

The Expert Group for Aid Studies

Invitation for proposals: Evaluation of Sida's application of multidimensional poverty analyses

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 works with 'dual independence'. This means that EBA independently defines what issues to explore and which studies to commission, while the author(s) of each report is responsible for the content and the conclusions.

EBA hereby invites proposals for an evaluation of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency's (Sida) work with multidimensional poverty analyses. The aim of the evaluation is to assess whether, and to what extent, Swedish bilateral aid is consciously influenced and/or steered towards poverty reduction interventions using multidimensional poverty analyses.

Background

The overarching objective of Swedish development cooperation, decided by the Swedish parliament, is to 'create opportunities for better living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression'. Hence, poverty reduction is at the centre of Swedish aid. However, OECD-DAC peer reviews of Swedish aid have repeatedly criticised the multitude of guiding and steering signals. Steered by so-called geographic or thematic strategies, Swedish aid has a large number of stated objectives at the strategy level (totalling over 600).

The development cooperation strategies decided by the Swedish government are underpinned by preparatory documents from Sida. Since 2017, these preparatory documents shall be based on a multidimensional poverty analysis (MDPA). The MDPA analytical tool was initiated and designed by Sida itself and has ever since been used as the agency's common analytical framework. The tool expresses Sida's view on poverty. A relevant question is how effective this mechanism is in contributing to a poverty reduction focus of bilateral Swedish development cooperation?

Up until today, some 30 different MDPAs, including one at global level, have been conducted and put to use (see <https://www.sida.se/en/for-partners/methods-materials/poverty-toolbox>). The application of the MDPA analysis differs from one embassy to another. In some places the MDPA are brief, annually updated, documents referred to in daily work. In other places the MDPA are substantive consultancy products,

sometimes rarely referred to. Some MDPA reports are analytically strong, others more descriptive and without clear conclusions. Efforts have recently been undertaken by Sida's Chief Economist Team (CET) to streamline practices modelled on best practice, to widen the analysis and to enhance its practical utility.

A multidimensional perspective on poverty has gained wide and increasing influence internationally. The theoretical foundation was formulated by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, who defined poverty as deprivation of people's capabilities to achieve what they have reason to value in their lives, something that may shift between societies and individuals. Such a capabilities' perspective implies that poverty may not be reduced to the lack of monetary means. Poverty is a condition that influences most aspects of life, and the factors driving poverty run deeper than the issue of short-term access to resources. Poverty is furthermore a dynamic process, implying that people can move in and out of poverty over time. Sida applies four different dimensions in its definition of poverty:

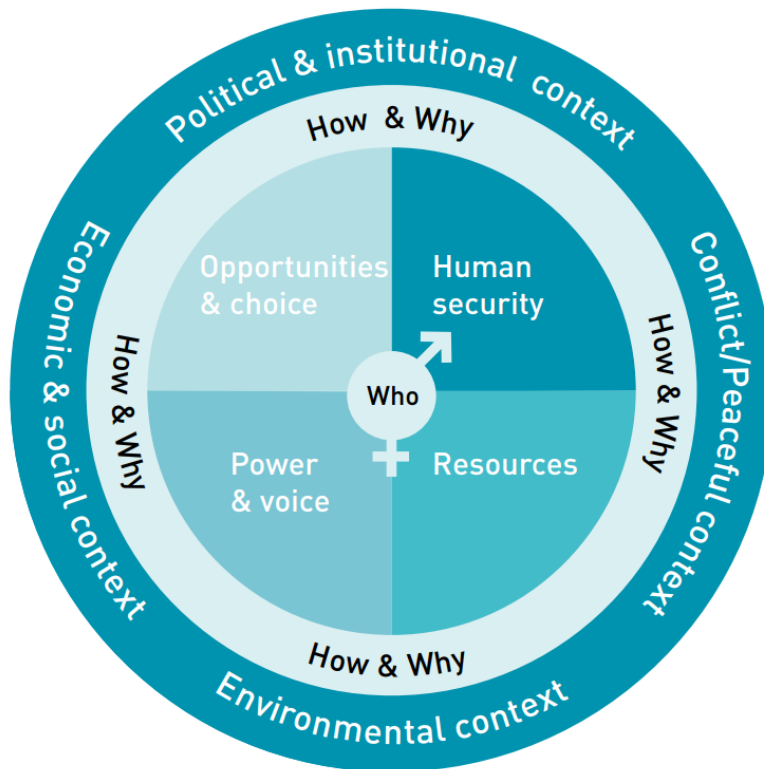
Poor in terms of resources means not having access to, or power over, resources that can be used to sustain a decent living standard, meet basic needs and improve one's life. Resources can be both material and non-material: a decent income or physical and human capital, such as being educated or having professional skills, being healthy, having agricultural tools or a cart to transport goods.

Poor in terms of opportunities and choice refers to one's possibilities to develop and/or use the resources available to move out of poverty. Access to productive employment, education, health clinics, infrastructure, energy, markets and information affect the choices available and opportunities to escape from poverty.

Poor in power and voice relates to people's ability to articulate their concerns, needs and rights in an informed way, and to take part in decision-making. Discrimination and violation of human rights are important obstacles. Power is a relational concept concerning i.e., socio-cultural hierarchies including gender, age, caste, class, religion, ethnicity and sexual identity.

Poor in terms of human security means that physical, sexual, and/or psychological violence and insecurity are constraints to different groups and individuals' possibilities to exercise their human rights and to find paths out of poverty.

Sida's MDPA analysis starts with the question of who the poor are? When identified, the analysis continues to identify how these groups and individuals fare along the four dimensions, and furthermore how the context – in terms of politics and institutions, economic and social conditions, conflicts, and environmental factors – influences the lives of people living in poverty. This is graphically described in the following way:



This 'inclusive' approach is understood by EBA to, at least in parts of Sida, be regarded as both the strongest and the weakest part of the analytical framework. The strength lies in that all Sida's activities may be framed in a poverty reducing perspective. The weakness is that almost any kind of intervention may be legitimised from an indirect, or claimed, connection to poverty reduction. This weakness implies that Sida's steering towards effective poverty reduction may be severely constrained.

Additional potential weaknesses of the model relate to the ability of measuring various dimensions (access and reliability of data) and the need to assess the relative importance of each dimension.

What is the purpose of the MDPA?

A key question is what the ultimate purpose of performing MDPAs is. This may be somewhat vague for outsiders. Is this an instrument for strategic planning of interventions or, alternatively, a mechanism mainly used for internal building of competence? Is it a way for the agency to put focus on the overriding objective of Swedish development cooperation (poverty reduction), given the multitude of government priorities? Or is it a tool for building internal consensus around the general direction of programs, and thereby train its staff in contextual analysis? Is it an instrument for increasing the shares of interventions directly benefitting people living in poverty, or to make aid more effective in reducing poverty (which may include indirect effects)?

This evaluation starts from Sida's own description of the MDPA as an analytical tool for systematic multidimensional poverty analysis. Hence, it should be understood as an (indirect) steering instrument, where the purpose is to achieve an agency-wide framework for how poverty ought to be understood and poverty reduction efforts programmed. The model stipulates, according to a set of documents 'Sida's view on poverty'. The analytical tool as such is composed by two components:

1. A normative perspective as to what a multidimensional poverty analysis ought to include and assess.
2. A guidance as to how the analysis may and ought to be conducted.

The instrument is normative and guiding. The object of analysis will generally be a specific geography, e.g., a country, but may also be applied to global strategies.

“The main operative purpose of multidimensional poverty analysis is to ensure the continued relevance of Sida’s contribution portfolio given how poverty is manifested and experienced, who is poor, in what dimensions, the underlying causes of poverty, risks and vulnerability.” (Sida, 2017, p 21: *Dimensions of Poverty – Sida’s Conceptual Framework*)

Sida’s ongoing evaluation of its work on poverty

Sida’s evaluation unit (UTV) in collaboration with the thematic and methods unit (INTEM) is currently undertaking an evaluation of Sida’s capacity to work with poverty reduction. The main purpose of that study is to assess whether Sida’s working processes lead to evidence-based poverty reduction interventions.

Besides this, Sida’s Chief Economist Team (CET) has recently worked with assessments and methodological development of the MDPAs in order to mainstream good examples and practices. New tools have been developed to make the analysis more useful for everyday practice.¹ The CET has in 2024 also extended the MDPA by inclusion of analyses of financial flows to partner countries. This is meant to enable improved understanding of the role of official development assistance (ODA) in addressing poverty in its various dimensions.

Since this evaluation aims at assessing how MDPA influences the overarching steering towards poverty reduction, it will be complementary to the one conducted by Sida.

Evaluation aim and questions

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess whether, and to what extent, Swedish bilateral aid is consciously influenced and/or steered by multidimensional poverty analyses. Such steering can, for instance, result in changed financial, geographic, or socio-economic allocations, in changed targeting within already established interventions, or in changes of the understanding of poverty within Sida.

To evaluate an agency-wide, normative, analytical tool for multidimensional poverty analysis, there needs to be both an assessment of the content of the analyses and an assessment of their anchoring within Sida.

The following evaluation questions shall be in focus for the evaluation:

- 1) Has the multidimensional ‘view on poverty’ been institutionalised, and are staff adhering to the MDPA model and process? Does the MDPA practice lead to

¹ The three instructive tools are labelled “How-to-do”, “How-to-analyse” and “How-to-use”. A collection of databases has also been gathered, to reduce time for data gathering.

consensus within Sida as to what constitutes poverty and effective measures to reduce poverty?

- 2) What outcomes have the MDPA led to (in terms of visible outcomes as well as according to the perception among Sida staff)? Have the conducted analyses been practically useful for prioritising – select and deselect – sectors, directions, projects, or areas of work? Have other kinds of outcomes emerged?
- 3) What lessons may be learned as to the merit and value of the MDPA instrument in consciously steering Swedish bilateral aid towards poverty reducing interventions?

Who is this study for? Intended users

The main target group of this evaluation is staff and managers at Sida headquarters and embassies who conduct and work with multidimensional poverty analysis. The study is also meant to inform policymakers at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Implementation and methods

The main objective of the study is to provide grounded, rigorous, and elaborated responses to the evaluation questions. The subject will greatly benefit from conceptual clarity and analysis. Tenderers are encouraged to let their expertise guide the choice of approach in answering the questions (including the design of the analytical framework, specific methodological approach, and delimitations). If needed, the evaluator(s) are given the opportunity to, in dialogue with the study's reference group, somewhat refine or adjust the formulation of the evaluation questions after the award decision.

The existing population of multidimensional poverty analyses should be studied, however the evaluation may focus on a subsample, as proposed by tenderers. One possibility could be to combine a focus on a smaller number (3-8) larger, typical, most similar or most different analyses for in-depth case studies as to their use and application in countries. Field visits are envisaged. Principles and process of case selection should be clearly described.

The period in focus is 2017 – 2024, however, comparisons with earlier periods may be relevant for establishing changes over time.

Multidimensional poverty is at times discussed and contested. Differences may concern notions such as what dimensions to include, weighting of various dimensions, or the issue of cross-context comparisons. The team that undertakes the study ought therefore to undertake conceptual work based on existing literature and research in the field. This would serve to situate the issue of a common view on poverty within Sida, and to analyse the outcomes of MDPA.

The issue of causality should be analysed carefully. Scientific method(s) suited to this purpose must be employed to ensure valid and reliable findings and conclusions, and a high degree of transparency should be applied. Examples of evaluation designs that could be considered are case-based and theory-based approaches, such as theory-driven evaluation (Chen, 1990), contribution analysis (Mayne, 2012), process-tracing

(Beach and Pedersen, 2013) or a combination of statistical and qualitative approaches. Choices regarding study design and specific methods should be carefully motivated.²

After the signing of the contract, EBA will provide the author(s) with more detailed information about the contributions relevant for the study.

It is important that the study contributes to learning for key audiences. This underlines the importance of attempting to understand how and why results have been achieved or not, how contextual factors have played in and how conclusions relate to previous research and evaluations.

While there is no requirement for the main applicant to understand Swedish, the evaluation team should include someone with the ability to analyse documents written in Swedish.

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 EBA's members. See also EBA's Policy and guidelines for quality assurance of studies (<https://eba.se/en/policy-for-quality-assurance/>).

The evaluator(s) shall deliver a report (in English) presenting the results from the study to be published in EBA report series. The length of the report should not exceed 22 000 words (about 45- 50 A4-pages), excluding annexes.

The evaluator(s) shall present the final report at a public dissemination event (details to be specified in consultation with EBA at a later stage).

Procurement procedure, budget, and timetable

The procurement procedure will be a restricted procedure in two stages.³ 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 28 June 2024. The application shall contain:

- CV of the principal investigator
- A list of the principal investigator's most relevant publications (at most 10 studies from the last 10 years are to be listed)
- Preliminary team (if more than one author. Described using at most 300 words.)
At least one team member needs to have knowledge of the Swedish language.

² Chen, H.-T. (1990). *Theory-driven evaluations*. Sage Publications, Inc.; Mayne, J. (2012). "Contribution Analysis: Coming of Age?" *Evaluation* 18(3): 270-280.; Beach, Derek & Pedersen, Rasmus. (2013). *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*. 10.3998/mpub.10072208.

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

- Three full 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.
- 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 1-5 of criterion 2 (see the table at the end of this document). Since the proposed team is preliminary, main weight will be put on the team leader/principal investigator's experience and competence.

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 13 pages. The proposal shall include a detailed presentation of study design, methods used and delimitations. Choices made shall be clearly justified. It is up to the tenderers themselves to choose the design and method of the evaluation. 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).

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 maximum cost for this evaluation is SEK 1 300 000 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), and participation at the launching event. The reference group will meet in Stockholm and/or over video link.

The proposal shall be registered at the tender portal Kommers Annons eLite www.kommersannons.se/elite, no later than 18 August 2024. 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 30 November 2024.

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.

Any questions related to the first stage may be posed until 18 June 2024.

Any questions related to the second stage may be posed until 7 August 2024.

Preliminary timetable

Last day to apply to submit tenders (first stage)	28 June 2024
Invitation to (5) suppliers to submit tenders	5 July 2024
Last day to submit tender	18 August 2024
Decision by EBA	4 September 2024
Contract signed	September 2024
First meeting with reference group	October 2024
Draft report delivered	March 2025
Second meeting with reference group	March 2025
Third meeting with reference group	April 2025
Final report delivered	May 2025
Launch event	Q2 2025

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 and a secretariat placed in Stockholm.

In 2024 the Expert Group consists of: Torbjörn Becker (chair), Malin Oud (vice chair), Jenny Deschamps-Berger, Staffan I. Lindberg, Anders Pedersen, Åsa Regnér, Katarina Tracz, Andreas Wladis.

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>Criteria 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 (numbered in order of importance)	<p>1. Does the study design, i.e. suggested methodological approach and plan for implementation, make it possible to fulfil the study's purpose?*</p> <p>2. Have the approach and method(s) been described in a specific, and transparent manner with conceptual clarity?</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' expertise in:*</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Poverty analysis Evaluation of steering, design and implementation of development cooperation interventions. Advanced research or evaluation methodology. Quality of the studies attached to the proposal. Academic merits of the team members. The team members' engagement in the evaluation as specified in the proposal's work and time plan and as shares of proposed budget. <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.)