



THE EBA AID REVIEW

2020



**EXPERT GROUP
FOR AID STUDIES**

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THE EBA AID REVIEW 2020

Annual report from the Expert Group for Aid Studies for the year 2019

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PREFACE

The Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA) is a government committee with a mandate to independently evaluate and analyse Sweden's international development assistance. Our annual report, *The EBA Aid Review*, is based on the studies published by the EBA over the past year. It is available in hard copy, digitally and (in Swedish) as an audiobook.

THE EBA has focused in 2019 on issues that are high priorities in development assistance, as the chapter headings in this report make clear. Several of our studies, among them two country evaluations, deal with the long-term results of aid.

Other studies are concerned with the content and design of development cooperation, including issues such as how media coverage affects risk-taking in programmes, or what effective democracy assistance can look like. EBA studies often build on questions from earlier studies, as do this year's reports on discrimination and gender equality.

In the last two years, the EBA has also participated in a review of the OECD/DAC's normative evaluation criteria. In December 2019, an adapted and clarified set of criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability) was approved, together with a new, sixth criterion (coherence).

Our conversation with actors in development assistance has been stepped up during the year, including through an intensified dialogue with Sweden's embassies, which handle a large share of Swedish development cooperation, and through our efforts in international networks. We are also pleased that our Swedish-language podcast on aid, the EBA Podcast, has attracted listeners in over fifty countries.

Through its studies and other activities, the EBA wishes to make an ongoing contribution to a factually based, more in-depth conversation about the functioning and impacts of aid – to enable it to be developed and improved.

You are welcome to contact us with your views and ideas.

Stockholm, 31 March 2020

Helena Lindholm, Chair

Johan Schaar, Deputy Chair

Kim Forss, Member

Torgny Holmgren, Member

Sara Johansson de Silva, Member

Staffan I. Lindberg, Member

Magnus Lindell, Member

Joakim Molander, Member

Julia Schalk, Member

Janet Vähämäki, Member



Photo: NASA/Unsplash.



Helena Lindholm is Chair of the EBA and Professor of Peace and Development Research at the University of Gothenburg.

LOOKING IN DEPTH

For the EBA, 2019 has been another exciting year. We have strengthened our position as an important body in the area of analysis, says Helena Lindholm, Chair of the Expert Group.

HOW DO WE KNOW THE EBA HAS STRENGTHENED ITS POSITION?

For one thing, our central government funding has been increased, which can be seen as confirmation that we're considered relevant.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST IMPORTANT CHANGE IN THE EBA'S WORK?

We're now more strategic in our choice of direction for our studies, and there's more discussion about the areas to be given priority.

"Humanitarian needs are growing"

WHAT EBA REPORTS ATTRACTED MOST INTEREST IN 2019?

That's difficult to say. Our reports cover a wide range of topics, with some narrower than others. But one of the studies we produced on Cambodia, which used night-time light data from satellite images to measure the effects of aid, got a lot of coverage on the science pages of Sweden's biggest newspaper, which was very gratifying and represented a different kind of impact. Our country evaluations of Cambodia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have also aroused interest, including among relevant stakeholders in the recipient countries. In addition, I would mention the studies on discrimination and social protection systems, and the report on migration and development.

WHAT SURPRISED YOU?

I was surprised at how useful satellite data can be in assessing impacts on poverty. The evaluation in question, of aid to Cambodia, was based on a specific method known as "geospatial impact evaluation".

Another thing I found very interesting, and which I knew far too little about, was the findings in the report on aid to the fisheries sector, and the consequences such aid can have in terms of overfishing.

WILL AID AS WE KNOW IT SURVIVE?

That's the sixty-four thousand dollar question, isn't it? Development assistance is constantly changing. Countries such as China and Qatar are becoming more important as donors. We're seeing more philanthropic support from major global companies and business leaders. In addition, there are micro-interventions by diaspora groups, who not only transfer money to families back home, but also start small development projects or humanitarian operations. Humanitarian needs are growing, which may also boost this type of assistance. Climate-related projects and activities, too, are likely to become more prominent.

WHAT LESSONS HAVE YOU PERSONALLY LEARNT FROM WORKING WITH THE EBA?

I learn so much from every report and from every meeting with the Expert Group. What I'd particularly like to highlight from 2019, and for me personally, is the importance of country evaluations: wide-ranging, in-depth studies of long-term impacts, describing the history of aid in a country, what it has resulted in, what changes have occurred and what the consequences have been.



The impacts of democracy support are much debated.
Polling booths in Ukraine. Photo: Nata Golubnycha/Adobe Stock.

A DRIVE FOR DEMOCRACY

Support for democracy has long been a key element of Swedish development cooperation, accounting for around a quarter of the country's bilateral assistance. Now it is to be further deepened and extended. The EBA has produced several studies linked to democracy support and is currently undertaking a major evaluation of this form of aid.

IN 2019, THE SWEDISH Government launched a “drive for democracy” as part of its foreign and development cooperation policy. It came against a backdrop of growing authoritarian tendencies and populism in several countries, with reduced freedom for the media, civil society and political oppositions. This is the case, not least, in states and regions that are receiving Swedish aid.

“To build a better understanding of the impacts of democracy support, the EBA has begun a major quantitative study.”

The number of democracies in the world is still close to a historic high, and once countries have introduced a democratic form of governance they tend to stick with it.

However, the number of countries in which aspects of democracy are being eroded is greater than the number where they are being

strengthened. In the last ten years, the world has come to be characterised by “autocratisation” (rather than democratisation), in both existing democracies and non-democratic countries.

Aid donors need to be aware that, increasingly, what seems to hold back democratic progress is a lack of will, rather than of capacity, in partner countries.

The overall impacts of support for democracy are much debated and insufficiently understood. To build a better understanding of these impacts, the EBA has begun a major quantitative study that is due to be completed in 2020.

AN EBA REPORT on democratic development in African countries (*EBA 2019:09*) argues that, while aid-initiated reforms have influenced the way states organise themselves, they have rarely succeeded in changing underlying values.

According to the report, donor interventions initiated from the outside need to be better geared to local norms and values. One reason why this is important is that most African states are divided along ethnic or religious lines, with a political culture often defined by ethnicity rather than economic competition. Political parties tend to be organised along ethnic lines, rather than around other political considerations.

Democracy efforts driven from below also have weaknesses. An EBA report on Swedish

democracy aid to Cambodia (*EBA 2019:03*) notes that this assistance has helped to strengthen civil society and its organisations, but has not managed to strengthen overarching systems, such as an independent judiciary.

The EBA's evaluations of Swedish democracy assistance to countries with increasingly authoritarian rule and shrinking freedom for civil society generally recommend that aid should continue (*EBA 2018:06, 2019:03, 2019:04*). Forms of support should be flexible and should be based on in-depth risk analysis. Civil society needs continued support, but this should be supplemented with support to state actors, possibly at the local level or to groups of government officials. Interaction between the state and civil society in such partner countries is important in reducing polarisation and, if possible, promoting good governance.

SUPPORT FOR HIGHER education and research is crucial, too, as a stronger knowledge society creates better conditions for democratic progress.

In the countries of eastern Europe, the long-term possibility of joining the EU may be a powerful incentive to strengthen democracy and respect for human rights. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, the EU accession process has stalled, chiefly because of the complex and ethnically fractured political structure that resulted from the Dayton Peace Accords. According to a country evaluation commissioned by the EBA (*EBA 2018:10*), future Swedish assistance needs to be geared more to promoting the country's progress towards EU membership. One recommendation is to find new ways of again focusing on this key objective.

CONCLUSIONS

- Swedish democracy assistance would benefit from an improved understanding of its impacts in various contexts and in different parts of the world.
- Democracy support to civil society and institutions produces important results. But when those in power are insufficiently open to democratisation, those results are not enough. In that situation, there needs to be a balance between a firm, principled dialogue and contextualised initiatives to promote democratic progress in the long term.

REPORTS:

G. Hydén, M. Buch Kristensen (2019): *Democracy in African governance: Seeing and Doing it Differently*, **EBA 2019:09**

A. BenYishay, B. Parks, R. Trichier, C. Baehr, D. Abogaye, P. Prum (2019): *Building a Foundation Stone: The Long-term Impacts of a Local Infrastructure and Governance Program in Cambodia*, **EBA 2019:04**

H. Andersen, K-A. Larsson, J. Öjendal (2019): *Supporting Statebuilding for Democratisation? A Study of 20 Years of Swedish Democracy Aid to Cambodia*, **EBA 2019:03**

C. Lindahl, J. Lindahl, M. Söderbäck, T. Ivankovic (2018): *Nation Building in a Fractured Country: An Evaluation of Swedish Cooperation in Economic Development with Bosnia and Herzegovina 1995-2018*, **EBA 2018:10**

Å. Eldén, P. T. Levin (2018): *Swedish Aid in the Era of Shrinking Space – The Case of Turkey*, **EBA 2018:06**





“Support for
higher education
and research is
crucial.”

The EBA's evaluations of democracy support to countries with increasingly authoritarian rule recommend that assistance should continue.
This picture is from Istanbul, Turkey. Photo: @ashta/Unsplash.

RISK, CORRUPTION AND MEDIATISATION

Taking risks in development assistance is unavoidable if results are to be achieved. Sometimes, there are unforeseen effects. How does media coverage affect decision-makers in Swedish development cooperation – and what does risk management look like in fragile environments?

WHEN CORRUPTION is discovered in development assistance, it often provokes heated debate. There are accusations of inadequate control, or that aid is propping up dysfunctional social systems and despots. Money that should go to the vulnerable and oppressed is not getting through. Frequently, this is the general picture of aid that emerges from the media buzz.

At the same time, we know that where human needs are greatest, the risks of corruption and project failure are often higher. A somewhat higher level of risk can also, if managed in an informed way, offer a greater potential to make a difference.

IN EBA STUDY 2019:02, three forms of risk in development assistance are defined. Contextual risks include such things as political change, conflict, hyperinflation or natural disaster. Programmatic risks relate to programme design and implementation, and can give rise to poor results or unforeseen harm. Institutional risks may relate to staff security, corruption, or violations of international laws and regulations.

In general, donors are better placed to influence institutional and programmatic risks than contextual risks.

What the media mainly focus on is institutional risks (chiefly corruption), but sometimes also contextual risks, such as shrinking democratic space in partner countries. There is less interest in the risk of interventions not achieving results or having to be cancelled, regardless of the consequences this will have for the people the aid would have reached.

The report's authors note that donors such as the US and the UK have extensive risk management systems, reflecting the risk-averse decision-making environments they operate in.

In Sweden, risk management is less formalised, with greater trust placed in staff and partners – which according to the study can make aid more flexible and adaptable (*EBA 2019:02*).

During the period covered by the study (January–October 2018), there seems to have been a decision-making climate in Swedish aid that favoured somewhat greater risk-taking. Greater flexibility and discretion have enabled the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) to operate in environments with large contextual risks and to permit a higher level of programmatic risk. At the same time, the authors argue that Sida has reached a limit as far as institutional risks are concerned. Its officials are unwilling to take financial and security-related decisions which, if things went wrong, could pose a threat to the agency's institutional legitimacy.

IN AN EBA STUDY on the mediatisation of aid (*EBA 2019:01*), the authors write that Sida's "decision makers in their working life constantly (and obviously) relate to the issues of either positive media visibility or the risk of ... media criticism accompanied by reputation loss". The media's presence in their day-to-day work is not necessarily related to actual current publicity about aid; it is equally linked to past experience. The authors believe that the "media logic" creates a duality, causing extra caution about how taxpayers' money is spent, but also fostering anxiety. This in turn may result in officials, when taking aid decisions, opting out of activities which they have difficulty and are perhaps uncomfortable about communicating.

That said, views of what constitutes an acceptable level of risk probably fluctuate over time. Periods of greater control and a stronger focus on measurable results alternate with periods marked

“Where human needs are greatest, the risks are often greater”



Less formalised risk management in development assistance can increase its flexibility, according to EBA Report 2019:02. Photo: Fabien Barral/Unsplash.



Picture from Yemen, 2019. Photo: Mahmood Fadhi for CARE, EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid.

by trust, learning and partnership (*EBA DDB 2018:02*). Development assistance has particular challenges at particular times, and the current focus on fragile environments, conflict and humanitarian situations may entail greater risk-taking in all three of the risk categories mentioned here.

Flexibility is key to handling this successfully. No single measure or analysis can manage or predict all risks in advance, especially in fragile, complex or conflict-affected environments that are rapidly changing.

THE QUESTION OF RISK is closely linked to trust, which can facilitate and make for more effective relations and sharing. In 2020, the EBA plans to launch a study focusing on the dimension of trust in aid management.

As noted, a higher level of risk may allow greater impact to be achieved, provided that pitfalls are handled in the right way. There is more chance, for example, of a development finance institution making a difference in a low-income than in a middle-income country (*EBA 2018:01*). The more difficult environment means that other donors will not be present, while the relative potential for change will be greater.

CONCLUSIONS

- Sweden needs a more nuanced public conversation about development assistance, better reflecting the actual opportunities and risks associated with it.
- Sida should continue to focus on transparent management of risks, without underreporting them, accepting corruption or the like.

REPORTS:

N. Gulrajani, L. Mills (2019), *Fit for Fragility? An Exploration of Risk. Stakeholders and Systems Inside Sida*, **EBA 2019:02**

M. Grafström, K. Windell (2019), *Scandals, Opinions and Reputation: Development Assistance in a Mediatized Society* (in Swedish, with a summary in English), **EBA 2019:01**

J. Vähämäki (2018), *The Rise and Fall of "Results Initiatives" in Swedish Development Aid*, **EBA DDB 2018:02**

S. Spratt, J. Flynn, P. O'Flynn (2018), *DFIs and Development Impact: An Evaluation of Swedfund*, **EBA 2018:01**

AID 2.0

How is digitalisation making itself felt in Swedish development cooperation? Swedish aid to ICT is chiefly linked to democratisation, freedom of expression and human rights. The EBA has published two working papers with a focus on development assistance and information and communication technology.

DIGITALISATION IS AFFECTING people worldwide. The internet and related technologies have very quickly become established in partner countries, with around 40 per cent of their population now digitally connected. Phenomena such as information and communication technology (ICT), artificial intelligence (AI) and blockchain, a kind of distributed database, are also affecting Swedish development assistance.

THE GOVERNMENT'S Policy Framework highlights the importance of digitalisation and ICT aid in three areas: (1) trade and sustainable investment, (2) education and research, and (3) human rights, democracy and rule of law.

Swedish ICT assistance is chiefly linked to democratisation, freedom of expression and human rights, and to issues relating to corruption and civil society.

More tangibly, aid in this area may involve helping authorities to develop computer systems, or supporting civil society efforts to promote press freedom and access to independent media. Digitalisation of population registration, for example, can help widen access to public services, while text messaging services can provide a tool for whistle-blowing on irregularities in government administration.

BLOCKCHAIN has started to be used in some development interventions, for instance to reduce transaction costs, to permit rapid cash transfers,

or as a tool in identifying individuals. One example is the World Food Programme (WFP), which is employing blockchain to distribute digital food vouchers in refugee camps.

Other potential areas of use for this type of technology are remittances, transactions/payments, and democratic elections, where it can allow secure digital voting. By enhancing traceability, blockchain can counteract corruption and fraud.

CHALLENGES FOR digitalised aid include the rapid pace of technological development, and people's need for greater digital skills.

In low- and middle-income countries there is often a lack of equality between the sexes in the use of digital services, a "gender digital divide". For example, women may not own mobile phones or use the internet to the same extent as men, creating a risk of them being left behind in development.

REPORTS:

A. Bäckman, *Blockchain As a Tool in Humanitarian Action - a Brief Overview of Potential Uses*, **Working Paper, May, 2019**

E. Mineur, R. Sannerholm, *ICT in Swedish Development Assistance* (in Swedish), **Working Paper, October 2018**

AID FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Deforestation, biodiversity loss, overfishing... How effective is Swedish development assistance aimed at promoting ecological, social and economic sustainability in the use of natural resources?

A REVIEW OF evaluations in the fisheries sector, commissioned by the EBA (*EBA 2019:08*), has found that the aim of reducing poverty has sometimes been pursued at the expense of sustainable fisheries. A goal conflict exists here – even small-scale fisheries need to be monitored, whether they are for subsistence or for sale, to avoid certain species being overfished or entirely depleted.

According to the report, development cooperation has not done enough to meet the challenges arising from increased regulation of fish stocks. These relate both to policy reform and to compensation for those who lose out from closer monitoring. Instead of increasing fishing in seas and lakes, the focus should be on enhancing the value-added of the catches landed.

The study points to a need for more and better data on human exploitation of nature's resources. There also needs to be more analysis of long-term impacts. The same can be said as regards aid in the area of climate change.

GIVEN THE UNCERTAINTY that exists about the tangible impacts of climate change on physical, ecological and social systems, predicting the long-term results of interventions and investments is difficult. Actors in this area need better and more fit-for-purpose forms of monitoring, evaluation and learning, as the EBA's evaluation of the Nordic Development Fund (*EBA 2019:06*), for example, makes clear.



“Even small-scale fisheries need to be monitored”



Instead of increasing fishing, the focus should be on enhancing the value-added of the catches landed, according to an EBA report. Fishermen on the Mekong River. Photo: @venusvi/iStock.



OVER THE PAST DECADE, numerous organisations and instruments to fund emission reductions and climate adaptation in low- and middle-income countries have emerged. Sweden has played an important, bridge-building role in this context. But challenges still remain. A better understanding is needed of what adaptation measures can and should be financed with private and public funds, respectively (*EBA 2019:06*).

Another conclusion is that cooperation between organisations needs to be strengthened and developed, at the international level but also within countries. A study of the incentives for collaboration between the national and local levels in forest governance in India (*EBA DDB 2019:02*) indicates that there is more to be learnt in this area.

TWO OF THE SUMMARIES of new dissertations (DDBs) published by the EBA this year have explored how attitudes on climate change can be influenced and what potential exists for collective action.

The first argues that, in polarised societies, more information is not enough to change behaviour. Since large groups are guided by pre-existing loyalties, political communication has a decisive part to play in changing patterns and handling conflicting norms (*EBA DDB 2019:03*).

The second summary examines how changing norms at the international level can enhance the potential for collective action. Here, contingent events can strongly influence the impact of and acceptance for new policies (*EBA DDB 2019:01*).

CONCLUSIONS

- In the short term, there may be a conflict between the goals of reducing poverty and achieving environmental sustainability.
- Good collaboration between different levels in the societies where climate-related aid is implemented is key to success.
- Systems to monitor and evaluate climate initiatives need to look more at long-term impacts, and to be adapted to continuous learning.

REPORTS:

G. Carneiro, R. Bisiaux, M. Frances Davidson, T. Tomás-son, J. Bjärnstedt (2019), *Fishing Aid – Mapping and Synthesising Evidence in Support of SDG 14 Fisheries Targets*, **EBA 2019:08**

S. Spratt, E. Lawlor, K. Prasada Rao, Mira Berger (2019), *Joint Nordic Organisational Assessment of the Nordic Development Fund (NDF)*, **EBA 2019:06**

S. Linde (2019), *Communication and Cooperation: A Study of the Relationship Between Political Communication and Large-scale Collective Action*, **EBA DDB 2019:03**

M. Wangel (2019), *Deep Roots and Tangled Branches. Bureaucracy and Collaboration in Natural Resource Governance in South India*, **EBA DDB 2019:02**

E. Jakobsson (2019), *Norm Acceptance in the International Community: A Study of Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate-induced Migration*, **EBA DDB 2019:01**

MEASURING LONG-TERM IMPACTS

Most evaluations study interventions over just a few years. The EBA has carried out several studies with a much longer time frame than that.

THE LATEST EXAMPLES of our long-term evaluations are one on Swedish support to economic development in Bosnia and Herzegovina over 23 years (*EBA 2018:10*), two reports on democratisation in Cambodia over 20 years (*EBA 2019:03* and *EBA 2019:04*), and an ongoing study of the Swedish Government's Climate Change Initiative 2009–2012, looking at its results over ten years.

PREVIOUS EBA REPORTS have also studied long time spans, like the evaluation of five decades of development cooperation with Tanzania (*EBA 2016:10*), analyses of Sweden's research cooperation since the 1970s and 1990s, respectively (*EBA 2017:07*, *EBA 2017:08*), and meta-evaluations of aid to education (*EBA 2016:02*, *EBA 2016:03*).

These are in a sense pioneering studies, as evaluations in general rarely cover periods of more than five years. Applying a longer timescale has many advantages. It means that any effects or side effects (positive or negative) have time to emerge and develop. It also enables us to see how different factors interact – how results and interventions are reinforced or weakened over time – and how phenomena such as “path dependence” (organisations getting “stuck in a rut” for various reasons) affect cooperation.

In addition, evaluations with long time frames shed light on the way situation-specific conditions affect results. Interestingly, it emerges that the surrounding context not only plays a decisive role, it also changes, and sometimes very quickly.

THIS MAKES THE NEED FOR stringent methodologies all the greater. The traditional toolbox available to the evaluator needs to be developed. We should learn from disciplines that study long periods of time, such as history and sociology. There also needs to be clear thinking about how we assess cause and effect.

The EBA is following the latest research in evaluation and has built up experience over

the years that it can share with others. For us, this has involved learning how procurement of such long-term studies can best be undertaken, how researchers from different disciplines can collaborate, and how reference groups can best contribute.

We have also drawn conclusions about how communication should be designed when findings are more complex and multifaceted than usual. The EBA regularly contributes to the funding of methodological studies.

REPORTS:

A. BenYishay, B. Parks, C. Baehr, D. Aboagye, P. Prum, R. Trichler (2019), *Building on a Foundation Stone: The Long-term Impacts of a Local Infrastructure and Governance Program in Cambodia*, **EBA 2019:04**

H. Andersen, K-A. Larsson, J. Öjendal (2019), *Supporting State-Building for Democratisation? A Study of 20 Years of Swedish Democracy Aid to Cambodia*, **EBA 2019:03**

C. Lindahl, J. Lindahl, M. Söderbäck, T. Ivankovic (2018), *Nation Building in a Fractured Country: An Evaluation of Swedish Cooperation in Economic Development with Bosnia and Herzegovina 1995-2018*, **EBA 2018:10**

M. Fellesson (2017), *Research Capacity in the New Global Development Agenda*, **EBA 2017:08**

D. Nilsson, S. Sörlin (2017), *Research Aid Revisited – a Historically Grounded Analysis of Future Prospects and Policy Options*, **EBA 2017:07**

D. Carpenter, J. Thaarup, M. McGillivray, O. Morrissey (2016), *Swedish Development Cooperation with Tanzania – has it helped the poor?*, **EBA 2016:10**

J. Leer, J. Samoff, M. Reddy (2016), *Capturing Complexity and Context: Evaluating Aid to Education*, **EBA 2016:03**

A. Damon, P. Glewwe, B. Sun, S. Wisniewski (2016), *Education in Developing Countries what Policies and Programmes affect Learning and Time in School?*, **EBA 2016:02**

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality is a priority objective of Swedish development cooperation. The EBA's reports point to positive results, but also to ways in which Sida and other aid actors could improve their performance.

DISCRIMINATION is a violation of human rights, and also closely linked to poverty. Combating discrimination is fundamental to sustainable development. In two reports, the EBA has brought together knowledge about anti-discrimination interventions and their impacts on poverty (*EBA 2017:02*, *EBA 2019:05*).

The first report (*EBA 2017:02*) revealed major gaps in our understanding of how large-scale anti-discrimination measures affect vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities. The study showed that government interventions seem to be able to reduce discrimination and to have an impact on both monetary and multidimensional poverty, chiefly through various employment and educational initiatives, and through extra resources for vulnerable groups.

As a follow-up, in 2019 the EBA published a literature review of anti-discrimination initiatives

“Interventions are particularly effective when ‘norm influencers’ are involved”

taken by civil society organisations (*EBA 2019:05*). This study focuses on what is known about civil society interventions aimed at strengthening the capacity

of discriminated-against groups to claim their rights and make governments more accountable. The most common type of initiative seeks to influence attitudes, norms and behaviour among the general public and service providers.

According to the report, which studies discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV status and disability, the greatest impact is achieved by combining multiple actions. Interventions are particularly effective in breaking down stereotypes when “norm influencers” are involved, and also when different social groups are brought together.

GENDER DISCRIMINATION IS one of the most common forms of discrimination, and equality between women and men is a priority area for Swedish development cooperation. One example of how Sweden has promoted gender equality is through its development cooperation with Cambodia. The EBA commissioned an evaluation of Sweden's aid to Cambodia over 20 years (*EBA 2019:03*), which has included initiatives to promote gender equality. The study shows for one thing that, partly thanks to Swedish development assistance, girls in Cambodia now complete basic education to the same extent as boys.

Another EBA report (*EBA 2019:07*) makes clear how important it is to analyse how development interventions affects power relations between women and men. This literature review has looked at evaluations of social protection programmes, such as cash transfers, in-kind food aid and public works programmes. It shows that these programmes have benefited gender equality by strengthening women in economic terms. At the same time, the authors discuss to what extent programmes aimed at women as caregivers risk increasing their (unpaid) workload.

None of the programmes covered by the study had made an effort to redistribute care work

REPORTS:

M. Dooley, A. Fried, R. Levto, K. Doyle, J. Klugman, G. Barker (2019), *Applying a Masculinities Lens to the Gendered Impacts of Social Safety Nets*, **EBA 2019:07**

R. Marcus, D. Mathur, A. Shepherd (2019), *Impact of Civil Society Anti-Discrimination Initiatives: A Rapid Review*, **EBA 2019:05**

H. Andersen, K-A. Larsson, J. Öjendal (2019), *Supporting State Building for Democratisation? A Study of 20 years of Swedish Democracy Aid to Cambodia*, **EBA 2019:03**

E. Bjarnegård, F. Uggla (2018), *Putting Priority into Practice: Sida's Implementation of its Plan for Gender Integration*, **EBA 2018:07**

R. Marcus, A. Mdee, E. Page (2017), *Do Anti-Discrimination Measures Reduce Poverty among Marginalised Social Groups*, **EBA 2017:02**



Picture from Uganda, where people who have fled from Sudan are receiving assistance from EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid. Photo: EU.

to men. The authors propose that, when aid programmes are designed, a thorough gender analysis should be included, to see how they could affect household decision-making, control of household resources and unpaid household labour. This, it is argued, could make interventions more effective, in terms of both reducing poverty and promoting gender equality.

IN 2016–2018 SIDA implemented a plan for gender integration, the main aim being to strengthen this perspective in the work of the agency. The EBA carried out a continuous evaluation (i.e. one conducted in parallel with the process evaluated) of Sida's gender mainstreaming efforts over the same period (**EBA 2018:07**).

The report shows that attention to gender equality is an important part of how Sida is viewed by both its staff and partner organisations. At the same time, efforts in this area are dependent on the commitment and competence of individual employees, as the agency places few formal requirements on its staff relating to gender integration. This, combined with Sida's decentralised structure, has resulted in an

uneven implementation, in terms of both substance and level of ambition.

The researchers behind this EBA study recommend, among other things, that Sida's demands on its staff should be clarified, that there should be more training on gender issues and analysis, and that support functions should be strengthened.

CONCLUSIONS

- Anti-discrimination interventions can help reduce poverty as well as discrimination.
- Including a thorough gender analysis in the design of poverty reduction programmes could reduce the risk of reinforcing gender roles or increasing women's unpaid work.
- Gender equality is a high priority for Sida. To achieve even better results, there is a need to be clear about what is demanded from employees in their work that relates to gender equality.

LOOKING AHEAD

The EBA's role is not to defend development assistance, but sometimes perhaps to explain this complex area.

INTERNATIONALLY, Sweden is often described as an ambitious and influential donor country – a humanitarian super power. Its self-image in the field of development policy is in line with such a description. One manifestation of Sweden's ambition in international aid is the “one per cent target”, which calls for 1 per cent of the country's gross national income to be devoted to development assistance each year. Sweden is one of a trio of countries, along with Norway and Luxembourg, that jockey for position as the world's biggest aid donor in relative terms. In addition, Britain and Denmark regularly spend over 0.7 per cent of their GNI on aid.

IN 2019, there were political calls to depart from the one per cent target. This has happened before, with reference to budgetary pressures. After the target had first been achieved, in 1975, it was met for 18 years, after which, for 13 years, Sweden had an aid budget of less than 1 per cent of GNI, though never less than 0.7 per cent. Since 2006, the country has kept to its one per cent target.

A decision in principle to abandon this target would be a major change. Declaring to the outside world that it no longer applies could potentially have significant consequences, apart from reductions in programmes. While the EBA can see several possible ways of determining the volume of aid, such a reform should be preceded by a rigorous evaluation of the possible effects, addressing questions about priorities, effects in partner countries and impacts on Sweden's international standing, role and voice.

Swedish public support for aid is often said to be exceptionally strong by international standards. The EU conducts regular surveys of citizens' views on development assistance.


Questions are asked, for example, about how important it is to help people in poorer countries, and whether aid from the EU or individual member states should be increased. Interestingly, in the latest survey (June 2019), Sweden does not come out on top on any of the questions, often occupying a middle-ranking position among the 28 member countries.

Public opinion is influenced by media reporting and political debate. Surveys carried out by Sida show that Swedish public commitment to development assistance is strong, but that knowledge is more limited. There is thus a danger of perceptions of aid being shaped by scandals and isolated events highlighted in the media.

At the same time, a majority of Swedes say that they want to learn more about aid. More studies of its results and effects therefore need to be carried out and communicated to a wider audience. The Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel awarded to Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer in 2019 is very important. Experimental studies of the type they have conducted, however, cannot answer every important question about aid. More agencies could, for example, do with devoting more resources to evaluating long-term impacts.

THE EBA'S REMIT is to continuously evaluate and analyse Sweden's international development assistance, thereby producing knowledge that can be used to develop and improve it.

Our role is not to defend aid, but sometimes perhaps to explain it. Both supporters and critics could do more to ensure that the debate about development assistance is informed by a shared evidence base. That is something the EBA will continue to play its part in establishing.



"A decision in principle to abandon the one per cent target would be a major change."

There are several ways of determining the scale of aid, but a reform of the one per cent target should be preceded by an evaluation of the possible effects. Photo: Unsplash.

REPORTS AND SEMINARS IN 2019

STUDIES IN PROGRESS AS OF 31 DEC 2019

WORKING TITLE AND DESCRIPTION	REFERENCE GROUP*	AUTHORS
Blended Finance – What does the Use of ODA to ‘Catalyse’ Private Finance Mean for Overall ODA Allocations? <i>A growing trend in international development cooperation is to use official development assistance (ODA) to “catalyse” private finance. This study is looking at what could happen to the allocation of ODA to different sectors, countries and groups, given that donors are planning to increase this type of support.</i>	Paddy Carter Irene Basile Njuguna Ndungu Meja Vitalice Erik Korsgren Chair: Torgny Holmgren	Polly Meeks Samantha Attridge Matthew Gouett Annalisa Prizzon Jesse Griffiths
Evaluation of the Swedish Climate Change Initiative 2009-2012 <i>An evaluation of the Swedish Climate Change Initiative, using a range of methods to study bilateral and multi-lateral programmes and projects at the macro, meso and micro levels.</i>	Kim Forss Joakim Molander Ulrika Åkesson Stefan Isaksson Lisa Schipper Nicolina Lamhauge Elisabeth Folkunger Chair: Johan Schaar	John Colvin m.fl. (Emerald network)
What do Evaluations of the Effectiveness of Swedish Aid Interventions Tell Us? <i>This study is looking at what recent Sida evaluations say about the effectiveness of Swedish development interventions and Swedish aid. It is based on the definition of effectiveness given by Sida in its evaluation manual, with reference to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria for development and humanitarian efforts.</i>	Sven Olander Johanna Lindström Lennart Peck Chair: Kim Forss	Markus Burman
Evaluation of Sida’s Administrative Appropriation: Review, Analysis and the Way Forward <i>This study is an evaluation of the balance and dividing lines between Sida’s administrative and programme appropriations.</i>	Lennart Båge Tawar Dabaghi Vilhelm Persson Richard Murray Curt Johansson Johan Lantto Chair: Magnus Lindell	Daniel Tarschys
Impact Evaluation of Swedish Central Government Authorities’ Development Cooperation in the Western Balkans <i>This study is an evaluation of the impacts of Swedish government agencies’ development assistance interventions in the western Balkans.</i>	Monika Bauhr Finn Hedvall Jonas Lövkrona Mo Hamza Jessica Giandomenico Chair: Eva Lithman	Richard Allan Númi Östlund Giorgio Ferrari mfl.
Trust and Trust Based Management in Aid. A Study on Embedded Challenges and Core Insights from Literature and Practice <i>A study of challenges and insights relating to trust-based management, with a focus on actors that are both donors and recipients of aid funding, i.e. intermediaries.</i>	Louise Bringselius Elliot Stern Dan Honig Karin Metell Cueva Chair: Kim Forss	Janet Vähämäki Susanna Alexius

* EBA reference groups are strictly consultative. Their members are not responsible for the content of reports and do not necessarily agree with the conclusions and recommendations set out there.

WORKING TITLE AND DESCRIPTION	REFERENCE GROUP*	AUTHORS
Credible Explanations of Development Outcomes: Improving the Quality and Rigour of Theory-Based Evaluation <i>A methodological study focusing on theory-based evaluation approaches for the assessment of development impact.</i>	Gustav Peterson Rick Davies Derek Beach Nancy Cartwright Susanne Mattsson <i>Chair: Janet Vähämäki</i>	Barbara Befani
Country Evaluation of Sweden's Development Cooperation with Ethiopia <i>The aims of this study include gaining an in-depth understanding of the relevance and long-term effects of Swedish development cooperation with Ethiopia.</i>	Fantu Cheru Annika Jayawardena Anders Ekbohm Tekeste Negash Arne Bigsten Anette Wilhelmsen Stina Karlton <i>Chair: Kim Forss</i>	Bereket Kebede Gunnar Köhlin Hailu Elias Leif Danielsson
Sextortion: A Violation of Human Rights and an Obstacle to Sustainable Development <i>This study examines sextortion – the abuse of power and position to obtain a sexual benefit – in development assistance as a violation of human rights and, as such, an obstacle to sustainable development.</i>	Maria Stern Johanna Förberg Jenny Grönwall Anders Kompass <i>Chair: Sara Johansson de Silva</i>	Åsa Eldén Elin Bjarnegård Dolores Calvo Silje Lundgren Sofia Jonsson
Filling the Global Gender Data Gap: Assessing Values and Norms Related to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights to Guide Sweden's International Support <i>A study of values and norms relating to gender and to sexual and reproductive health and rights, to provide guidance for Sweden's international development cooperation.</i>	Åsa Andersson Ben Cislighi Amy Alexander Jonathan Gunthorp <i>Chair: Julia Schalk</i>	Anna-Mia Ekström Bi Puranen Anna Kågesten Karin Båge Jesper Sundewall Helena Litorp Olalekan Uthman
Effects of Swedish and International Democracy Support <i>A quantitative study of the effects of Swedish and international democracy assistance.</i>	Helena Bjuremalm Jörg Faust Carl-Henrik Knutsen Maria Perrotta Berlin Sten Widmalm <i>Chair: Staffan I. Lindberg</i>	Miguel Niño-Zarazúa Rachel M. Gisselquist Kunal Sen Maria Lo Bue

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EBA REPORTS 2019

The EBA decides independently what studies are to be undertaken. The authors of EBA Reports bear sole responsibility for the analyses, conclusions and recommendations they contain. Final quality assurance is the responsibility of the Expert Group.

- 2019:09 Democracy in African Governance: Seeing and Doing it Differently**
Göran Hydén with assistance from Marina Buch Kristensen
- 2019:08 Fishing Aid: Mapping and Synthesising Evidence in Support of SDG 14 Fisheries Targets**
Gonçalo Carneiro, Raphaëlle Bisiaux, Mary Frances Davidson and Tumi Tómasson, with Jonas Björnstedt
- 2019:07 Applying a Masculinities Lens to the Gendered Impacts of Social Safety Nets**
Meagan Dooley, Abby Fried, Ruti Levto, Kate Doyle, Jeni Klugman and Gary Barker
- 2019:06 Joint Nordic Organisational Assessment of the Nordic Development Fund (NDF)**
Stephen Spratt, Ellis Lawlor, Kris Prasada Rao and Mira Berger
- 2019:05 Impact of Civil Society Anti-Discrimination Initiatives: A Rapid Review**
Rachel Marcus, Dhruva Mathur and Andrew Shepherd
- 2019:August Migration and Development: the Role for Development Aid**
Robert E. B. Lucas (jointly with the Migration Studies Delegation, Delmi; published as Delmi Research Overview 2019:5)
- 2019:04 Building on a Foundation Stone: the Long-Term Impacts of a Local Infrastructure and Governance Program in Cambodia**
Ariel BenYishay, Brad Parks, Rachel Trichler, Christian Baehr, Daniel Aboagye and Punwath Prum
- 2019:03 Supporting State Building for Democratisation? A Study of 20 years of Swedish Democracy Aid to Cambodia**
Henny Andersen, Karl-Anders Larsson and Joakim Öjendal
- 2019:02 Fit for Fragility? An Exploration of Risk Stakeholders and Systems Inside Sida**
Nilima Gulrajani and Linnea Mills
- 2019:01 Scandals, Opinions and Reputation: Development Assistance in a Mediatized Society**
(in Swedish, with a summary in English)
Maria Grafström and Karolina Windell

WORKING PAPERS 2019

EBA Working Papers consist of brief syntheses of current knowledge, reviews and analyses. Interim reports from major projects are also published in this series, as are examined masters theses for which the EBA has acted as assistant supervisor. Working Papers are not subject to quality assurance by the Expert Group.

Blockchain As a Tool in Humanitarian Action – a Brief Overview of Potential Use, May 2019

Anna Bäckman

DEVELOPMENT DISSERTATION BRIEFS (DDBs) 2019

The EBA's DDB series gives newly graduated PhDs an opportunity to summarise their dissertations, with a focus on their relevance to Swedish development cooperation. The aim is to keep the Government, public authorities and other stakeholders updated on both new research and new researchers.

- 2019:03 A Climate for Change? Political Communication and the Prospects for Large-Scale Collective Action on Climate Change**
Stefan Linde
- 2019:02 Collaboration in Forest Governance in Low-Income Countries – Challenges, Lessons from India and Ways Forward** (in Swedish)
Marcus Wangel
- 2019:01 International Acceptance of Climate Security Norms**
Elin Jacobsson

THE EBA PODCAST 2019 (IN SWEDISH)

- Episode 7** – Gender mainstreaming in development assistance
- Episode 8** – Democracy assistance – how does it work?
- Episode 9** – Budget support – the aid modality that worked and went away?
- Episode 10** – What happens when humanitarian needs increase – but funding decreases?
- Episode 11** – Aid history I – From zero to a one per cent target
- Episode 12** – The future of development assistance
- Episode 13** – Aid history II – Conflicts and territorial disputes
- Episode 14** – Almedalen special – What do the parties want to achieve through aid?
- Episode 15** – Almedalen special – Wohlgemüth on where aid is heading
- Episode 16** – Can aid influence migration?
- Episode 17** – Risk and corruption – how to handle them
- Episode 18** – Aid in the fight against discrimination
- Episode 19** – The Nobel Prize – we discuss field experiments
- Episode 20** – Bosnia – successful assistance or stuck in a rut?



Top, from left: Sara Johansson de Silva, Lena Johansson de Chateau and Anders Trojenborg.
Above, from left: Eva Lithman, Torgny Holmgren and Magnus Lindell.



Top, from left: Julia Schalk, Lisa Hjelm and Markus Burman.
Above, from left: Helena Lindholm, Jan Pettersson and Janet Vähämäki. Photos, pp. 28–29: Kristian Pohl.

SEMINARS IN 2019

EBA seminars offer a natural forum for debate on important aid issues. Here, EBA reports are placed in a wider perspective and discussed from both a policy and a practitioner point of view.

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| 14 Jan | Carpe Per Diem – Use and abuse of per diem payments and travel expenses in international development assistance (and what donors can do about it) (in Swedish)
(Working Paper: In Pursuit of Per Diem – Donor and Recipient Practices of Per Diem Payment) |
| 7 Feb | The State of the Underfunded Humanitarian System
(EBA 2018:09) |
| 7 Mar | The Gender Equality Perspective in Swedish Development Assistance (in Swedish)
(EBA 2018:07) |
| 26 Apr | Swedish Aid to Bosnia and Herzegovina – the Case of Inclusive Economic Development
(EBA 2018:10) |
| 24 May | Scandals, Opinions and Reputation: Development Assistance in a Mediatized Society
(in Swedish)
(EBA 2019:01) |
| 28 May | Green Governance – How do we Move from Words to Action? (in Swedish)
(DDB 2019:01, 2019:02, 2019:03) |
| 13 June | Risk Management in Development Cooperation – the Challenge to Simultaneously Act Responsibly and Responsively!
(EBA 2019:02) |
| 18 June | Twenty Years of Aid to Cambodia – What are the Results? (in Swedish)
(EBA 2019:03) |
| 19 Aug | Migration and Development: the Role for Development Aid
(Delmi/EBA 2019:5) |
| 5 Sept | Left Behind – Anti-discrimination in the Fight Against Poverty
(EBA 2019:05) |
| 7 Oct | Towards a More Effective Climate Financing: the Nordic Development Fund Evaluated
(EBA 2019:06) |
| 17 Oct | Enhanced Gender Equality through Social Protection Programmes – What do We Know?
(EBA 2019:07) |
| 6 Nov | Fish Stocks and Aid Flows: Poverty Reduction in Times of Resource Depletion
(EBA 2019:08) |

THE EXPERT GROUP FOR AID STUDIES



HELENA LINDHOLM
Chair

Professor of Peace and Development Research at University of Gothenburg. Research interests include the Palestine question.



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Deputy Chair

Chair of ALNAP, Assoc. Senior Fellow SIPRI. Formerly in charge of Swedish aid to Palestine and head of department at Sida.



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Consultant in evaluation, with broad international experience of evaluating development assistance.



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Member

Exec. Director, SIWI. Previously ambassador, head of department at Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Vice Chair of OECD/DAC.



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Consultant in evaluation and analysis, including for World Bank, UNDP and UNIDO.



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Former Head of International Department, Swedish National Audit Office. Previously Head of Operations at Sida.



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Member

Head of Budget and Programme Performance at International IDEA. Formerly at Sida, incl. as Head of Evaluation.



JULIA SCHALK
Member

Deputy Director, International Department of RFSU. Member of Steering Committee of EuroNGOs network.



JANET VÄHÄMÄKI
Member

Head of Unit, Resources and Development, Stockholm Environment Institute. Formerly at Sida and Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The Expert Group for Aid Studies also includes an expert appointed by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Decisions taken by the Expert Group are carried out by a Secretariat with eight full-time equivalent employees: Anna Bäckman, Jan Pettersson (Managing Director), Lena Johansson de Chateau, Lisa Hjelm, Markus Burman, Mats Hårsmar and Nina Solomin, with one position currently vacant.

The Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA) is a government committee tasked with independently evaluating and analysing Sweden's international development assistance.

Its remit is to contribute to an evidence base for the management of Swedish development cooperation.

The EBA Aid Review is based on the studies published by the EBA over the past year. This is our annual report, available in digital and printed formats and (in Swedish) as an audiobook.

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**EXPERT GROUP
FOR AID STUDIES**