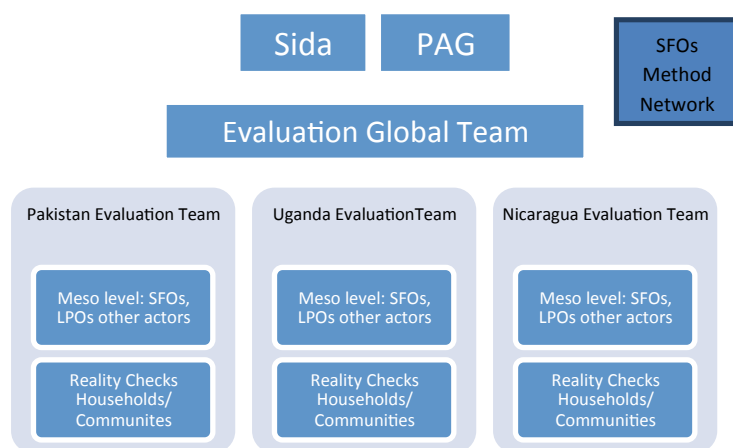


Evaluation of Sida's support to civil society via Swedish CSOs – based on realities of people living in poverty

Context

A consortium of three organisations, SIPU, IDS and IOD PARC, is currently in the second and final phase of the two-year evaluation of the Swedish civil society strategy, as implemented by Swedish framework CSOs (SFOs) and their local partner organisations (LPOs). It synthesises findings from the evaluation's inception phase and two rounds of fieldwork carried out between September 2012 and November 2014 in three countries: Pakistan, Uganda and Nicaragua.

The ToR was developed by Sida together with a Project Advisory Group (PAG) consisting of representatives from selected SFOs and academia. The PAG further represents a larger method network of all SFOs. Communication and dialog with Sida, the PAG and the method network has been an integral approach throughout this evaluation.



Pakistan key themes, geographic sites and Swedish learning partners:

- Workers' rights in Faisalabad City, Olof Palme Centre
- Sexual & Reproductive Health Rights in Chakwal District, Plan Sweden
- Child Rights and Disaster Risk Reduction in Ghotki District, Plan Sweden
- (Child Rights in Hyderabad, Save the Children)

Uganda key themes, geographic sites and Swedish learning partners:

- Post-conflict reconstruction in Pader District, Swedish Mission Council
- Young people's livelihood in Wakiso (Kampala District), WeEffect
- Environmental management in Mbarara District, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation

Nicaragua key themes, geographic sites and Swedish learning partners:

- Indigenous rights in the North Atlantic Autonomous Region, Diakonia
- Food security and sovereignty in the North Pacific, Church of Sweden (via Lutheran World Federation) and WeEffect
- People with Disabilities in Managua, MyRight

Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is "To find out if, how and why/why not the support to civil society actors in developing countries via Swedish CSOs has contributed to the overall objectives of the support by creating conditions to enable poor and discriminated people to improve their living conditions and quality of life. The focus of the evaluation should be on learning aspects."

Focus

The evaluation focus on whether and how the Swedish civil society strategy, as put into practice by SFOs and their LPOs, is *relevant, aligned* and *feasible*. Rather than evaluate the entire strategy it aims:

- To identify the priorities and perceptions of people living in poverty and marginalisation concerning the enabling conditions they need to improve their lives, and perceived changes in these conditions.
- To explore what the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and its guiding principles mean to people living in poverty and marginalisation, and to civil society actors implementing the Swedish CS strategy.
- To infer the plausible contribution and the alignment, relevance and feasibility of SFOs and LPOs to creating the enabling conditions for people to improve their lives.

The evaluation affirms a learning process approach that seeks to involve SFOs/LPOs in dialogue and learning about both substantive issues and the methodology. The original evaluation questions from the ToR evolved during the inception phase into the below six evaluation questions to be answered:

- What are people's perceptions of the changes taking place, or not, in the enabling conditions needed to improve their living conditions – with regard to the key issue (e.g. workers' rights)?
- Which actors, including the Swedish CSOs and their partners, can plausibly be inferred to be contributing positive changes in the enabling conditions?
- What does a human rights-based perspective mean to people living in poverty and marginalisation, in the context of the key issue?
- What is the relevance, alignment and feasibility of the theory of change, strategies and interventions of the Swedish CSOs and their partners?
- What plausible contribution can be inferred to the role of CSO capacity development and enhancement have in the context, and in relation to the key issue?
- What are the theories of change and strategies of Swedish CSOs and their partners, and what do the four human rights principles of participation, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability mean in their practice, in the context of the key issue?

Learning events and dialogue involving Sida, SFOs and LPOs took place in Nicaragua, Pakistan, Sweden and Uganda during each phase of the evaluation.

Methodology

The evaluation used the Reality Check Approach (RCA) to understand the realities and perspectives of people living in poverty and marginalisation. RCA involves researchers immersing themselves in the daily realities of people living in poverty at household and community levels. RCA was combined with 'meso-level' research and 'organizational inquiries' of LPOs and SFOs at local, national and international levels. An evaluation team of 3–4 researchers in each country conducted fieldwork, with one person leading the RCA visits, meso-level studies, organisational inquiries and analysis for each site, leading to 3 themes and 9 research sites per country and involved in total 16 SFOs and their local partners.

The evaluation do not seek to evaluate the performance of SFOs or LPOs, but explore their *theories of change, cooperation strategies, intervention logics and practices* in relation to *the realities and perspectives of people living in poverty*. Using a mix of qualitative and participatory methods, the evaluation assesses the Swedish CS strategy as implemented by SFOs and LPOs, considering coherence across the various levels of cooperation by comparing perspectives 'from below' (RCAs) with the strategies and approaches of these organisations.

It infers the *plausible contributions* of Swedish support to creating enabling conditions for people to improve their lives. It identifies opportunities for achieving greater capacity and alignment so that the prospects of achieving results within the strategy are increased. Understanding how change and *human rights based development* are perceived and supported by different actors, and how they align with the realities, perspectives and strategies of people living in poverty and marginalisation, is the central focus of this evaluation.