainable? <i>A study of sustainability and evaluation of sustainability in Swedish aid.</i></p>	<p>Jan Valdelin Anna Liljelund <i>Chair: Jan Pettersson</i></p>	EBA's secretariat
<p>Geospatial impact evaluation: A new approach to aid evaluation <i>A study of the conditions for evaluating Swedish aid based on geocoded data.</i></p>	<p>Anders Olofsgård Andreas Kotsadam Daniel Strandow Joakim Molander <i>Chair: Eva Lithman</i></p>	Ann-Sofie Isaksson
<p>Research Aid Revisited <i>A study of the origin, development and future of Swedish research aid.</i></p>	<p>Måns Lönnroth Rolf Carlman Lena Johansson de Chateau Sylvia Schwaag Serger <i>Chair: Gun-Britt Andersson</i></p>	Sverker Sörlin David Nilsson
<p>What happened to all the researchers? <i>A follow-up of African doctoral students financed by the Swedish sandwich model.</i></p>	<p>Tomas Kjellqvist Beth Maina Ahlberg Eva Tobisson <i>Chair: Arne Bigsten</i></p>	Måns Felleesson

* EBA's reference groups have a strictly advisory role. Participants in reference groups are neither responsible for the content of reports nor necessarily agree with their conclusions and recommendations.

WORKING TITLE AND DESCRIPTION	REFERENCE GROUP*	AUTHOR(S)
<p>Evaluation of the impact of Swedfund's activities <i>An evaluation focusing on Swedfund's effect on poverty reduction.</i></p>	<p>Edward T. Jackson Eilis Lawlor Henrik Schaumbürg-Muller Karin Kronhöffer Keetie Roelen <i>Chair: Kim Forss</i></p>	<p>Stephen Spratt Chris Barnett Charley Clarke</p>
<p>Ongoing evaluation of Sida's interventions to strengthen gender mainstreaming <i>Ongoing evaluation regarding the implementation of Sida's plan for gender mainstreaming, 2015–2018.</i></p>	<p>Anne-Charlott Callerstig Drude Dahlerup Jessica Janrell Åsa Eldén <i>Chair: Julia Schalk</i></p>	<p>Fredrik Ugglå Elin Bjarnegård</p>
<p>Aid evaluation: Learning from experience <i>The study sheds light on how evaluation activities deal with the tension between accountability and learning. The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach and is based on Swedish and Norwegian experiences.</i></p>	<p>Asbjörn Eidhammar Penny Hawkins Karolina Hulterström Lennart Wohlgemuth <i>Chair: Eva Lithman</i></p>	<p>Hilde Reinertsen Desmond McNeill Kristian Bjørkdahl</p>
<p>Sweden's funding for UN funds and programmes <i>An analysis of changed financing patterns for the UN's funds and programmes – in order to provide guidance on how Sweden is to navigate the new landscape.</i></p>	<p>Henrik Hammargren Magnus Magnusson Piera Tortora Silke Weinlich Tobias Axerup <i>Chair: Torgny Holmgren</i></p>	<p>Thomas G. Weiss Stephen Browne</p>
<p>Evidence-based anti-corruption <i>A study of the forms of anti-corruption measures that work best in different environments.</i></p>	<p>Martina Björkman Nyqvist James Donovan Nikos Passas Anna Persson Nils Taxell <i>Chair: Arne Bigsten</i></p>	<p>Alina Mungiu-Pippidi</p>
<p>Literature review of the interaction between humanitarian aid and long-term development aid <i>A literature review focusing on processes for linking humanitarian aid and long-term development aid and of evaluations of responses in refugee crises. The study is being conducted in partnership with DEval.</i></p>	<p>Helge Roxin Riitta Oksanen Malin Mobjörk <i>Chair: Kim Forss</i></p>	<p>Alexander Kocks Ruben Wedel</p>
<p>Aid volatility due to exchange rate fluctuations <i>A study of the extent to which exchange rate fluctuations contribute to fluctuations in aid flows, and how this can be managed.</i></p>	<p>Alan Whiteside Nicholas Zebryk Irina Zviadadze Erik Åkesson <i>Chair: Arne Bigsten</i></p>	<p>Númi Östlund</p>
<p>Evaluating anti-discrimination measures: Phase II <i>An in-depth evaluation of the domestic anti-discrimination measures in a number of countries.</i></p>	<p>Julia Schalk is a participant in the international reference group</p>	<p>Andrew Shepard Rachel Marcus</p>

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REPORTS AND SEMINARS IN 2016

EBA REPORTS IN 2016

The Expert Group decides independently which studies are to be conducted and authors are solely responsible for analysis, conclusions and recommendations. EBA is responsible for final quality assurance.

- 2016:01 **Support to regional cooperation and integration in Africa – what works and why?**
Fredrik Söderbaum, Therese Brolin
- 2016:02 **Education in developing countries – what policies and programmes affect learning and time in school?**
Amy Damon, Paul Glewwe, Suzanne Wisniewski, Bixuan Sun
- 2016:03 **Capturing complexity and context: Evaluating aid to education**
Joel Samoff, Jane Leer, Michelle Reddy
- 2016:04 **Swedish responsibility and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**
Magdalena Bexell, Kristina Jönsson
- 2016:05 **Pathways to change: Evaluating development interventions with Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)**
Barbara Befani
- 2016:06 **Vem beslutar om svenska biståndsmedel? En översikt**
Expert Group for Aid Studies
- 2016:07 **Towards an Alternative Development Management Paradigm?**
Cathy Shutt
- 2016:08 **Sustaining a development policy: Results and responsibility for the Swedish policy for global development**
Måns Fellesson, Lisa Román
- 2016:09 **Exploring Donorship – Internal Factors in Swedish Aid to Uganda**
Stein-Erik Kruse
- 2016:10 **Swedish Development Cooperation with Tanzania – Has It Helped the Poor?**
Mark McGillivray, David Carpenter, Oliver Morrissey, Julie Thaarup
- 2016:11 **Revitalising the policy for global development**
Per Molander
- 2017:01 **Making Waves: Implications of the irregular migration and refugee situation on Official Development Assistance spending and practices in Europe**
Anna Knoll, Andrew Sherriff
- 2017:02 **Do Anti-Discrimination Measures Reduce Poverty Among Marginalised Social Groups?**
Rachel Marcus, Anna Mdee, Ella Page

- 2017:03 **Animal health in development – its role for poverty reduction and human welfare**
Ulf Magnusson, Arvid Ugglå, Jonathan Rushton
- 2017:04 **Enprocentmålet – en kritisk essä**
Lars Anell
- 2017:05 **Local Peacebuilding – challenges and opportunities**
Joakim Öjendal, Hanna Leonardsson, Martin Lundqvist

DEVELOPMENT DISSERTATION BRIEFS (DDBs)

Our DDBs give newly qualified PhDs the opportunity to present their thesis, focusing on its relevance for Swedish development cooperation. The aim is to provide the Government, authorities and other stakeholders with knowledge about both new research and new researchers.

- DDB 2016:01 **Going with the flow or swimming against the current? Interplay of formal rules, informal norms and NGO advocacy strategies**
Yumiko Yasuda
- DDB 2016:02 **The when and why of helping: individual and organizational decision making from a psychological perspective**
Arvid Erlandsson
- DDB 2016:03 **Path dependent possibilities of transformation: Agricultural change and economic development in north and south Vietnam**
Montserrat López Jerez
- DDB 2016:04 **Child education, child labor and the agricultural economy**
Elin Vimefall
- DDB 2016:05 **Beyond the buzzwords: Approaches to gender in humanitarian aid**
Elisabeth Olivius
- DDB 2016:07 **Våldsamma hot och priset för ärlighet: En omvärdering av tjänstemäns val att ta mutor**
Aksel Sundström
- DDB 2016:08 **Anti-corruption reform – evolution or big bang?**
Anders Sundell
- DDB 2016:09 **How does China challenge the IMF's power in Africa?**
Johanna Malm
- DDB 2016:10 **Beskattning och institutionell kvalitet**
Rasmus Broms
- DDB 2016:06 **Women in African natural resource booms**
Anja Tolonen

SEMINARS IN 2016

EBA's seminars provide a forum for dialogue and discussion of pertinent issues within development cooperation. These seminars place our reports in a broader context, discussing them from both a policy and practical perspective.

- 20 Jan **Drivers for development: advocacy, diversification, donations and endowments**
(DDB 2016:1 – 2016:4)
- 27 Jan **Business and Human Rights in development cooperation – is Sweden on the right track?**
(EBA 2015:08)
- 21 Mar **In search of double dividends from climate change interventions: Evidence conservation and household energy transitions**
(EBA 2015:09)
- 11 May **Aid to education – what works in a complex world?**
(EBA 2016:02 och 2016:03)
- 10 June **Jämställdhet i det humanitära biståndet och utvinningsindustrins effekt på kvinnors ställning**
(DDB 2016:5 – 2016:6)
- 20 June **Sveriges arbete med de globala målen – vems ansvar?**
(EBA 2016:04)
- 27 June **Impact Evaluation using Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)**
(EBA 2016:05)
- 31 Aug **Beyond the “results agenda” in international development cooperation?**
(EBA 2016:07)
- 14 Sep **PGU – omöjligt eller mer aktuellt än någonsin?**
(EBA 2016:08)
- 18 Oct **Sweden's support for development in Africa**
(EBA 2016:01, 2016:09 and 2016:10)
- 8 Dec **Samhällsstyrning: nationellt och globalt**
(DDB 2016:8 – 2016:10)
- 14 Dec **Det möjliga biståndet – Swedish development cooperation in a new environment**
(EBA 2016:11)





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