

Two Decades of Support to Peacebuilding What have we learnt?

Sida's Support to Peacebuilding in Conflict and Post-Conflict Contexts

The evaluation finds that Sida's approach to peacebuilding is value-based, flexible and adaptive with a strong focus on the role of women. Most Sida supported interventions are relevant to the context. Yet, more can be done to address the root causes of conflict and to support drivers of peace to ensure long-term stability and development in the countries targeted.

The objective of the evaluation was to evaluate Sida's approach to peacebuilding in different conflict and post-conflict contexts from the early 1990s, focusing on what has worked well and what has worked less well. The evaluation uses a timeline and theory-based approach and focus on strategic decisions and choices in programming in four cooperation countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guatemala, Rwanda and Somalia. The evaluation points to several successes in each country as well as a significant continuity of effort. Sida has maintained a broad and active engagement throughout the period evaluated. The evaluation also notes challenges in terms of building sustainable peace, such as difficulties in addressing root causes of conflict due to political constraints.

Sida is recognised for its strong value-based approach to peacebuilding

The evaluation finds that Sida stands out among development partners as a value-based organisation. The value-based approach manifests itself in two ways: (i) in terms of commitment to the peacebuilding agenda from a perspective of equitable access to resources and rights, and (ii) in how Sida approaches peacebuilding and engages with partner countries and other development partners. This has remained constant in all four evaluated countries over the last 20 - 25 years.

The commitment to peacebuilding is driven by a focus on human rights and a rights-based approach as well as a commitment to ensuring an inclusive and durable peace settlement. Similarly, Sida has a strong focus on gender equality and women's empowerment in peacebuilding. At the strategic level, Sweden is a strong advocate for ensuring the rights of marginalised groups and minorities, though the level of practical commitment to this in Sida funded interventions varies.

The value-based approach is evident in Sida's strong commitment to the international peacebuilding agenda and to peace agreements. It is also demonstrated by a commitment to the multilateral system - in particular the United Nations - and to rallying behind the multilaterals' lead role in state-building processes.

The evaluation finds that the value-based approach in terms of commitment to human rights, a rights-based approach as well as commitment to the international agenda and the UN, provides a comparative advantage for Sida in peacebuilding settings.

Sida applies modalities which allow for a high level of adaptability in fragile and conflict affected states, and this contributes to effectiveness

The evaluation finds that Sida has a high degree of adaptability to changing contexts in the countries in which it works. There is evidence to show that development cooperation has been effective when Sida’s so called “classic” development approach has been applied. Characteristics of Sida “classic approach” include long-term engagement with the same partners; a high degree of predictability in the funding to partners; as well as a high level of flexibility allowing for reallocation of funds as contexts or programme results change. The evaluation also finds that there is a strong cooperation and alignment between Sida and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, making it easier for partners to position themselves and cooperate with Sida. Similarly, Sida’s neutrality in most cases makes it a preferred partner, free from economic and security interests, while its values remain clear.

Sida’s approach is however associated with some risk, which merits attention in future Sida programming and implementation. The evaluation finds that high reliance on the same partners (often Swedish non-governmental organisations – NGOs) and limited use of independent monitoring information (e.g. from third party monitoring) to inform portfolio decisions, provides a risk of being caught in a familiar discourse around what is effective and what is not. This can limit opportunities for engaging in new initiatives and approaches with new partners. The evaluation recommends that Sida continues its flexible “classic” approach but also draw on other partners and third-party information to inform decision-making on project funding.

Sida’s support has been relevant to the general context but has had limited impact in terms of addressing root causes of conflict

Sida has identified and prioritised programmes and projects that in one way or other contribute to peacebuilding *writ large*. In other words, they contribute to aspects of development (examples include support to local governance, judicial reform, and return of displaced people) that strengthen inclusion and human rights and mitigate underlying societal weaknesses. The evaluation also finds that Sida and its partners across all four countries have been effective in terms of identifying and prioritising projects that contribute to peacebuilding at the local level. Conversely, the limited strategic guidance on peacebuilding in Swedish country strategies – in particular in the first decade evaluated – means that Sida’s programme officers have had (and to a large extent still have) considerable scope to identify interventions to be supported. As mentioned, Sida has relied heavily on the same partners over time, which has contributed to its effectiveness and contextual and peacebuilding alignment due in part to the knowledge and experience of the partners concerned.

The Swedish country and regional strategies and underlying Sida documentation were relevant to the contexts, but the evaluation finds that they were often not explicit about the root causes of conflict and how the Swedish engagement would address these and contribute to sustainable peace. In other words, the peacebuilding logic or theory of change has often been weak.

A lack of success in addressing root causes of conflict is also evident at the impact level. Overall, none of the countries evaluated have seen a significant change in the root causes of conflict over the period evaluated. In other words, the root causes are still present. This, of course, is a general

problem facing the whole of the development community, and where the commitment of national actors is even more critical for success. In many ways, the partner countries are still facing situations that can be described as “negative peace” with lower levels of political violence but with conflict risks still present. While this evaluation demonstrates how resilient root causes of conflict are, it also suggests that Sida should further enhance its focus on drivers of peace and conflict and link these specifically to the expected results of its peacebuilding work. While acknowledging the need to be politically sensitive in certain countries, the evaluation recommends that theories of change should be made explicit and explain how Sida will work with drivers of peace and target root causes of conflict.

Strong focus on the role of women in particular, and to a lesser degree marginalised groups, in peacebuilding

The degree of theory of change alignment with women’s and marginalised groups’ rights and needs was found to be high overall, albeit with some differences across the targeted countries. In particular when it comes to women’s rights, Sida has moved from a focus on women as beneficiaries towards a focus on women’s role in peacebuilding that is aligned with UN Security Resolution 1325. However, the attention to marginalised groups varies with a high emphasis on indigenous people’s rights in Guatemala and a conscious decision not to engage in the issue of marginalisation and ethnicity in Somalia and Rwanda. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sida has supported some local initiatives concerning marginalised groups.

The evaluation finds that Sida has contributed to the improvement of the situation for women in a peacebuilding context, but in terms of overall impact, the indicators remain bleak in most of the countries evaluated. Yet, there are projects targeting women’s role in peacebuilding funded by Sida that have made a difference in the specific area targeted. By and large, however, the impact in terms of ensuring inclusion of the most marginalised is less evident in the evaluation, with the exception of Guatemala.

With human rights as a core value and a specific focus on inclusiveness, the evaluation recommends that the issue of marginalisation – and in the context of peacebuilding marginalisation around ethnicity in particular - becomes a core part of Sida’s peacebuilding work on a par with the focus on women’s rights.

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The evaluation was commissioned by Sida and carried out by an evaluation team from TANA Copenhagen between May 2018 and January 2019. The evaluation team included Erik Bryld (team leader), Julian Brett, Nadia Masri-Pedersen and Cécile Collin. Field visits were made to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guatemala, Rwanda and Somalia. The evaluation can be downloaded from www.sida.se/publications