



The Expert Group for Aid Studies

Invitation for proposals: Evaluation of Sweden's application of the Grand Bargain localisation agenda.

The Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA) is a government committee mandated to evaluate and analyse the direction, governance, and implementation of Sweden's official development assistance (ODA). EBA engages researchers and other experts to carry out studies of relevance for policymakers and practitioners.

EBA hereby invites proposals for an evaluation of the localisation agenda within the Grand Bargain agreement on humanitarian action. The focus of the evaluation is on how Sweden has implemented and furthered the localisation agenda, hindrances and enabling factors.

Background and motivation for the study

At the humanitarian summit in Istanbul 2016, donor countries, multilateral organisations and humanitarian organisations agreed on a joint programme to make the international humanitarian system more effective and efficient. Through this '**Grand Bargain**' they agreed to link humanitarian efforts closer to affected communities and people, increase transparency, predictability and flexibility in their work and strive for more long-term, flexible funding of humanitarian work.

A total of nine 'work streams' were initiated to achieve improvements in various aspects. Today, work has been discontinued within some of them:

1. Greater transparency
2. More support and funding tools for local and national responders
3. Increase the use and coordination of cash-based programming (discontinued)
4. Reduce duplication and management costs with periodic functional reviews (discontinued)
5. Improve joint and impartial needs assessments
6. A participation revolution: include people receiving aid in making the decisions which affect their lives

7. Enhanced quality funding (discontinued)
8. Harmonise and simplify reporting requirements (discontinued)
9. Enhance engagement between humanitarian and development actors (discontinued)

Five years after the bargain, in June 2021, efforts were made to renew the agreement and the "Grand Bargain 2.0" was signed. Workstreams where results have not yet been achieved were agreed to be pursued further. To improve upon experienced inefficient processes, a new working mode was introduced. By creating somewhat looser 'caucuses' consisting of smaller sets of actors collaborating on key issues the aim is to reach better results faster. Clear criteria on how to form such a caucus have been outlined and agreed.

A major shift emerging from the Grand Bargain 2.0 is, however, that efforts are focusing on two major remaining priorities:

- a) A critical mass of quality funding is reached that allows an effective and efficient response, ensuring visibility and accountability;
- b) Greater support is provided for the leadership, delivery and capacity of local responders and the participation of affected communities in addressing humanitarian needs.

These two priorities presuppose that most of what was initially agreed upon in the Grand Bargain actually has been achieved, such as risk sharing, transparency, accountability. It is nevertheless evident that these two areas are seen as particularly relevant and important to reach the increased humanitarian effectiveness that the Grand Bargain is all about. In these two areas, progress has been especially slow.

Sweden's current and previous contributions

Regarding the priority "Quality funding comprises enough multiannual, predictable and flexible funding provided timely for humanitarian needs to be fulfilled", Sweden has been active in this field as somewhat of a champion and example by signing framework agreements with key international actors, such as the WFP or the Red Cross movement, for these to have almost immediate access to financial resources when and where needs occur. The Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) provides core support to the UN humanitarian fund, CERF, and Sida currently provides support to 16 humanitarian UN-coordinated funds where donor contributions are pooled at national level. Financing such funds is held to be ideal, since it allows decision making on site based on immediate assessments of needs, while at the same time effectively coordinate various donors. It may be added that Sweden, within the Grand Bargain, has been co-coordinator of work streams 7 and 8 on quality funding.

It is, on the contrary, less evident how Sweden has been able to respond to the other priority concerning localisation and active participation by affected groups and communities. Localisation may be about allowing local actors to take greater part in needs assessments, or that resources to a larger extent reach organisations that represent vulnerable and marginalised groups. Basically, the problem is that international actors too

often take an executive role in situations where they are unfamiliar with the context, instead of acting as facilitators and delegate decisions to local, more anchored organisations. To a large extent it is about having the courage to step out of well rehearsed and traditional roles.

In its report to the parliament (Prop 2021/22:1) the Swedish government reported the following about its achievements in the area of localisation (our translation):

”The development towards increased influence for crisis affected people is partly advancing. Several humanitarian organisations supported by Sweden report of inclusion of crisis affected people in planning, implementation and monitoring of humanitarian interventions. Good examples of collaboration with crisis affected groups are found in Afghanistan, the Centralafrican Republic and South Sudan. At the same time, feedback loops from crisis affected people may be improved, through a more proactive treatment, according to an evaluation of Sida’s humanitarian partners” (p 37).

Localisation in the humanitarian system

‘Localisation’ is an old objective within the international context, predating the humanitarian summit and the Grand Bargain. Over earlier decades, it used to be framed in wordings like ‘strengthening local capacities’, ‘partnerships with local organisations’ or ‘working in solidarity’. When emerging in the context of the Grand Bargain, the localisation agenda is seen to address no less than seven different types of challenges (van Brabant and Patel, 2017):

- Excessive centralisation of the humanitarian system when it comes to strategic, financial and operational decisions;
- An financially overstretched system with humanitarian needs increasing faster than funding, widening the financial gap;
- International organisations slower to respond to crises, and leaving communities at risk, much faster than local and national actors;
- The control over financial flows gives international actors a structural dominance over national actors;
- An oligopolic situation where the first receivers of humanitarian aid has become too few – a handful of UN bodies and international NGOs;
- Over time, the system will be financially unsustainable, dominated as it is by donors from Western countries;
- A system perceived as overly paternalistic, driven by an international elite, the system is perceived as politically unsustainable for the future.

Bringing national and local actors to the forefront may, it is believed, open for improved solutions to these challenges. Non-western donors may increase their contributions, needs assessments, design of interventions and decision making may be more locally anchored and thus more realistic.

However, the current discussion on ‘localisation’ is not a unitary one, as different interpretations of the concept exist. Differences partly depend on which of the above problems the localisation is supposed to solve. A distinction may be made between a more

technically oriented decentralisation reading of the concept and more politically loaded transformation reading, dealing with power structures. The first primarily deals with the problem of excessive centralisation of the system, arguing that decentralised decision making will be more cost effective, since contextual knowledge would be higher.

The second interpretation starts from a more systemic and historical perspective, arguing that the prevailing dominance and control by international actors hinders national and local capacity to be built; hinders local control and maybe also discourages non-Western potential donors to contribute. Hence, this is a more comprehensive and intrinsically political interpretation of the localisation agenda originating in discussion about the problem of political and financial non-sustainability of the system.

It should be added that there are also concerns and potential problems with a localisation agenda. Some of these concerns are for instance:

Capacity constrains: national actors are seen to be too slow, and not able to scale up quickly enough in a crisis;

Fiduciary risks: national and local actors do not always have systems in place that allow them to absorb sudden large inflows of finance with enough control;

Efficiency constraints: National and local actors have less access to technical expertise and globally acquired experiences;

Humanitarian principles: In situations of conflict, it may be harder for national actors to live up to fundamental humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence.

There are, in turn counter arguments to all of these, so the theoretical debate is ongoing. Actors who have reservations about relying too much on national and local actors tend to adhere more to the decentralisation interpretation of localisation. Those who lean towards the transformation interpretation tend to give more validity to the counterarguments.

A different set of hindrances to increased localisation concerns more practical aspects of donor activities. It may be that there are legal restrictions in donor countries that limit distribution of funds to local partners. It may be that limited administrative capacity within donor organisations hinder collaboration with too many different partners. It may be that counter-terrorism legislation and financial restrictions hinder collaboration with organisations in countries where terrorist organisations are active. Or it may simply be that domestic constituencies are uneasy to see others than their own national organisations dealing with funds.

Hence, problems in implementing the localisation agenda may be grounded in many different reasons. This may be easier said than done, and it would be valuable to know more about why this seems to be so.

Previous studies and evaluations

Apart from general evaluations of humanitarian interventions and programs, there seems to be a dearth of specific evaluations of efforts to achieve localisation of humanitarian action. However, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has commissioned a literature study on the theme (Barbelet et al. 2021). This literature study investigate what evidence there is on various aspects of localisation. It also includes a list of academic and grey literature

comprising some 135 publications. This may provide valuable input to the current evaluation.

Aim and questions

The aim of this study is to evaluate Sweden's application of the decentralisation agenda as it is expressed in the Grand Bargain, including the Grand Bargain 2.0. The following questions shall guide the inquiry:

- a) What efforts and interventions have been undertaken by Sweden to implement and further the localisation agenda within its humanitarian work? What does this imply for Sweden's interpretation of the agenda? More specifically: what problem does Sweden search to deal with in applying the agenda?
- b) What results have these interventions led to and how can such outcomes be explained? More specifically: what factors enable or hinder the furthering of the localisation agenda within Swedish humanitarian work?
- c) What lessons can be learned for future efforts to further the localisation agenda?

To answer question a) a mapping of Swedish interventions and programs is required, together with qualitative analysis of program content. To answer question b) some evaluation method for establishing results will be required, since this is a question of causality. Question c) requires analysis and reflection building on the findings from the earlier questions.

Study design

The proposal should include a theoretical and methodological framework. It is up to the authors to further develop the study design, methods, and delimitations but the choices should be clearly justified.

It will be an important starting point to map, synthesise and analyse existing relevant knowledge and insights. Various research methods and approaches may be applicable and innovative designs are encouraged as long as they are well suited to the task.

The evaluation has the objective to contribute to learning. This underlines the importance of attempting to understand work within the area, how it resonates with current knowledge, and its relevance, coherence, and impact in country contexts. To stimulate learning, EBA welcomes proposals that engage key audiences during the process.

If needed, the evaluator(s) may refine or adjust the formulation of the questions after the award decision, in dialogue with EBA and the study's reference group.

General structure and conditions

EBA works under what is termed "double independence". This means that EBA defines which questions and areas are to be studied, independently of the Swedish MFA. At the

same time, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations in each study are the responsibility of the author(s).

For all studies, EBA sets up a reference group consisting of experts in the field of study (members are designated by EBA in dialogue with the authors). The overall purpose of the reference group is to strengthen the quality of the report. The group will be chaired by one of the EBA members. For more information about EBA's work with reference groups, and about our understanding of quality in conducting studies, see the reference group guidelines and the process quality policy at our website: www.eba.se

The evaluator(s) shall deliver a report (in English) presenting the results from the study to be published in the EBA report series (www.eba.se/en/reports/). The length of the report should not exceed 25 000 words (about 50 A4-pages).

The evaluator(s) shall present preliminary results at a pre-launch meeting/workshop with the MFA, Sida, and EBA, and present the final report at a public dissemination event, preliminary to be held in Stockholm (details to be specified in consultation with EBA at a later stage).

Intended users

The primary target audience for this evaluation include those who work with humanitarian issues at the MFA, Sida, Swedish missions abroad, and in civil society organisations. The study is also expected to be of interest to foreign aid donors, and foreign civil society organisations.

The primary target audiences (MFA and Sida) will be invited to participate in the study's reference group in order to ensure the opportunity for process learning and simultaneous feedback on the study process and results.

Procurement procedure, budget, and timetable

The procedure will be a restricted procedure in two stages.¹ At both stages, tenderers are expected to disclose potential conflicts of interest pertaining to members in the evaluation team, as this may be a ground for exclusion of a proposal.

First stage: Application to submit tenders

All suppliers have the right to apply to submit tenders (expression of interest). EBA will invite five (5) suppliers to submit tenders.

Applications to submit tenders shall be registered at the tender portal Kommers Annons eLite www.kommersannons.se/elite, no later than 14 October 2022. The application shall contain:

1. CV of the principal investigator.

¹ The Public Procurement Act (2016:1145), chapter 6, section 3.

2. A list of the principal investigator's most relevant publications (at most 10 studies from the last 10 years are to be listed).
3. Preliminary team (if more than one author. Described using at most 300 words.).
4. Three sample studies conducted by members of the proposed team. At least one shall have been authored by the principal investigator. Note that the studies should be sent in as files, not as links in a document.
5. A short account for how, according to the authors, respective study has contributed to new, reliable knowledge of relevance for this evaluation (at most 300 words, i.e. 100 words per study).

Applicants are kindly asked not to submit any unsolicited material.

Selection of applicants to invite to submit tenders will be based on the submitted material assessed against sub-criteria 1-4 of criterion 2 (see the table at the end of this document). Main weight will be put on the principal investigator's experience and competence, and on how this is complemented by functions and competencies in the preliminary team.

Suppliers must submit a self-declaration in the form of a European Single Procurement Document (ESPD) by filling in the tender form at www.kommersannons.se/elite. Please make sure enough time is allocated for completing the ESPD form when submitting the expression of interest.

Second stage: Submission of tenders

Selected suppliers are invited to submit a full proposal. The proposal shall be written in English and no longer than 15 pages. The proposal shall include a detailed presentation of study design, methods used, and delimitations. Choices made shall be clearly justified. The proposal shall also include a presentation of the members of the evaluation team, a detailed schedule, allocation of time and tasks between the members of the group, and a budget (stated in SEK, including price per hour for each team member).

Tenderers shall give an account of all potential conflicts of interest pertaining to members in the evaluation team, as this may be a ground for excluding tenders. The maximum cost for this evaluation is SEK 1 800 000 excl. VAT. The budget shall be denominated in SEK. The budget shall enable three to four meetings with the study's reference group (to be appointed by EBA following dialogue with the authors), a workshop in Stockholm, and participation at the launching event. The reference group will meet in Stockholm, but one or two meetings may be conducted by video link. As appendices to the proposal shall be included: (i) CVs; (ii) at most three sample studies (reports or articles) carried out by members of the proposed team. At least one shall have been authored by the principal investigator. These studies may be the same as or different from the ones in the first stage; (iii) A brief account for how, according to the authors, respective study has contributed to new, reliable, knowledge of relevance for this evaluation (at most 300 words, i.e. 100 words per study, may be the same as or different from the application to submit tenders).

The proposal shall be registered at the tender portal Kommers Annonns eLite www.kommersannons.se/elite, no later than 30 November 2022. Tenderers are advised to monitor the tender portal regularly, as it is not possible to guarantee the receipt of e-mails.

Proposals shall be valid until 31 March 2023.

Questions to EBA during the process

During the procurement process, EBA is not permitted to discuss documentation, tenders, evaluation, or any such questions with tenderers in a way that benefits one or more tenderers. All questions shall be sent to the Questions and Answers function on the procurement portal Kommers Annons eLite, www.kommersannons.se/elite. Questions and answers to questions are published anonymously and simultaneously to everyone registered for the procurement.

Questions related to the first stage may be posed until 7 October 2022.

Questions related to the second stage may be posed until 22 November 2022.

Preliminary timetable

Last day to apply to submit tenders	14 October 2022
Invitation to (5) suppliers to submit tenders	28 October 2022 (at the latest)
Last day to submit tender	30 November 2022
Decision by EBA	December 2022
Contract signed	January 2023
Presentation of preliminary findings	November 2023
Final report delivered	Q1 2024
Launch event	Q2 2024

Selection of proposals in the second stage

An assessment group comprising members of EBA will assess proposals received based on the relationship between price and quality. The following criteria will be used when assessing proposals received:

- Quality of proposal, in terms of design, methods, and plan for implementation (weight: 50 per cent).
- Experiences and qualifications of team members in the areas of interest (weight: 40 per cent).
- Cost (weight: 10 per cent).

See the table at the end of this document for the factors that will be considered under each of these three criteria. The assessment of each proposal will be based on the material submitted by the tenderer by the end of the bidding period.

Confidentiality

After the communication of EBA's selection, all submitted proposals will become official documents, meaning that the Swedish principle of public access to official records applies. Sentences, sections, or paragraphs in a document may be masked in the public version if "good reasons" (thorough motivations in terms of causing economic damage to the company) can be provided and deemed valid. The tenderers are fully responsible for making their claims of confidentiality.

About the Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA)

The Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA) is a government committee mandated to evaluate and analyse the direction, governance, and implementation of Sweden's official development assistance. The aim is to contribute to an efficient implementation of well-designed aid. EBA focuses primarily on overarching issues within Swedish development assistance, not on individual projects. EBA consists of an expert group of ten members, an expert from the MFA, and a secretariat placed in Stockholm.

In 2022, the Expert Group consists of: Helena Lindholm (chair), Johan Schaar (vice chair), Kim Forss, Torgny Holmgren, Sara Johansson De Silva, Staffan I. Lindberg, Magnus Lindell, Joakim Molander, Julia Schalk, Janet Vähämäki and Anders Trojenborg (adjunct expert from the Swedish MFA).

References

Barbelet, V., G. Davies, J. Flint and E. Davey (2021): Interrogating the evidence base on humanitarian localisation: A literature Study. HPG Literature review, ODI, London

Grand Bargain 2.0 (2021) Endorsed framework and annexes, Interagency Standing Committee; accessible at: [The Grand Bargain \(Official website\) | IASC \(interagencystandingcommittee.org\)](https://www.interagencystandingcommittee.org/)

Van Brabant, K. and S. Patel (2017): "Understanding the localisation debate", Global Mentoring Initiative, Begnins, Switzerland.

Appendix 1 – Assessment criteria

Criteria	1. Quality of proposal in terms of design, methods, and plan for implementation. (Weight: 50 per cent)	2. Experiences and qualifications of team members in the areas of interest. (Weight: 40 per cent)	3. Cost. (Weight: 10 per cent)
Scale	<p>Criterion 1 and 2 are graded on a scale of 0–5 where: 5=Extraordinary or exceeds all expectation; 4=Very good; 3=Good; 2=Fair, reasonable, in line with what can be expected; 1=Sub-standard; 0=Not applicable/not possible to assess. Sub-criteria are assessed in falling importance according to number but are not graded numerically.</p> <p>Each criterion is finally weighted (0.50*Criterion 1+ 0,40*Criterion 2 + 0,10*Criterion 3) to obtain a total grade in the interval [0, 5].</p>		Continuous grade [0,5] as a share of the lowest bid offer, where the lowest bid is graded 5.
Specifications <i>(numbered in order of importance)</i>	<p>1. Does the study design, i.e. suggested methodological approach and plan for implementation, make it possible to fulfill the study's purpose?*</p> <p>2. Have the approach and method(s) been described in a specific and transparent manner?</p> <p>3. Have important or pertinent limitations with the method been described and discussed clearly?</p> <p>4. Will the study design enable conclusions that can be expected to form the basis of use, learning, and reflection among the study's target groups?</p> <p>5. Does the proposal have a thorough and realistic workplan and timeline?</p> <p>* An overall assessment that the evaluation is feasible to implement and that it can be implemented without any ethical breaches occurring is presupposed. While such an appraisal is required, it is not included as a separate sub-criterion.</p>	<p>The team participants' experience of:*</p> <p>1) Evaluation or research in areas related to the topic, humanitarian aid, localisation/decentralisation of humanitarian work; local participation in development or other social processes;</p> <p>2) Advanced evaluation or research methodology;</p> <p>3) Development cooperation, especially in the field of humanitarian aid;</p> <p>4) Quality of previous evaluations/studies conducted by team members (based on studies attached to the proposal);</p> <p>5) Academic merits of the team members;</p> <p>6) The team members' engagement in the evaluation as specified in the proposal's work and time plan and as shares of proposed budget</p> <p>* Sufficient language skills in relation to the needs of the assignment are required to be shown and are therefore not specified as a separate sub-criterion.</p>	Total price in SEK (VAT excl.)