



2015:36

Sida Decentralised Evaluation

Jethro Pettit
Rosemary McGee
Helen Dixon
Patta Scott-Villiers
Hugh Goyder

Evaluation of the Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations 2010-2014

Final Synthesis Report

Authors: Jethro Pettit, Rosemary McGee, Helen Dixon, Patta Scott-Villiers and Hugh Goyder

The views and interpretations expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.

Sida Decentralised Evaluation 2015:36

Commissioned by Sida, Department for Partnerships and Innovations, Civil Society Unit

Copyright: Sida and the authors

Date of final report: April 2015

Published by Citat 2015

Art. no. Sida61910en

urn:nbn:se:sida-61910en

This publication can be downloaded from: <http://www.sida.se/publications>

SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Address: S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Valhallavägen 199, Stockholm
Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64
E-mail: info@sida.se. Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>

Evaluation of the Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations 2010-2014

Final Synthesis Report

**Final Synthesis Report
April 2015**

**Jethro Pettit
Rosemary McGee
Helen Dixon
Patta Scott-Villiers
Hugh Goyder**

Sida Decentralised Evaluation 2015:36, Sida

There are three other reports related to this report;

Final Country Report - Uganda 2015:37

Final Country Report - Pakistan 2015:38

Final Country Report - Nicaragua 2015:39

Preface

This evaluation was initiated by a call from the Swedish government, in the Strategy for support via Swedish civil society organizations 2010-2014. The purpose of the evaluation was to find out if, how and why/why not Sweden's support to civil society actors in developing countries had contributed to the overall objectives of the support, by creating conditions to enable people living in poverty and marginalisation to improve their living conditions and quality of life. The focus of the evaluation was on learning aspects.

In order to get new perspectives and reach further than evaluations normally do, Sida had the ambition to be innovative, to experiment and seek information in new ways, combining conventional evaluation methods with new ones such as the Reality Check Approach. The chosen methodology which evolved during the process, through trials, practice and dialogue with stakeholders, gave rise to high stakeholder expectations but also to much discussion and also some differences in understanding how the methods could be used. The original research questions were redesigned to fit new approaches, giving the evaluation a wider focus than initially envisaged.

It has been a challenging but interesting journey for all parties involved, to keep momentum and to finalize this multi-year process. Looking back we are convinced that new ideas and thoughts emerge when we are stepping out of our comfort zones and that divergence of opinions also provokes development and learning. Sida would like to thank the evaluation team for their patience and efforts. Sida would also like to thank the Project Advisory Group which played a crucial role, from strategic discussions to reading and commenting on drafts on several occasions. The group consisted of representatives of the Swedish framework organisations, Sida colleagues and academic expertise.

Some of the questions we raised were; What does a human rights-based perspective mean to people living in poverty? Are the theories of change, strategies and interventions of Swedish CSOs and their partners relevant for people living in poverty? The final product provides interesting and thought-provoking reading, it sparks reflection and give rise to further questions to be discussed. We hope you will find the findings of the evaluation useful and that they will lead to further development and innovation.

Charlotta Norrby
Head of Civil Society Cooperation
Sida

Acknowledgements

This report was compiled by Jethro Pettit, Rosemary McGee, Helen Dixon, Patta Scott-Villiers and Hugh Goyder, with extensive contributions from Eburne Larracoechea and Salvador Garcia (Nicaragua), Mir Quasmi and Samia Raoof Ali (Pakistan), and Josephine Ahikire, Richard Ssewakiryanga and Eberhard Gohl (Uganda), as well as others who helped with logistics and research.

This report has been quality assured by Professor David Lewis (London School of Economics), who reviewed it according to the OECD/DAC's Evaluation Quality Standard checklist. The report was also edited by professional external editor Karen Brock (Green Ink). The comments received from the QA adviser and external editor have been addressed by the evaluation team.

We are grateful for guidance and support from Karin Metell Cueva and Christian Carlbaum (SIPU), Elisabeth Berg Khan (Sida), Sadie Watson (IOD PARC), David Lewis (LSE) and to all the members of the Programme Advisory Group and Sida Steering Group (See Annex 8).

Above all, we would like to thank the families and communities who so generously hosted and opened their lives to us, and to the staff of national and local NGOs in Nicaragua, Pakistan and Uganda and their Swedish CSO partners who willingly gave their time and ideas to this study.

Further information about this evaluation is available on the study's website:
<http://sidacivilsocietyeval.wordpress.com>

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	5
Table of Contents.....	6
Abbreviations and Acronyms	7
A Word on Terminology	8
Executive Summary	9
1 Introduction and Background.....	17
2 Methodology and Process	24
3 Realities, Perceptions and Theories of Change	30
4 Human Rights Based Approach – Meanings and Practices	47
5 Plausible Contributions of SFOs and LPOs	64
6 Relevance, Alignment and Feasibility	75
7 Conclusions and Recommendations	87
Annex 1-3 Country Reports- Nicaragua, Uganda and Pakistan	98
Annex 4 Team Organisation and Management	99
Annex 5 Purposive Sampling.....	101
Annex 6 Theories of Change and Logics of Intervention	103
Annex 7 Terms of Reference.....	108
Annex 8 Expected Results, Methodology Aims and Evaluation Questions	125

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFC	adolescent-friendly centre
CBO	community based organisation
CoS	Church of Sweden
CS	civil society
CSO	civil society organisation
DRR	disaster risk reduction
EQ	evaluation question
FECONORI	Federación de Asociaciones de Personas con Discapacidad
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
IAS	International Aid Services
IAS(U)	International Aid Services (Uganda)
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IOD PARC	International Organisation Development
LEF	Labour Education Foundation
LPO	local partner organisation
LQM	Labour Qaumi Movement
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NAPE	National Association of Professional Environmentalists
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OPIC	Olof Palme International Center
PAG	Programme Advisory Group
RBM	results-based management
RC	reality check
RCA	Reality Check Approach
RDPI	Rural Development Policy Institute
SCP	Save the Children Pakistan
SCS	Save the Children Sweden
SFO	Swedish framework organisation
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIPU	Swedish Institute for Public Administration (also known as SIPU International)
SMC	Swedish Mission Council
SRH	sexual and reproductive health
SSA/UHSNET	Shelter and Settlement Alternatives/Ugandan Human Settlements Network
SSNC	Swedish Society for Nature Conservation
ToRs	terms of reference

A Word on Terminology

Throughout this report, we have defined specific meanings for several of the key terms we use.

- CS refers to civil society, defined as the civic or public realm, largely separate from state or market, including formal and informal actors and organisations
- CSO refers to civil society organisations, defined as the full range of actors, organisations and shapers of opinion in the civic sphere, both formal and informal, largely outside the state and market.
- NGO refers to non-governmental organisations, defined as a sub-set of CSOs with particular characteristics, summed up by Lewis:¹ those with formal status, working in the development sphere, usually with links to international cooperation. The terms CSO and NGO are used in this evaluation to refer to these organisations more generally, beyond the Swedish-funded civil society actors supported through the Swedish CS policy² and Swedish CS strategy³.
- SFOs are Swedish CSOs supported by Sida framework agreements within the Swedish CS strategy.
- LPOs are in-country partners of SFOs, any may be working from the local to the national level.
- We use the term *citizen agency* to mean the agency exerted by people when they act to exercise their citizenship as rights holders, in relation to duty bearers. *Citizen agency* is one of “the higher degrees of political autonomy which are entailed by democratic participation in the political process at whichever level.”⁴ By contrast, when people act to satisfy their survival needs or to cope with unforeseen crises, they are said to be exerting *coping agency*.

¹ Lewis, D. (2007), ‘Civil society in African contexts: Reflections on the usefulness of a concept’, *Development in Practice* 33.4: 569–586.

² Government Offices of Sweden (2009b) Pluralism: Policy for Support to Civil Society in Developing Countries within Swedish Development Cooperation, Stockholm: Sida, <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/13/13/60/8c589318.pdf> (Accessed 9 March 2015), p.7.

³ Government Offices of Sweden (2009a) Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations 2010–2014, Stockholm: Sida (UF2009/28632/UP, 10 September 2009).

⁴ Lister, R. (2003) *Citizenship. Feminist Perspectives*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 39, citing Doyal L. and Gough, I. (1991) *A Theory of Human Need*, London: Macmillan

Executive Summary

This report shares findings from a two-year evaluation of the Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations 2010-2014⁵ (henceforth referred to as the Swedish CS Strategy) as implemented by selected Swedish civil society ‘framework organisations’ (SFOs)⁶ and their national partners in three countries – Nicaragua, Pakistan and Uganda. The evaluation was carried out by a consortium of three organisations⁷ in two rounds of fieldwork between March 2013 and October 2014.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The terms of reference (ToRs) for the evaluation state that its purpose is “to find out if, how and why/why not the support to civil society actors in developing countries via Swedish CSOs (SFOs) 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.”

The evaluation used the Reality Check Approach (RCA) to understand ‘from below’ the realities and perspectives of people living in poverty and marginalisation, combined with meso-level inquiries into the efforts of diverse actors – notably the SFOs and local partner organisations (LPOs) funded by Sida – to address these issues ‘from above’. These findings are used to analyse the *relevance*, *alignment* and *feasibility* of the Swedish CS strategy, as formally written and as practiced by SFOs and LPOs.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The study aims to answer the following questions:⁸

⁵ Government Offices of Sweden (2009a) *Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations 2010–2014*, Stockholm: Sida (UF2009/28632/UP, 10 September 2009)..

⁶ SFOs are Swedish CSOs that have a framework agreement with Sida, and framework status under the Swedish CS strategy.

⁷ The Swedish Institute of Public Administration (lead organisation, Sweden), the Institute of Development Studies (UK) and International Organisation Development (UK).

⁸ These seven questions were derived from the terms of reference during round 1, and re-ordered. The order of the original evaluation questions (EQs) is noted in brackets.

- 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 each key issue (e.g. workers' rights, young people's livelihoods)⁹? (EQ1)
- What are the theories of change and strategies of Swedish CSOs and their partners? (EQ6a)
- What does a human rights based perspective mean to people living in poverty and marginalisation, in the context of the key issue? (EQ3)
- What do the four human rights principles of participation, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability mean in practice, in the context of the key issue? (EQ6b)
- Which actors, including the Swedish CSOs and their partners, can plausibly be inferred to be contributing positive changes in the enabling conditions? (EQ2)
- What plausible contribution¹⁰ can be inferred to the role of CSO capacity development and enhancement have in the context, and in relation to the key issue? (EQ5)
- What is the relevance, alignment and feasibility of the theory of change, strategies and interventions of the Swedish CSOs and their partners? (EQ4)

THE EVALUATION AND METHODS USED (SECTIONS 1 AND 2)

Section 1 explains the purpose of the evaluation and introduces the Swedish CS strategy, including the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and the emphasis on capacity building. It defines key terms and the framework for analysis, and presents the EQs in relation to the ToRs.

Section 2 presents the methodology, describing the RCA used with households and communities, the meso-level inquiry used with organisations, the sampling and selection process, methods of analysis and learning, and a timeline of the research.

⁹ 'Key issues' are the thematic programme areas, outcomes and results that have been prioritised by the SFOs in their framework agreement with Sida, and in their partnerships with LPOs.

¹⁰ Identifying clear impact from governance-related aid programmes is complex. This has led to the development of some approaches to evaluation which strive to avoid excessive claims of attributable impact. The term 'plausible contributions' comes from one such approach, contribution analysis.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS (SECTIONS 3, 4 AND 5)

Section 3 presents reality check (RC) findings about people's perceptions of the enabling conditions needed to improve their lives (EQ1), and juxtaposes them with RC and meso-level findings about the SFO and LPO theories of change (EQ6a).

Our findings reflect the realities of *multiple dimensions of poverty and marginalisation*, many of which interact with each other. Against a backdrop of increasingly monetised livelihoods and the privatisation of public services, paid employment and migration play a key role in livelihood strategies, yet neither comes easily or without costs. The realities of people living in poverty and marginalisation are marked by many forms of discrimination, on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, geographic region and disability, amongst others. The quality of education and access to it are both declining rather than improving; this leads people to perceive education as an ever-less promising strategy for overcoming discrimination. Social settings are characterised by dependency on relatively powerful patrons, and vulnerability to natural disasters and climate-related livelihood shocks.

We found some cases where community organisations and CSOs were effectively combating these conditions and mobilising citizens to realise their rights, but also many others where community organising tended to reproduce existing patterns of dependency and discrimination. To varying degrees, many of the people living in poverty that we met suffered from undiagnosed and untreated depression, trauma and mental illness generated by poverty, violence or war, diminishing the likelihood of them mobilising to claim their citizen rights.

People's perceptions of change taking place in the enabling conditions needed to improve their living conditions (EQ1) were both positive and negative. Poverty is clearly cyclical and systemic as well as multidimensional. Small incremental improvements in enabling or living conditions were often wiped out by bigger negative tendencies. Some reported positive changes were attributed to CSO activities (in general), but others happened through luck. Everywhere we went, expectations that government will bring any positive change were very low; in northern Uganda and Nicaragua, the same applied to expectations of CSOs in general. When positive benefits had come from government or CSOs, they were described as gifts rather than entitlements.

Despite these perceptions of little positive change, *people's strategies for change* are multiple, carefully honed, and not without hope, combining hard work, caution, education, migration, and the formation and improvement of associations. Yet we found that the people living in poverty and marginalisation we met were not in general active citizens who readily engage their governments to secure rights with the help of CSOs; instead, they often demonstrated 'rational passivity' towards government, CSOs and other powerful actors, striving to conform to the status quo of

dependency and clientelist relationships, which deliver insecure favours and gifts rather than rights.

Section 4 connects the RC findings to the HRBA, examining what the four HRBA principles of *participation, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability* mean to *people living in poverty and marginalisation* (EQ3), and to *LPOs and SFOs* (EQ6b), and how they are put into practice. Findings on this issue are strongly shaped by country context. There is a clear difference between, on the one hand, people's *awareness* of their rights and how far they are fulfilled or denied, and on the other hand, their *expectations* of fulfilment. Particularly in Uganda and Pakistan, where discrimination emerged as a fact of life, non-discrimination is a distant ideal, or simply unimaginable. Participation, transparency and accountability are familiar ideas to those we interacted with and to the organisations that work with them – although meanings and practices vary widely – but many people in poverty see government decentralisation as something that has decentralised discrimination and *lack* of transparency and accountability, rather than having positively promoted the HRBA principles.

Given the dominance of patronage systems and poor people's reliance on them for survival, participation, transparency and accountability tend to be practised in ways that are in keeping with the norms of patron–client politics, rather than with the rather more idealistic norms pursued by aid programmes. At best, they are put into practice in ways that are a hybrid of both sets of norms, sometimes leading to contradictory outcomes.

The ways that SFOs and LPOs interpret and practice non-discrimination, participation, transparency and accountability have to contend with these different interpretations of meaning, but we found a few striking examples where this was being done very effectively and successfully. But there were other instances where the prevalence of basic needs among the population, the dominance of needs-satisfaction in the activities of CSOs (generally), and the existence of local variants on what the human rights principles mean, led to tensions between rights advocacy and needs-focused service delivery, and between the universal HRBA and local, culturally-rooted priorities. In many cases we also found that the HRBA principles were not applied consistently *within* organisations, even organisations which outwardly advocated or pursued them.

Section 5 responds to the question of the *plausible contribution of CSOs and their partners to positive changes* in the enabling conditions for people living in poverty to improve their lives (EQ2) and the *role of CSO capacity development and enhancement* (EQ5). The section opens by discussing the methodological challenges of identifying the plausible contributions of actors involved in the Swedish CS strategy. It also highlights the fact that, at least in Uganda and Pakistan, the overall conditions for CSOs (generally) contributing to positive change appear to be worsening rather than improving. Nonetheless, plausible contributions to positive

changes in enabling conditions were identified in the areas of legal and policy changes, organisational strengthening, the building of organisational capacities, and direct improvements in living conditions.

Less positively, it was found that in some settings, promoting the voice of people in poverty and marginalisation could put them at risk; and that some of the deeper changes needed for sustained contextual transformation, as distinct from improvements to the welfare of individual people living in poverty, are not being addressed. This is usually for well-founded reasons, which are often political. Another widespread, less positive finding was that the scope of SFOs and LPOs for contributing to positive changes in enabling conditions is significantly constrained by the time requirements and opportunity costs¹¹ of Sida's results-focused aid management system.

Although identifying *the plausible contributions of the Swedish CS strategy's support for CSO capacity development and enhancement* (EQ3) is a complicated task, we found reasonable grounds for inferring a contribution in a number of cases. Sida's support has helped to increase the capacities and awareness needed for realising rights in Nicaragua and Uganda. Some SFOs have contributed significantly to developing leadership capacity in LPOs, including by working to embed in them the principles of participation, transparency, accountability and non-discrimination, and then giving the LPOs progressively more space to develop and lead their own strategies.

In Pakistan, implementation of the Swedish CS strategy has contributed to strengthening the organisational and project-implementation capacities of community-based organisations (CBOs), though not always in transformative ways. Capacity strengthening that promotes political activism has at times had negative effects because of sensitivities of the context; and sometimes short-term capacity development inputs have fallen far short of the systemic or structural challenge they aim to address. It seems that some SFOs and LPOs are responding to restrictive or repressive political contexts by developing *capacity to satisfy needs* rather than tackling the more sensitive task of developing *capacity to realise rights*. While this is an understandable tactic, it leads to the question of how the Swedish CS strategy can help build stronger civil societies, and help make them less vulnerable to restriction and repression.

¹¹ 'Opportunity cost' refers to the value of something that is lost when an alternative course of action has been chosen: time and energy invested in one activity causes a trade-off with the potential benefits of other activities one might pursue.

A reflection arising from the research in all countries is that capacity development is often interpreted to mean the *acquisition* of abilities, skills and competences, taking capacity to be something that can be given and acquired. This understanding might not do justice to some of the deeper-seated work we came across in LPOs and SFOs, especially in Nicaragua but also in Uganda. What it would take to support that work most effectively is the strengthening of processes, methodologies, and spaces for dialogue to constitute stronger civil societies. Whether Sida, or SFOs, are the best actors to directly support this is an important question. But the findings suggest that this form of support, which does not fit within the conventional definition of capacity building, needs to be debated.

RELEVANCE, ALIGNMENT AND FEASIBILITY (SECTION 6)

Section 6 addresses the *relevance, alignment and feasibility of the theories of change, strategies and interventions of the SFOs and their partners* (EQ4).

On *relevance*, we find that the Swedish CS strategy and the way it is interpreted and practised by SFOs and LPOs, is relevant to the priorities, perspectives and desired changes of people living in poverty and marginalisation. In some cases the theories of change through which the strategy's objectives are pursued are highly relevant and effective; in others, they appear too diffuse, too narrow or not attuned to local realities.

On *alignment*, we were looking for not only shared understandings and approaches at the strategic level but also at whether organisational systems, processes, relations and dynamics that connect Sida to SFOs and to national, local and grassroots CSOs are congruent at operational levels. We found greater alignment at the level of strategic intent and understanding than at the level of operations and partnerships. Some LPOs are strongly aligned with the Swedish CS strategy and its expectations, and others less so. There are many contextual drivers of non-alignment, and others that are concerned with scale. There are tensions between the project scale (micro, short-term, specialised) and the programme or strategy scale (broad, longer-term, multi-thematic). Some characteristics of results-based management also drive non-alignment, favouring a logic of vertical relationships, fragmentation, and low scope for synergy. Alignment is further complicated by the nature of Sida's civil society partnerships, which combine organisations emblematic of Sweden's domestic civil society, with international NGOs which may be based in Sweden but are international in identity, and pursue an international agenda.

Feasibility refers to whether the programmes, approaches and theories of change of the SFOs and LPOs are feasible in terms of their plausible contributions (and in relation to what other actors are contributing) to creating enabling conditions for people to improve their lives. Despite some successful examples of change, we found that the contexts themselves present limitations for feasibility. In some contexts it is

unrealistic to expect that CSO services will be improved, rights enhanced and poverty reduced simply by building the capacity of citizens to claim their rights, or that democratisation will be encouraged by CSOs playing a mediating role between citizens and the state; building CSOs does not necessarily lead to the realisation of rights. Also, feasibility appears to be reduced by the vertical characteristics of the system through which Swedish support to civil society is delivered.

Our analysis suggests that Sida, SFOs and LPOs need to strategise more closely about how to work effectively in unfavourable contexts; build stronger shared understandings of gender and power; revisit the focus on results and upwards accountability; expand the concepts of civil society, mobilising capacity and creating enabling spaces that underpin the strategy; and think about how to create enabling conditions not only for people in poverty and marginalisation but for civil society itself.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (SECTION 7)

Section 7 concludes the report with recommendations in five key areas. Below is a summary of our main recommendations, based on conclusions drawn from an analysis of our findings, to Sida and to the SFOs:

1. Revisit expectations of results, accountability and participation.

- *We recommend that Sida* should enter into critical dialogue with SFOs and their partners about the results-based framework and how it fits with strategies focused on citizen empowerment, democracy and human rights.
- *We recommend that SFOs* should critically examine their internal and partnership results monitoring and reporting systems and indicators to ensure that they are not distorting the implementation of the HRBA.
- *We recommend that SFOs* should re-focus the attention of staff and partners on their organisational mission and mandate, and ask themselves what this means for their accountabilities

2. Support civil society engagement and horizontal alignment in unfavourable contexts

- *We recommend that Sida* should support the facilitation of safe processes for dialogue, contextual analysis and joint strategizing among civil society and other actors in challenging contexts, and ensure coherence among the various forms of Swedish civil society cooperation, aid, trade and international relations to achieve this.
- *We recommend that SFOs* should prioritise horizontal coordination and networking with other SFOs, LPOs and other civil society actors to develop shared analysis and strategies for working in problematic country and regional contexts.

3. Support enabling spaces for civil society as a ‘field’, rather than as a collection of associations

- *We recommend that Sida* should focus on ‘capacity mobilising’ within civil society (rather than ‘capacity development’), which implies the release of existing potential and energies, and prioritise internal cooperation and alliances among civil society actors to create a more powerful field.
- *We recommend that SFOs* should support strategic spaces and processes of dialogue among LPOs, with the aim of strengthening civil society as a field rather than as individual organisations.

4. Deepen engagement with multidimensional poverty, in order to locate entry and leverage points for structural change

- *We recommend that Sida* should engage SFOs in a learning dialogue about who they and their LPOs are within the social fabric of their countries.
- *We recommend that Sida* should explore with SFOs how they can best achieve extending the benefits of the Swedish CS strategy to those in poverty and marginalisation – either by channelling resources to improve practical conditions, or by conducting policy advocacy and campaigning to make legal frameworks and policies more equitable.
- *We recommend that SFOs* should reflect within the organisation on what the organisation is and who its LPOs are within the social fabric of Sweden (for the SFOs) and of the LPOs’ countries. This should extend to whether the SFO and its LPOs are well placed to extend the benefits of the Swedish CS strategy to those in the worst poverty and marginalisation.
- *We recommend that SFOs* should explore the question of how the SFO and its LPOs can best achieve this: whether by channelling resources through to these groups in highly targeted ways to improve their practical conditions, or by conducting policy advocacy and campaigning to make legal frameworks and policies more equitable or redistributive in orientation.

5. Contextualise the HRBA, developing a better understanding of what it means to claim and attain human rights in a given context.

- *We recommend that Sida* should support and encourage SFOs to analyse which tactics will work best for them or their LPOs to advance the HRBA in their particular context, using the very considerable relevant experience and learning resources Sida has built up.
- *We recommend that SFOs* should draw on their own in-country experience and that of members of their LPOs to make good tactical choices about best how to advance the HRBA in specific localities, sectors or subgroups of the population, and be prepared to justify these by reference to high-quality context analysis.

1 Introduction and Background

1.1 OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE OF THIS EVALUATION

This report presents the main findings and recommendations of a two-year evaluation of Sida's support to civil society actors via Swedish framework organisations (SFOs)¹² in Nicaragua, Pakistan and Uganda, through the Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations 2010-2014. It synthesises findings from the evaluation's inception phase and two rounds of fieldwork carried out between September 2012 and November 2014.¹³

The purpose of the evaluation was “to find out if, how and why/why not the support to civil society actors in developing countries via Swedish civil society organisations (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.”¹⁴

The evaluation focused on whether and how the Swedish civil society strategy,¹⁵ as put into practice by SFOs and their local partner organisations (LPOs), is *relevant*, *aligned* and *feasible*. The evaluation questions are detailed in section 1.4 and Annex 9. Rather than evaluate the entire strategy, the study examined:

- The realities of people living in poverty and marginalisation, and their perceptions of what is changing in the enabling conditions needed to improve their lives.
- The human rights based approach (HRBA), and what its four principles – participation, transparency, accountability and non-discrimination – mean to people living in poverty.

¹² Swedish framework organisations (SFOs) are Swedish CSOs that have a framework agreement with Sida, and framework status under the Swedish CS strategy.

¹³ The evaluation was carried out by a consortium of three organisations: the Swedish Institute of Public Administration (lead organisation, Sweden), the Institute of Development Studies (UK) and International Organisation Development (UK).

¹⁴ *Terms of Reference*, GLOBAL/Unit for Civil Society, case number 2011-001257, 10 January 2012.

¹⁵ Government Offices of Sweden (2009a) *Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations 2010–2014*, Stockholm: Sida (UF2009/28632/UP, 10 September 2009). We refer to this strategy as the ‘Swedish CS strategy’.

- The theories of change and strategies of SFOs and LPOs, and how these organisations understand and pursue the four principles of the HRBA.
- The plausible contributions of SFOs and LPOs to creating changes in enabling conditions, and of CSO capacity development efforts.
- The relevance, alignment and feasibility of the theories of change, strategies and interventions of the SFOs and LPOs.

The evaluation used a learning process approach, in which key questions, methods and understandings evolve throughout the evaluation. Learning events and dialogue involving Sida, SFOs and LPOs took place in Nicaragua, Pakistan, Sweden and Uganda during each phase of the evaluation.¹⁶

The evaluation used the Reality Check Approach (RCA)¹⁷ to understand the realities and perspectives of people living in poverty and marginalisation. RCA was combined with ‘meso-level’ and organisational inquiry into the efforts of diverse actors – notably the local partners of SFOs – to strengthen civil society and create enabling conditions for change.

The study explored the *theories of change, cooperation strategies, intervention logics and practices of SFOs and LPOs* in relation to *the realities and perspectives of people living in poverty*. Using a mix of methods, the evaluation assessed the Swedish CS strategy as implemented by SFOs and LPOs, considering coherence across the various levels of cooperation – including people living in poverty, SFOs and their local, national and international partners, and the Swedish CS strategy itself.

Comparing perspectives ‘from below’ with the strategies and approaches of these organisations, the evaluation assessed the *relevance, alignment* and *feasibility* of the Swedish CS strategy. It inferred the *plausible contributions* of Swedish support to creating enabling conditions for people to improve their lives. It identified 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.

¹⁶ Learning events in Pakistan were held on a more limited scale and frequency due to the security situation.

¹⁷ The Reality Check Approach (RCA) involves researchers living with families in communities for visits that last several days and are repeated periodically, in order to gain an understanding of the lives and perspectives of people living in poverty and marginalisation. Further details are provided in Section 2 and Annex 5, and <http://reality-check-approach.com/>

1.2 SWEDISH CIVIL SOCIETY POLICY AND STRATEGY

According to the *Policy for Support to Civil Society in Developing Countries within Swedish Development Cooperation* (henceforth referred to as the ‘Swedish CS policy’), Swedish development cooperation aims to support “a vibrant and pluralistic civil society in developing countries that contributes effectively, using a rights-based approach, to reducing poverty in all its dimensions” and to create conditions that will “enable people living in poverty to improve their lives.”¹⁸

The Swedish CS policy is made operational by the Swedish CS strategy¹⁹, which shares its aims, but also has two additional objectives:

Enhanced capacity of civil society actors in developing countries to apply a rights-based approach in their roles as collective voices and organisers of services.

*Enhanced democratisation and increased respect for the human rights of poor and discriminated people.*²⁰

Swedish cooperation’s HRBA is guided by four main principles drawn from those embodied in international human rights commitments: participation, accountability, transparency and non-discrimination:

The human rights based approach puts people who are poor first and helps development cooperation to better take into account the views of men, women, children and young people living in poverty. These approaches provide a clearer picture and better knowledge of local power structures in the provinces and sectors where Sida works. The human rights based approach is primarily a method of working, a ‘how’.

¹⁸ Government Offices of Sweden (2009b) *Pluralism: Policy for Support to Civil Society in Developing Countries within Swedish Development Cooperation*, Stockholm: Sida, <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/13/13/60/8c589318.pdf> (Accessed 9 March 2015), p.7.. It was replaced in March 2014 by the *Aid Policy Framework – The Direction of Swedish Aid* (Government Offices of Sweden, Government Communication 2013/14:131).

¹⁹ Government Offices of Sweden (2009a) *Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations 2010–2014*, Stockholm: Sida (UF2009/28632/UP, 10 September 2009). We refer to this strategy as the ‘Swedish CS strategy’. The strategy has been extended to 2015

²⁰ Government Offices of Sweden (2009a) *Op. cit.*, p.4

The human rights based approach encompasses the central elements of democracy, good governance and human rights, equality between women and men, and rights of the child. In combination with the human rights based approach, development cooperation shall be pervaded by the perspectives of the poor.

Sida has chosen to work with these principles as a starting point for both the human rights based approach and the perspectives of the poor. The principles constitute a basis for analysis and assessment and a common basis for dialogue, cooperation and follow-up. The human rights based approach shall strengthen individual empowerment, that is, the human right of individuals to influence their own situation and development.²¹

In Swedish cooperation, poverty is understood to be “a condition where people are deprived of the freedom to decide over their own lives and shape their future. Lack of power and choice and lack of material resources form the essence of poverty. Given that poverty is dynamic, multidimensional and context specific a holistic analytical approach is advocated.”²²

These principles and definitions shape expectations about what should be changing if poverty is to be reduced and human rights are to be realised, and imply *theories of change and action* for organisations seeking to fulfil the aims of Swedish development cooperation. Understanding how these theories are perceived and supported by different actors, and to what degree they align with the realities, perspectives and change strategies of people living in poverty, is the central focus of this evaluation.

Sweden is concerned with democratic, social, economic, environmental and civic change in favour of people living in poverty and marginalisation. For such changes to happen, it supports civil society actors to enhance meaningful forms of participation, transparency and accountability in relation to government, to contribute to creating the conditions for economic growth, to work towards gender equality, and to overcome other aspects of discrimination and marginality. Sweden promotes social cohesion through supporting effective interfaces between different social, cultural, religious, political and ethnic groups.²³

²¹ Sida (2012) *Results for Justice and Development: Report on Sida's Results on Democracy, Human Rights and the Human Rights Based Approach*, Stockholm: Sida, p.60

²² Sida (2002) *Perspectives on Poverty*, Stockholm: Sida, p.2

²³ This and the following two paragraphs are summarised from the Swedish CS Strategy, Government Offices of Sweden (2009a) *Op. cit.*, p.4

Sweden gives particular attention to groups that are discriminated against on grounds of ethnic origin, religion or other belief, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, or transgender identity or expression. As such, Sida promotes capacity development for CSOs with similar priorities, emphasising a set of domains in which changes, including shifts in power relations and rights, are to be supported and anticipated.

The Swedish CS strategy emphasises some aspects which this evaluation does not directly address, in particular the principles of aid effectiveness, which include donor harmonisation, predictability, long-term support, alignment with partner systems and procedures, and increasing the share of the local partner in core and programme support. The evaluation does however address the strategy's aim of seeing CSOs acting as the effective and representative voice of poor and marginalised groups, and enablers of good quality and fairness in provision of services such as health and education. This aim informs decisions about how support through the programmes of SFOs is directed and aligned, and underpins the *results orientation* of this evaluation.

1.3 FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

With reference to the Terms of Reference (ToRs), the Inception Report and the Swedish CS strategy, this evaluation aimed:

- 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 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.²⁴

The evaluation framework combined power analysis with a multidimensional perspective on poverty and vulnerability. The four principles of an HRBA were used as the primary lens for understanding the *theories of change and action* used by SFOs and LPOs to implement the Swedish CS strategy. To understand if the strategy is *relevant, aligned and feasible*, we posed the following broad questions:

²⁴ Adapted from *Inception Report*, May 2013, p.10

- *Relevance* – are the programmes, approaches and theories of change of the SFOs and LPOs relevant to people's priorities and perceptions of the changes that would enable them to improve their lives?
- *Alignment* – are the programmes, approaches and theories of change of the SFOs and LPOs aligned with the strategies of multiple actors at different levels, including actions being taken by local people themselves, to create enabling conditions to improve their lives?
- *Feasibility* – are the programmes, approaches and theories of change of the SFOs and LPOs feasible in terms of their plausible contributions (and in relation to what other actors are contributing) to creating enabling conditions for people to improve their lives?²⁵

1.4 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

As this was a learning process evaluation, the questions evolved during the inception phase, as methods and a sampling approach were developed and piloted.

The ToRs called for a qualitative, participatory, mixed methodology. Rather than attributing specific impacts to specific actors, the team's methods and sampling approach were designed to examine *relevance*, *alignment* and *feasibility* of the Swedish CS strategy, and to establish the *plausible contributions* of Sida support to creating enabling conditions for people to improve their lives. This focus required a purposive and non-probabilistic sampling method, and a reframing of the research questions in the Inception Report accepted by Sida, as follows:

1. What are poor people's perceptions of the changes taking place, or not, in the enabling conditions needed to improve their living conditions?
2. What actors, including the Swedish CSOs and their partners, can plausibly be inferred to be contributing positive changes in the enabling conditions?
3. What does a human rights based perspective mean to people living in poverty and marginalization?
4. What is the relevance, alignment and feasibility of the theory of change, strategies and interventions of the Swedish CSOs and their partners?
5. What plausible contribution can be inferred to the role of CSO capacity development and enhancement in the context, and in relation to the key issue?
6. What are the theories of change and strategies of Swedish CSOs and their partners, and what do the four human rights principles of participation,

²⁵ Synthesis Report, Round 1, January 2014, p.20

non-discrimination, transparency and accountability mean in their practice, in the context of the key issue?

Annex 9 maps the original expected results of the evaluation, as stated in the ToRs, against the methodology and the evaluation questions agreed at the end of the inception phase. This Synthesis Report responds to the above six evaluation questions, rather than the original expected results, which nonetheless remain as important reference points for interpreting the findings of the evaluation.

2 Methodology and Process

2.1 METHODOLOGY

In this section we outline key aspects of the methodology which need to be understood for engaging with the evaluation's findings, analysis and conclusions. The methodology evolved through the tendering process, the inception phase and two rounds of field work, giving rise to much discussion, and some doubts and differences in understanding.²⁶ Here we provide a brief overview of how our methods and sampling processes developed during the course of the evaluation. A full explanation of the sampling methodology and its validity is provided in Annex 5.

Three countries – Nicaragua, Pakistan and Uganda – were selected by Sida before the tender award. The evaluation was conducted in nine 'sites', three per country, selected to represent a diverse set of the key issues, population groups and partner organisations covered by the Swedish CS strategy. Further details on site selection are given in Section 2.2.

The ToRs for the evaluation called for a qualitative, participatory, mixed methodology that would combine RCA with other methods. RCA involves researchers immersing themselves in the daily realities of people living in poverty, in order to understand their lives and perspectives. Given the original research questions presented in the ToRs, the evaluation team tendered a research design combining RCA visits at the household and community levels with 'meso-level' research and 'organisational inquiries' to document the theories of change and practices of actors at the local, national and international levels. These meso-level and organisational inquiries focused primarily on LPOs and SFOs²⁷, and sought to establish how Sida's support to CSOs made plausible contributions to achieving the objectives of the Swedish CS strategy.

An evaluation team of three to four researchers in each country conducted fieldwork, with one person leading the RCA visits, meso-level studies, organisational inquiries

²⁶ For example, there have been differences of opinion between the commissioner of the evaluation and the evaluation team about the criteria for RC-site selection and the purposive sampling criteria..

²⁷ Other actors whose views contributed to meso-level findings included CBOs and informal self-help groups, local government officials, civic, traditional and religious leaders, and CSOs and national civil society representatives not supported by Sweden, among others.

and analysis for each site. The teams were trained and methods tested during the inception phase (July 2012–January 2013); the *Inception Report* formed the foundation for the two rounds of fieldwork (March–September 2013 and March–September 2014). Fieldwork and subsequent analysis, validation and learning, was conducted as follows:

- *Round 1 reality checks (RCs)* (three to five days each) were conducted in one community per site. Each RC involved the researcher staying with a family, observing and interacting with household members, neighbours and a wide range of people in the community, taking detailed notes, and making preliminary analysis. Once the homestays were completed, the information gathered was shared within the team and the analysis developed collectively. These initial findings informed the focus of the meso-level and organisational inquiries.
- *Meso-level inquiries* involved semi-structured interviews with civil society, state and other actors at the local and national levels, including LPOs and networks supported by SFOs. SFO representatives or their intermediaries were interviewed in countries where they were present; where they were not, they were interviewed in Stockholm. Organisational documents were collected and reviewed.
- *Round 2 RCs* (two days each) followed the same pattern as the first round, and were conducted with the same families and communities in order to build a deeper understanding and to observe any changes over time.
- *Organisational inquiries* with one or two LPOs per site (including advocacy NGOs at the national level) were carried out in the second round, in recognition of a need for more detailed information about their theories of change and interventions. The team used qualitative research methods including semi-structured interviews, workshops and, where possible, observation of the daily activities of LPO staff.
- *Analysis* of findings was carried out after both rounds of fieldwork, in face-to-face workshops and during report drafting by each country team, in synthesis workshops involving the lead country researchers and other country research team members, and, to engage stakeholders, in validation and learning events.
- *Validation and learning events* were held in all three countries after the first (except in Pakistan) and second round of fieldwork, and in Stockholm with representatives mainly from civil society, LPOs, SFOs, Sida and Swedish Embassies (in Uganda and Pakistan). These events were vital in feeding back interim findings, seeking clarifications and corrections from key informants, and deepening the analysis. Drafts were reviewed by Sida, the PAG and the SFO methods network, and then revised by the evaluation team.
- *Quality assurance*, following the standards of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, has been provided by

Professor David Lewis, London School of Economics, an experienced anthropologist and RCA practitioner.

2.2 SITE AND ORGANISATION SELECTION

Table 1 is a summary of the site selection approved by Sida for each country in the inception phase, with some updating on the basis of Rounds 1 and 2. SFOs and LPOs shown in bold were the priority focus, while the others listed in the tables were involved as interviewees or as participants in dialogue and learning events. Discontinued programmes or partners are indicated where known. The process of selecting households and respondents within these sites is explained in Annex 5.

Table 1: Selected key issues, SFOs, LPOs and sites, by country

Nicaragua

Reality check #	Key issues	Swedish framework organisations	Local partner organisations ²⁸	Geographic sites
RC1	Indigenous and Afro-descendent rights <i>Other issues: gender and youth economic rights; governance and power; education</i>	Diakonia	CENIDH, CEDEHCA, CEJUDHCAN, CEPREV, CEIMM , IPADE, Wangky Maya, CCER, RMCV, Iglesia Morava	North Atlantic Autonomous Region
RC2	Food security and sovereignty <i>Other issues: trauma and violence; health and the environment; migration; gender and young women; citizen participation and leadership</i>	Church of Sweden (via Lutheran World Federation) We Effect	Local: Asociación Joven Siglo XXI, ADEES, Proyecto Miriam National: Centro Humboldt, Foro ACT , Iglesia Luterana, AMNLAE, UNAG, CMR, FEMUPROCAN Local: Women's Cashew Production Cooperative (discontinued) Regional: PECOSOL (discontinued)	North Pacific

²⁸ LPOs shown in bold are the SFO partners that this study focused on. The other LPOs listed were also interviewed as part of meso-level research. Full names are provided in the Nicaragua Country Report.

RC3	People with disabilities and access to education <i>Other issues: mobility, access and autonomy (rural/urban); economy, sexuality and gender; recreation; organisation and representation</i>	MyRight	FECONORI, OCN-M, ASCN	Managua
-----	---	---------	-----------------------	---------

Pakistan

Reality check #	Key issues	Swedish framework organisations	Local partner organisations	Geographic sites
RC1	Workers' rights	Olof Palme International Centre	Labour Education Foundation/Power Loom Workers Union	Faisalabad City, Punjab
RC2	Sexual and reproductive health rights	Plan Sweden	Rahnuma	Chakwal District, Punjab
RC3	Child rights and disaster risk reduction	Plan Sweden	Rural Development Policy Institute	Ghotki District, Sindh Province
	Child rights	Save the Children Sweden	DevCon ²⁹	Hyderabad, Sindh Province

Uganda

Reality check #	Key issues	Swedish framework organisations	Local partner organisations	Geographic sites
RC1	Post conflict reconstruction <i>Other issues: gender-based violence; social displacement of men</i>	Swedish Mission Council	International Aid Services (Uganda)	Pader District, Acholi Sub-region
RC2	Young peoples' livelihoods <i>Other issues: housing and sanitation</i>	We Effect	Shelter and Settlement Alternatives/Uganda Human Settlements Network	Wakiso District, Kampala, Central Region
RC3	Environmental management <i>Other issues: discrimination, education, agriculture</i>	Swedish Society for Nature Conservation	National Association of Professional Environmentalists	Mbarara District, Western Region

²⁹ Local partner of Save the Children Pakistan (funded by Sida through SC Sweden). This was a light organisational review, which was added to RC2 at the request of Sida; no Reality Checks were conducted with DevCon or any other partner of Save the Children, Pakistan

Selection criteria. The team used purposive sampling – a common technique in mixed-method qualitative research designs – to select respondents for the evaluation. The main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on the characteristics of a population that are relevant to the research questions. As the questions in the Inception Report were designed to assess the *alignment*, *relevance* and *feasibility* of the support provided to CSOs through the Swedish CS strategy, we needed to purposively sample the sources that would give us the best insights into these focal issues, seeking out people affected by the issues that the Swedish CS strategy and SFOs address. If the evaluation had been focused on assessing the impact of specific projects or organisations, a probability sampling approach – taking a statistically representative random sample of those benefitting from Sida-supported projects – would have been needed instead. The purposive sampling methods used in this evaluation are discussed further in Annex 5.

Given the use of purposive sampling, judgements about the validity of the evaluation findings must take into account whether data was drawn from a set of individuals, actors and organisations purposively sampled to comprise those affected by the issues that the Swedish CS strategy addresses. This set includes not only people living in areas of direct intervention, but also those affected through advocacy, watchdog, policy-influencing and mobilisation activities.³⁰ Given that a probability sampling approach was not used, judgements about the validity of the evaluation findings cannot be made on the basis of whether data was drawn from a representative sample of the population of each country, site or project, or on the three countries being representative of all countries where the Swedish CS strategy operates.

2.3 ANALYSIS, VALIDATION AND LEARNING

The evaluation set out to be a learning process, which the evaluation team pursued in a context of finite resources and wide-ranging stakeholder expectations. We recognise that the outcome is a trade-off between competing priorities.

The validation and learning events held in Pakistan, Nicaragua, Uganda and Sweden were designed to be the main learning moments for the key stakeholders who participated in them. The evaluation team designed and facilitated customised processes involving presentation of findings followed by focused, small-group discussions of particular aspects of what had been presented. The intention of these processes was to validate – or complement, or correct – researchers' interpretations and analysis. They were also designed to deepen understanding of the methodology, and stimulate reflection and learning from the findings in ways that could enhance

³⁰ *Evaluation Terms of Reference*, p. 8

participants' practice as researchers, development professionals, civil society activists and advocates.

3 Realities, Perceptions and Theories of Change

This section presents key findings in response to EQ1 and EQ6a. It first presents findings about people's perceptions of the enabling conditions needed to improve their lives (EQ1), and then juxtaposes them with findings about the SFO and LPO theories of change (EQ6a). These findings are drawn from the nine RC and meso-level inquiry site reports and the three Country Reports, and have been further analysed in validation and learning events in each country, and in core evaluation team synthesis workshops.

EQ1 asks “*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)?*” We respond to this question in Section 3.1, where we describe the multiple and intersecting dimensions of poverty and marginalisation experienced by our host communities, and in Section 3.2, where we report our findings about people's perceptions of changes in the enabling conditions needed to improve their lives and their own strategies for change and day-to-day survival. Together, these sections combined provide a comprehensive picture of the underlying realities and conditions that civil society interventions aim to change in order to reduce poverty.

EQ6a asks “*What are the theories of change and strategies of Swedish CSOs and their partners?*” In Section 3.3, we give an account of the theories of change and logics of intervention of SFOs and their local partner organisations.

3.1 MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY AND MARGINALISATION

Evidence from all nine RCs validates Sida's recognition of the *multidimensional* nature of poverty and marginalisation. The families and individuals we lived with are coping with a multitude of forces all at once, experienced both as *external* constraints on the options available to them, and as *internal* constraints which limit their sense of ability to effect change. The external forces were apparent in people's experiences and views of:

- their shrinking prospects for livelihoods and employment
- an increasingly monetised world in which basic needs can only be met with cash
- a commercialised public sector where health, education and other services must be paid for

- growing pressure to migrate in search of alternatives
- the weakening of familial, community and associational bonds
- stigma and discrimination on the basis of gender, disability, ethnicity, age or sexuality.

These constraints are internalised in the form of psychological stress, depression, despair, low self-esteem and a declining sense of personal and collective agency – which in turn affects people’s ability to participate in civil society and take steps to realise their rights.

These perceptions of internal and external constraints are not isolated. While the nine sites do not constitute a representative sample, they reflect the composite views of many individuals and families from each community, supported by the perspectives of other local actors and analysts. Below, we summarise our RC findings under ten dimensions of poverty and marginalisation.

3.1.1 Monetisation of livelihoods

Basic subsistence needs cannot be satisfied without money, and problems of conflict, exclusion, food insecurity, corruption and the vulnerability of livelihoods increase with monetisation.

There are very few things that are not commercialised in Nyamitanga. Buku and Edith are paying for water, rent, land, firewood, school, health, clothes and much else, despite having no assets and only borrowed land to cultivate. Even going to church involves putting money into the collection plate, or being censured. The few things that remain non-commercial are no longer certain – the church lends land but only for a short time; a neighbour may give some food, or banana leaves for cooking, but who knows when they will decide to stop? (Mbarara, Uganda)³¹

People’s experiences in all nine sites called attention to the power of the cash economy – which they have no choice but to accept – in shaping their livelihood strategies. It is a double-edged force: in some cases, cash offers avenues to a better life and access to useful things previously beyond reach, while in others it displaces livelihood strategies based on self-reliance and reciprocity. People’s widespread experience of the *unequal terms of incorporation* into this economy and its opportunities for advancement – the balance between their ability to earn, and what

³¹ All indented text in Section 3.1 is derived from RC site reports or the country reports from the first and second phases of fieldwork. The name of the site is given in brackets at the end of each extract.

they must spend to meet their basic needs – suggests that the monetisation of livelihoods, often presented as a solution to poverty, can also be one of its drivers.

What effect does monetisation have on individual and collective wellbeing?

Migration to find paid work (discussed further in Section 3.1.2) is a common response to the need for money, and one of its effects is a weakening of family and community cohesion, as people pursue individual strategies to earn cash. In Chakwal, Pakistan, where the majority of the men work outside the community, interdependence and mutual support have broken down.

Sakeena explains that they have separate houses (rooms) and stoves, and do not share anything. “We are each responsible for our children and our *choolah* (cooking stove)”, she says, and goes on to elaborate that not just her family but everyone in the village lives their own lives. “Everyone in this village is selfish and concerned only about themselves. Even if [we] have nothing to eat except for bread and salt, we will hide it from others and keep our problems to ourselves.” (Chakwal, Pakistan)

Faced with this reality of incorporation into the cash economy, many CSO programmes aim to enable people living in poverty to engage with markets on better terms – to form savings and credit groups, join cooperatives, or find ways to add income-generating activities to their livelihoods. In RC sites we found a good deal of scepticism amongst the very poor about the accessibility and value of such initiatives. For example, in Nicaragua’s North Pacific region, Domingo questioned current forms of community organisation and dependence on projects, associated the market economy with poverty and corruption, and spoke of his own desire for self-reliance.

In Mbarara, Uganda, Buku and Edith saw development interventions as beyond their reach, reflecting a feeling that if you are successful, you can take part in government or CSO programmes, but if you are not, you are left behind. Their perception of ever more stratified access to social goods was confirmed in interviews with the Uganda Cooperative Alliance and farmers’ association MBADEFA, where respondents differentiated between those who belong and those who are too poor to take part. While becoming part of a systematic marketing and quality upgrading system is clearly of benefit for small-scale producers with land and financial resources, for Buku and Edith, with their borrowed land, tiny plots, and lack of money, participation is unthinkable.

This concerning trend of limited access for the poorest was observed about civil society initiatives –not only those supported by Sweden – in all three RC sites in Uganda. Even though most donor-funded agencies try to work on poverty, we found very few working with or for people who are very poor. CSOs that do work with the very poor tend to be small local self-help groups, but these too can be exclusionary. None are able to stem the tide of individualisation and inequality.

Where both livelihoods and the civil society initiatives that seek to enhance them rely on a stronger insertion into the cash economy, to what extent are the very poor and marginalised enabled to improve their living conditions?

3.1.2 Unemployment and migration

Patterns of social rupture and deterioration are emerging alongside the abandonment of traditional local production systems. Migration is driven by the need for cash and by the fact that even an education does not lead to employment.

Rural–urban migration is a major phenomenon in all three countries and across all nine sites. It is linked to the monetisation of livelihoods and services, and driven by unemployment. In the case of young people in the Pacific Coast (Nicaragua), Wakiso (Uganda) and both sites in rural Pakistan, it is also driven by the aspirations of the younger generation for a different kind of life from that of their parents, and for access to global consumer goods. Disabled young people in Nicaragua migrate in search of better education, and work opportunities suited to their disabilities. Many men from Chakwal (Pakistan) serve in the army or are employed as labourers in the Middle East.

In some cases, migration has a negative effect on food security and livelihoods, as people leave the land and lose interest in agricultural production. While remittances from migrants can provide income and capital to their families, for others the resources needed to migrate can lead to debt, servitude and dependency. For David in Nicaragua's Pacific Coast site, while migration was a source of emotional and social rupture in both family and community relationships, it also helped diversify income, and enhance economic autonomy and food security.

Respondents in Wakiso, Uganda, reported that young women migrate to escape the shame of not completing school and having no skills and no job. Although they do not expect more security in town, they hope for new opportunities. But the dreams of young people who migrate because they aspire to a different life are often not realised, as the stress and insecurity of casual employment and the imbalance between income and expenditure take their toll.

3.1.3 Decline and privatisation of public services

Access to public services such as health, education, water and electricity is either absent or in decline as budgets are cut or the services become privatised and commercialised.

One morning Sakeena is nowhere to be found and I discover that her youngest boy was unwell and she had taken him to town to see a doctor, and had spent almost Rs500 (US\$4.90) in the process. This is one of the major expenses for these communities. Sakeena tells me that even for minor things, they have to go to a private health provider, as they cannot rely on the government Basic Health

Unit or clinics nearby. She asks me what was the point of going to the government unit when there are no doctors or medicines to be had, or when the treatments given are ineffective. She says that women only seek medical assistance as a last resort. (Chakwal, Pakistan)

In all nine sites there was a perceived decline in the quality and accessibility of public services, notably health care and education. This was mirrored by a growing commercialisation of access, as both public and private service providers demanded cash payment. In Chakwal, for example, there are no health facilities in the village, only a single health worker who carries out household visits. Although there is a primary school and a teacher, most children do not continue their education to secondary level as this requires resources to study in town. People also complained that they got little support from any government agencies, and did not get even basic agricultural extension services. The public water supply was disconnected after the wealthier residents stopped paying their bills, preferring their own private bore holes; this left the poorest with no water supply at all.

Under a constitutional amendment, much public service provision in Pakistan – including health and education – has been devolved to the provincial level. Although provincial government is, for example, technically responsible for providing education, in Faisalabad parents still have to buy books, teachers are often absent, and standards were reported to be low. The private sector fills the gap in education which the government has left wide open, but the majority of power loom workers cannot afford to send their children to private schools.

Access to public health care for power loom workers in Faisalabad is also very limited. For minor illnesses they visit local doctors who are cheap but have no qualifications, and practice illegally. Government hospitals are few and overcrowded, and poor power loom workers, who struggle hard and work long hours to earn few hundred rupees, cannot afford to stand in long unending queues to get treatment; nor can they afford the fees demanded by the growing number of private hospitals. They have no access to government benefits in the case of severe illness or disability because the factory owners refuse to register them as employees, to avoid paying insurance contributions – a practice the union has struggled to change, but without success.

Likewise, across all three Uganda sites, most people live in conditions that do not guarantee any social security. There is hardly any regular social welfare, and poor people seldom receive compensation or meaningful disaster response from the state. For many households, if a breadwinner falls sick, children do not go to school. Assets like land are often sold in response to a health crisis; stress and violence may also rise. What little access people do have to public funds is often received not as a citizen with a right to basic services, but as the dispensation of political patronage. Leaders spend money in their constituencies helping out at burials, weddings and any community activities. The money that they remove from public coffers is, in part,

returned to the community through this largesse, which in turn is a political tool. This commercialisation of politics, services and welfare offers a fertile ground for the propagation of patronage politics.

Public opinion in Uganda is deeply concerned about what people see as a frightening collapse of public services.³² Citizens do not feel they are all treated equally by the state. Frontline services, since they do not receive adequate running costs from government, levy charges to stay open. Poor parents sending their children to government schools that are supposedly free not only have to pay for uniforms, food and exercise books, but also for ‘extra lessons’ and ‘school maintenance’; if they cannot pay, the child is sent home and not allowed to sit exams. Health services are also not free, but operate a similar system of ‘allowable’ charges; these become the gate through which prospective patients must pass in order to qualify for any kind of care.

The breakdown in public service delivery and the increasing cost of accessing what is supposed to be free has meant that most of the population pay for their services from private service providers who may be inadequate, but are at least present. Everywhere public services are under stress and for a price. This has left the millions of citizens on low incomes in worsening poverty.

One implication of this situation in terms of a human rights based approach to development is that as government services and welfare provision have become so unreliable and inaccessible, poor people are simply not demanding them. Instead they hustle to pay for services and beg relatives and friends for welfare. As such there is little incentive to mobilise as citizens or civil society for greater rights, accountability or transparency of public services.

3.1.4 Lack of access to good quality education

Decline and disappearance of access to schools, tendency towards privatisation and cutback in state budgets, low pay to teachers.

Another theme that emerges across all nine sites is the contrast between the huge importance that families living in poverty give to education as a strategy for advancement, and the declining quality and often complete lack of access to functional schools. This widely expressed problem was not always reflected in the key issues of the CSOs active in these communities.

³² CBR (2013) *Uganda at 50: Amplifying Citizen's Voices*, Report of Citizen's Dialogue on 'The Uganda I want to see', Kampala: Centre for Basic Research

In Ghotki, Pakistan, although the community was struggling to recover from a disastrous flood which had destroyed their agricultural livelihoods, the highest priority of most families was to obtain a primary school for their children. People expressed gratitude that their children and livestock had been saved from the flood, but throughout the three-day RC, the only need they expressed was for schooling. Some had a sense of education as a right: “We know that children should be educated,” said RC host Ismail, “it is their *haqooq* (right). But where to send them for education? There is no school.” The researcher was puzzled by the apparent contrast of this widely-expressed priority with the disaster risk reduction (DRR) priorities of the LPO working in Ghotki.

We also found exceptions to this trend of prioritising education. While power loom workers in Faisalabad acknowledge the importance of education, the practical and financial obstacles of obtaining it are too great. They themselves are uneducated and the next generation also seem likely to be deprived of this basic right. While several NGOs are working in Faisalabad, we found none focusing on the education of workers’ children.

Education is highly prioritised by the poor families we met in Uganda, but they are concerned about both quality and access. Under the government’s policy of Universal Primary Education, schools exist, but teachers are often absent, overburdened or poorly qualified. In Mbarara, teachers had not been paid for three months and schools had received no funding for running costs due to a crunch in the government budget, which people attributed in part to the suspension of aid as a result of high-level corruption. Although the quality of teaching at the government schools was considered bad by most parents, their determination to send their children to school and to give them a one-in-a-million chance of success was universally strong.

In Katooke, our RC site Wakiso, Uganda, there are no government schools within a 7 km radius, but private nursery and primary schools are mushrooming – the team saw at least 10 nursery and primary schools in one subsection of the village. The high fees of most of these are outside the reach of poor people. Some of the private schools however work on charitable basis, allowing payment in kind, or offering subsidised fees, but these schools tend to be poorly equipped. It was reported that between 25 and 50% school-age children are not going to school.

For indigenous people on Nicaragua’s Atlantic Coast, while there is a crumbling three-room primary school with a leaking roof, access to secondary school is a huge expense for families who must provide fees and funds for their children to study in the city five hours away. Yet nearly all families make this sacrifice if they can, and some aspire to also get higher education and professional training. Here too, education is seen as a route out of poverty, and for parents of children who succeed in some way, a potential source of social security. Those who had given up their secondary education due to extreme poverty or hardship were sad about it.

3.1.5 Gender discrimination and violence

Discrimination, exclusion, harassment, violation of basic rights and threat of femicide.

Experiences of unequal gender relations, gender discrimination and gender-based violence pervade the RC narratives, adding another layer of complexity to people's experiences of poverty and marginalisation. This further complicates the key issues addressed by CSOs (generally). For example, one of the LPOs we interviewed with in Nicaragua focuses on food security and sovereignty, issues which are directly impacted by gender discrimination, as seen in women's lack of control over the food they themselves prepare, and the hierarchical order in which the food is served:

Catalina explains the order for serving food: first the men, then the small children, then anyone who is older or sick, and the adult women, leaving till last the mother, or the woman who prepared the food. In the same order, the portions served diminish. (North Pacific, Nicaragua)

As well as discussing the gendered serving of food, Catalina also described the sexual division of labour and the key role of women in food production in her household. Nonetheless, household head Domingo spoke of the family economy using the pronoun "I", making Catalina and Ena, the women in the family, invisible as subjects.

In the same community, Maritza's story of domestic violence, and other women's experiences of abuse and denigration, show how the patriarchal order shapes both gender violence and gender identities. Identities are also influenced by internalised unequal power relations – for example, the traditional maternal identity which brings with it the expectation that women will deny their own needs – and reinforced by the media and religion. These narratives also show how social stigma, combined with economic and emotional dependence, prevent women from taking legal action in situations of extreme violence. The treatment of women who think differently or break with gender stereotypes is either sexualised or ridiculed, and there is violent discrimination against those – for example gay people, or those with disabilities – who differ from the 'norm'.

Gender discrimination and gender-based violence were also pervasive in the indigenous community on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast. Here, they complicate the key issue of indigenous rights, which has focused on securing collective rights to territory and natural resources, but has only just begun to consider gender, age and other kinds of discrimination driving rights violations and inequality *within* communities.

In Pader, Uganda, while the key issue for CSOs (generally) is post-conflict livelihoods, there is an epidemic of gender-based violence and teen pregnancy. This is a legacy of the widespread sexual abuse of women during the conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army and the government, which to a degree made it culturally

acceptable. According to some perspectives, it is also a result of introducing women's rights and freedom of movement and dress in ways that are seen to contradict cultural norms. However, the picture in Uganda is not all negative: girls and women in Mbarara are accessing education and their capabilities in the economy are acknowledged.

Also on a positive note, in Ghotki, Pakistan, where Ismail was away from home most of the time, the researcher observed Ismail's wife heading the household, with a degree of control over the income provided by her husband's wages. Nonetheless, Ismail's wife and other women in the community manage all domestic and agricultural activities for much of the year, labouring particularly hard during harvest season to ensure household food security. Although the age at which girls in Ghotki marry has increased from 12–13 to 14–15, by global standards this is child marriage. The key issues for LPOs here are child rights and DRR; as in the other sites, the evaluation raises questions about how the gendered dimensions of these issues can be addressed.

3.1.6 Discrimination against people with disabilities

Violation of basic rights, and barriers to basic welfare, personal, social and economic development.

Disability was selected as the key issue for the Managua, Nicaragua RC and the researcher got an in-depth immersion into the lives and livelihood strategies of people with disabilities (PwD), notably sight-impaired individuals. Here we learned the most about the links between disability, poverty and marginalisation. However, the team was struck by how widespread disability is among poor households in *all nine sites*, and how stigma, discrimination and lack of access to services compound individual and family vulnerabilities. Nearly every researcher came back with stories of the profound challenges posed by disabilities within their hosts' or neighbouring families. The two themes that emerge most strongly are social stigma and lack of services.

In Faisalabad, Pakistan, the RC on workers' rights turned out to be a narrative of the effects of disability on a power loom worker who became paralysed and found himself with no recourse to public or employer benefits, due to the casual and exploitative nature of his sector, his lack of legal rights, and the failure of state health and social services. Both of the rural RCs in Pakistan produced stories of people disabled or suffering long-term illnesses who depended entirely on their families or private providers for support.

Sakeena lives with her two small boys and her two brothers-in-law. Although they are grown men in their early thirties, both are like children to Sakeena because of their disposition, vulnerability and dependence: both are handicapped in different ways. One brother met with an accident aged four and has lived since with a colostomy bag attached to his abdomen. The other is

mentally challenged and almost blind. Sakeena adopted these two young men after her father-in-law passed away from a cardiac arrest five months ago. (Chakwal, Pakistan)

In Mbarara, Uganda, RC host Buku suffers from a lifelong physical disability and was discriminated against throughout her childhood by her own father. The stigma of disability is still a reason for demeaning people, if only because it may well be more difficult for a disabled person to make an income.

The message from the site reports is that ‘disability is everywhere’ and that no one bears the burdens of it more than the very poorest – due to social stigma, service failure, and lack of access to employment. A key finding of the Managua RC was that securing legal rights and access to education for people with disabilities are necessary but not sufficient in the context of social barriers based on discrimination and stigma. Despite progress in educational and other legal rights for the disabled in Nicaragua, the main respondent in Managua was more determined to secure his economic survival than to advance his education; the researcher encountered numerous well-educated people with disabilities who could not find employment. The informal sector and family support emerged as key to their livelihood strategies.

3.1.7 Ethnic and regional discrimination

Discrimination due to language and ethnic origin against indigenous, Afro-descendent and other ethnic minority people, and against minority linguistic and regional groups.

Discrimination along ethnic or regional lines is a common dimension of poverty, and takes a range of overt, subtle and internalised forms. We found it to be part of the experience of economic social, political, cultural, geographical and linguistic marginalisation in certain RC sites in Nicaragua and Uganda.

In Nicaragua we encountered systemic and multiple discrimination against members of an indigenous community, despite the Nicaraguan Constitution and legal framework recognising collective indigenous rights.

In Uganda we encountered the discrimination experienced by the people of the north, in particular the Acholi people. They have suffered historically from ethnically-defined politics of resource distribution, as well as from the effects of long-term war in their region between rebel groups of Acholi origin and the national government. The upheavals and displacements of this war have, in turn, compounded the economic, social, political and geographic marginalisation of the Acholi north compared to other ethnic groups and regions of the country. Ethnicity in Uganda is highly political, affecting access to entitlements, employment prospects and the spoils of clientelist politics, as well as signifying the power of particularly powerful institutions and associations at national level.

Ethnic and regional discrimination intersect with and compound other forms of discrimination experienced *within* certain ethnic communities or regions.

3.1.8 Vulnerabilities

Vulnerability to climate change, disasters and other environmental and contextual risks that contribute to food insecurity and ill health.

Natural disasters and livelihood-threatening climatic changes are very concrete risks in some RC sites, particularly Managua and Pacific North in Nicaragua, and Ghokti, Pakistan. Aside from vulnerability to environmental risks, the people living in poverty and marginalisation that we met often have fragile livelihoods and precarious access to basic services which depends on patron-client relationships and conforming to the status quo. This sort of socio-political environment causes vulnerability of a different but equally problematic kind.

In collective analysis of RC findings from both phases of fieldwork across all countries, the research team noted a high degree of fatalism, and a widespread lack of both individual and collective agency. This reduces the chance that people will engage as active citizens in politics or accountability processes. As the Uganda team observed after their first round of RCs,

There is an underlying sense of growing divisions in society that begin in politics, are exacerbated in the unregulated economy, and end in a vulnerable society. We are seeing not only an increasing distance between rich and poor, but between every layer of wealth, and also between genders, and across other social divides, including disability. For the very poor, competitive social divisions create new versions of personal ill-being – depression and despair, and loss of faith in others and in community and nation.

Monetised livelihoods, declining services and multiple forms of discrimination combine to produce debilitating levels of vulnerability.

3.1.9 Weak leadership and associational life

Traditional and recent models for community organising suffer from low trust. They reinforce relations of dependency that discourage independent discourse on rights, authentic participation and citizen mobilisation.

Identified mainly in Nicaragua and Uganda, weak associational life is both a cause and a consequence of poverty and marginalisation. Associations form in contexts of social cohesion – as well as strengthening it once they exist.

The historic model of leadership in Nicaragua, reinforced by the Sandinista revolution, is that of the top-down, authoritarian strongman. Identified with

corruption, this is under challenge from today's post-revolutionary generation, leaving something of a vacuum in respect of organisational, leadership and associational models, ethics and values.

Rich, strong histories of associational and organisational life in both countries – and, in Nicaragua, considerable constitutional provision for associational freedoms and rights – are at odds with the current associational panorama, in which comparatively few are organising to defend the rights of people living in poverty and marginalisation. In Uganda, apart from cooperatives and trade unions, which have been progressively weakened, most associations lack formal organisational status, effectively limiting their scope for mobilising or making local claims on behalf of people in poverty and marginalisation.

3.1.10 Psychological stress

Depression, mental illness and trauma due to poverty, violence, disaster or war contribute to low expectations of self and others.

For the families we lived with and encountered in the RC communities, the combination of the many dimensions of poverty and marginalisation are so great that they create high levels of risk, intra-familial violence, and psychological stresses including anxiety and depression. Our main finding is that people's sense of self-esteem and their agency as human beings – let alone as citizens with rights – is severely eroded.

The Uganda team, for example, reported that:

...the poor people that we spent time with did not feel that they were being treated as equals by anyone... Our hosts and hostesses showed us how the monetisation of every part of life has created material divisions in society that mean that the effects of even minor discrimination have become more acute – because people are not helping each other as they used to. Everyone has to look after themselves first, and there is nothing left over.

Our RCs provided glimpses into the intimate and emotional dimensions of people's lives which are often missing altogether when other methodologies are used. These insights became important to us as we tried to understand the way people experience civil society, rights and practices like participation and non-discrimination on a day-to-day basis. One might call this the intimate domain, where the internal and psychological aspects of wellbeing and poverty reside.

Our glimpses into the intimate and private domains showed us how deeply social and cultural norms about gender, sexuality, age, disability, class, race and ethnicity are embodied, and how readily they are reproduced. We found this to be the case on both

sides of any given difference or oppression – everyone played their role intuitively, whether as a dominant actor or a submissive one.

As we tried to understand the presence or absence of civic agency and people's participation in shaping a vibrant and pluralistic civil society, we found on the whole that psychological stresses and vulnerabilities, combined with high levels of awareness about the risks of challenging power and patronage, lead to rationally passive citizens. Passivity and constrained agency are created not by lack of awareness, but by lack of an enabling environment and perceived rewards for action, and by a deeply internalised acceptance of the way things work. The psycho-social effects of poverty and marginalisation are one of the main constraints we observed on people's ability to participate in civic and political life and to demand their rights.

3.2 PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS AND STRATEGIES OF CHANGE

In this section, we continue with EQ1, and report our findings about *people's perceptions of changes in the enabling conditions needed to improve their lives*, and their own *strategies for change and day-to-day survival*. One aim of the second RC visits was to identify such changes. These observations of change did not seek to capture the impact of NGO interventions; rather, they represent the perceptions of community members about trends in the local context. They provide a basis for assessing the *relevance* and *alignment* of people's perceptions of change with the theories and strategies of change of NGOs (Section 3.3 and Annex 6).

3.2.1 People's perceptions of change

Some things have changed. In all three countries we observed and heard about small examples of positive changes in people's lives – in some instances linked to the contributions of Swedish CSOs – which included post-flood recovery in Pakistan.

When we returned to the flood-affected village of Saindad Chachar in March 2014 we found that a paved embankment road had been raised. The scenario was different from March 2013, when there were vast fields of sand and no cultivation. This year there were only small parts of sand and most of the land was covered with wheat and parcels of sugarcane, mustard, fodder and onions. The floodwater had deposited alluvial soil, making the land suitable for cultivation and improving its fertility. The village also had an improved look. The courtyards and floors of the thatched roofed huts were plastered with mud... and ten more households had returned following encouragement from the community. One woman commented, "After three years, we have our crops... We will harvest our crops living in our own homes. We will store our wheat without carrying it from distant areas and paying for the carriage. We are very happy." (Sindh, Pakistan)

But in general, these instances of positive change were overshadowed by larger, negative trends. In Uganda, for example, the team found that some of the poorest people were seeing some improvement in enabling conditions, including some returned displaced people whose livelihoods were undergoing progressive rehabilitation, but progress was slow and patchy. Access to a fair share of public goods and services is not a right, but comes about by luck, patronage and hard work. While there was national economic growth – reflected in exports, investments in the oil, horticulture, large-scale agriculture and urban construction industries – and jobs were being created, these were not keeping up with demand from an ever-growing young population. In all sites we found some families poorer than last year, and others a little better off. None spoke of systematic positive change in the sorts of conditions that enable them to sustainably improve their living conditions. For those who were doing better, improvements had come about through the luck of an inheritance, a good farming season or a market fluctuation. For those doing worse, it was bad luck – poor health, or increased competition for markets or jobs – compounded by institutional failures to help out when things got difficult. Faced with changes for the worse, RC host households in two of the three sites had turned to self-help groups to try and meet their needs, rather than approaching NGOs or government.

In Pakistan, while there were small signs of positive change in some of the rural sites, in addition to post-flood recovery, households had not increased their livestock holdings or obtained off-farm employment. In Nicaragua, living conditions were generally not improving or becoming more enabling. Here, ‘getting ahead’ tended to be small-scale and low-impact, and not sufficient to be widely replicated. Most people’s perceptions were not of positive change.

Systemic and cyclic poverty. Because poverty is multidimensional, one kind of vulnerability can hinder improvements made in relation to other vulnerabilities. Community members in Nicaragua, traumatised by past negative changes, are disempowered by their psychological as well as their material legacy. There are few if any expectations of positive change. People’s survival and livelihood strategies actually depend on *not* aspiring to or actively seeking change.

In Faisalabad, Pakistan where the focus was power loom workers’ rights, there was no improvement in the fulfilment of rights, nor any respite from poverty, for the marginalised households covered in the RCs.

In Uganda, we observed that the personal difficulties and psychological stress that can overtake one’s life are made more dangerous by a decline in social support and unfair, inaccessible and inadequate government services, especially in urbanising areas. People who are very poor have poorer education (because they cannot afford high quality schooling), poorer health (because they cannot afford to pay for health care) and poorer connections in finding jobs. Regions that are poor, such as northern Uganda, where our Pader site is located, suffer these inequalities at a broad scale.

While many of the poor people we met work extremely hard, have enthusiasm and optimism and are managing to get by, life is becoming ever more expensive and competition for every job or parcel of land is increasing. Political and administrative corruption is not improving. The difficulties of exiting from poverty and the ease with which a family can fall back into it are systemic – inequality, discrimination, corruption and unsustainable environmental practices are normal and not perceived to be changing for the better.

Low expectations of government and NGOs. For the Ugandans living in poverty that we met, and especially for those who suffer the most discrimination – women, people living in the north, and people with no material or social capital – state institutions and political networks provide inadequate support. People see state officials as selfish and exploitative, but they generally placate them and avoid complaining, in order to avoid trouble and to get what little they can from them. Government and NGO projects do not feature in people's conversations as ways of enabling a reliable escape from poverty. The general message we got from almost all the poor people we met in Uganda is that NGOs are seen as organisations from which they can expect gifts, rather than allies in creating sustainable change. This mistrust is a telling aspect of the relationship between people living in poverty and most of those mandated to provide assistance and services, and needs to be recognised and acknowledged if relationships and results are to improve. While there were a number of references to CSOs providing support such as bursaries, agricultural inputs or access to anti-retroviral medication, we did not find evidence that CSOs (whether supported by Sweden, or not) had been able to make significant change to enabling conditions for the families and communities we visited. Similarly, in all three sites in Pakistan, people struggled to be accepted as real citizens who have rights that are respected by those with power, and this limits their willingness to raise their voices as citizens.

3.2.2 People's strategies for change

Hopes and expectations. In Pakistan, people's highest priority in the urban site was to gain access to basic social security, labour rights and a minimum wage, while in the rural sites, people wanted access to diversified livelihoods to avoid having to migrate. In Faisalabad, the power loom workers wanted alternative livelihood options which would enable them to escape the dysfunctional and exploitative textile sector.

In Nicaragua there were major differences in people's strategies for change. The legacy of the revolution and the power of working together is in contrast with an attitude of 'fend-for-yourself-in-the-market-economy', held by those who feel that positive change will only happen through increased access to money and commerce, in forms such as cash crops, remittances and the exploitation of natural resources.

The families we visited in Uganda identified the main enabling conditions for a good life as access to productivity, markets, decent employment, effective and relevant

services (education, health, water and justice), security, a healthy environment, fair and respectful treatment, social networks, spiritual and social belonging, and family.

Carefulness. In our RC sites in Uganda, people nurtured their limited resources with infinite care. Each shilling, each hour of labour, and each relationship was carefully deployed, after due thought and discussion as to priorities. When NGOs come to the community calling for meetings, people living in poverty try to weigh up what advantage may be gained over other uses of their time. Often the poorest will choose not to attend, as the costs are seen as too high. Other reasons for not coming to meetings include not being invited, and not feeling welcome. This is another form of care: care for one's own dignity.

Hard work and self-reliance. Ugandans emphasised that hard work is the one thing they can rely on – even though it can be undermined by illness and accident. People rely on their own work, that of their families, and in some areas, on communal work. People borrow money and make small investments, but they prefer to borrow from friends and family, so that difficulties in repayment can be managed.

Education. In Nicaragua and Uganda education is still seen by many as vitally important in creating enabling conditions and improving one's own circumstances. Yet the evidence does not support this, showing that this route to betterment is frequently blocked. In particular, education often proves to be a dead-end for women. While in both rural and urban Pakistan people see education for children as the only way to escape poverty and become productive citizens, in remote rural areas like Ghotki, education is no more than an unattainable dream. Although more schools exist in urban areas, poorer families struggle to keep their children in school.

Migration. In all three countries, domestic and international migration is taking over from local livelihoods and even education as a strategy for rural people to improve their conditions. As a route towards creating enabling conditions for positive change, however, migration has serious drawbacks: it can produce indebtedness, deplete the community work force, disperse families and cause social disruption and new forms of criminality and victimisation.

Association and leadership. In Nicaragua, a minority of those we spoke to hold onto the idea that positive change is achieved through inclusive organisation and fair and honest leadership. But such situations are acknowledged to be extremely rare and undermined by the current government's tendencies. The ideal of realising rights through collective struggle, with the community fabric getting strengthened through the building of collective power, is further undermined by people's vulnerability to disasters and climate change. As noted above, Ugandans have similarly low expectations of their leaders and of organisations.

However, where individuals or families do access self-help groups or associations, including those supported by Swedish CSOs, they take advantage of these

opportunities. In Pakistan, we met a 16-year-old girl who has started attending an adolescent-friendly centre (AFC):

According to her mother, Kamala never went to school, and going to the AFC has been useful. She felt some level of change in her young daughter since she took interest in the AFC. Before, she was always quarrelling and rude, but she now is more respectful and helpful. Kamala shared her fondness for her AFC, where she made friends with whom she laughed, and got information which she found useful. The computers and games in the AFC were a fascination for her, as she had never seen them before. Initially she was shy to go the AFC but gradually she became interested, and now wants to stay at the centre for longer. (Ghotki, Pakistan)

Rational passivity. A major finding from all three countries is a low level of expectation that changes in enabling conditions will happen. People see their own efforts as the way out of their situation, and appreciate the opportunities that they can grasp, such as access to schools or NGO projects. But few people raise their voices and complain about poor services or demand their rights, because they fear losing what little that they have. Loyalty is often given to local leaders, politicians and administrators, as well as more powerful families and patrons, in order to get what little financial or other benefits may be on offer. It is unrealistic to hope or expect that people who are very poor are going to be at the forefront of demands for change.

Moreover, in places where we could get real insights into clientelist and patronage systems – mainly in Uganda and Nicaragua– rational passivity was not only a strategy for avoiding negative repercussions, but also for improving one’s living conditions by keeping patronage relationships stable. Rational passivity is a strategy for working within, rather than finding alternatives to, current unjust structures.

3.2.3 Theories of change and logics of intervention

We now turn to the first part of EQ6, which asks “*What are the theories of change and strategies of Swedish CSOs and their partners?*”

Annex 6 provides in table form a descriptive account of the theories of change and intervention logics of SFOs and their LPOs, as observed and documented during the meso-level part of the evaluation. This table is based on documents, interviews, observations, learning events and other interactions between the researchers and the organisations. The purpose is to provide our interpretation based on these sources, but not yet to analyse this.

4 Human Rights Based Approach – Meanings and Practices

Building on the realities and multiple dimensions of poverty identified above, in this section we examine the understandings and practices of the human rights based perspectives and the four HRBA principles emphasised in the Swedish CS strategy. We first explore *people's perceptions and experiences of participation, transparency, accountability and non-discrimination* (EQ3) and then turn to the *understandings and practices of these principles by the SFOs and LPOs* (EQ6b).

4.1 WHAT DO HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVES MEAN TO PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY?

EQ3 asks “*What does a human rights based perspective mean to people living in poverty and marginalisation, in the context of the key issue?*” We have approached this question by asking more generally how people understand *human rights* in the context of their daily lives, what the principles of participation, transparency, accountability and non-discrimination mean in their experience, and what they are saying and doing in relation to these principles.

4.1.1 Awareness of rights

In our RCs in all three countries, we found that the people we met living in poverty usually had a reasonably good sense of what their human rights are, and whether they are being fulfilled or denied. This can sometimes be attributed directly to human rights training and awareness-raising, including that provided by CSOs. Some people's views align with ‘universal’ notions of rights, such as those as enshrined in national or international law. But understandings of rights are also mixed with pragmatic, contextual and historical meanings arising from people's life experiences, and people's awareness of their rights is rarely matched by any expectation that they will be realised.

Many Nicaraguans, for example, are very aware of international human rights standards, from their experience of the Sandinista revolution and encounters with external actors and development projects, but their practical expectations of fulfilling these rights are framed by power relations going back to colonial times, local patronage systems, and indigenous social structures. This leads to a hybrid concept of rights, which links them with entitlements to material benefits, political space or status as a reward for loyalty – to a dominant social group, a powerful family or leader – or to ideas about rewarding sacrifice based on religious beliefs or political militancy.

Ugandans have a similar hybrid concept of rights. Their day-to-day practices in claiming entitlements, relating to authorities, dealing with conflict, and managing activities and relationships is rarely framed as a democratic process of claiming rights. While there are many rights protocols enshrined in the Ugandan constitution, people often experience these rights if they behave as ‘good clients’ in relation to powerful leaders and patrons. While NGOs have done a lot of work to raise awareness of human rights, we found little evidence that people believe they *personally* have hopes of fulfilling them. Whatever they may have been told about rights, their assessment is based on what they have experienced and know to be real.

In Wakiso and Mbarara, people understand that they have a right to life, family support, private property, market access and school, but few consider themselves entitled to other economic, social, civil or political rights. In Pader, the right to life and bodily integrity seems more fragile after the war, but family norms are strong and land rights are being actively claimed. In most cases people have most faith in and take most responsibility for rights embedded in tradition. Most do not think that government sees ordinary citizens as rights-holders. When a government-appointed leader provides protection, provision or participation, it is looked on as a favour or as recompense for political allegiance.

In Pakistan, we found that people in remote rural areas like Ghotki have an emerging awareness of rights that was not previously there, for example as a result of their greater exposure to the work of local NGOs following the Indus floods, and that they are starting to act on this greater consciousness. This can be seen as a positive result of SFO-supported DRR measures. People reported that they were more aware of their rights, better prepared for disasters, and have a greater sense of solidarity and a lower level of internal conflicts. In the urban context of Faisalabad, our RCs suggest that the poorest people are less aware that they have universally recognised rights – and even where they are aware, they have no way to fulfil those rights. The power loom workers are focused on achieving their rights as a means of securing higher wages and a more secure livelihood.

4.1.2 Participation

The Ugandans living in poverty that we met during the RCs feel that they have lost opportunities to participate in decisions affecting the development of their communities. They understand ‘participation’ as getting a portion of any resources coming into the community from outside. For NGOs, this limited perception of participation presents a challenge. Many organisations believe that if citizens can increase their income and develop an awareness of rights, then they should be also able to participate in and get more power over decisions in the community, or even at higher levels of the political structure. Yet Uganda’s poorest citizens are not invited to participate in decisions, and have little access to economic opportunities. With increasing competition for jobs and markets, and with little improvement in services,

those living in poverty face even more hurdles than everyone else. Savings groups are widely promoted by NGOs as a means of empowerment and a way of training for participation, but are often very difficult for people living in poverty to participate in: they take up time and require a level of contribution that is often out of people's reach.

In Nicaragua, too, economics constrains the viability of participation as a means of fulfilling rights. Survival has become more individualised as migration remittances crowd out collective livelihoods, and monetisation undermines collective natural resource management. The ideal of collective action to get rights from state duty-bearers is undermined by three factors:

- a) Privatisation of services fragments the 'cause' and the 'target' of the struggle: the duty-bearer is no longer the state, but multiple private providers whose responsibilities are not seen in terms of rights.
- b) An understanding of 'participation' as the way that poor and marginalised communities should secure their own needs *without* state support, undermines this key ingredient in collective social struggle.
- c) When basic social provision is a need to be paid for, and delivered at low quality, better off people 'exit' to use private services people, leaving people in poverty and marginalisation to struggle for their entitlements on their own.

Given the lack of expectations of change among most people living in poverty we encountered in Nicaragua, the nature of their participation is mostly linked to pragmatic concerns. People participate with an attitude of resignation, often engaging differently in public and private spaces. In the North Pacific and Managua sites, many are critical of participation in spaces for dialogue defined by others ("invited spaces"³³) and conditioned by political loyalty. They express frustration with the lack of *benefit* from these spaces, showing conformity and resignation to avoid conflict while being quietly critical, or faking loyalty to access 'benefits' that are actually basic rights. In the Caribbean more widely, the difference between public and hidden discourse can be observed in the occasional upsurges of violent threats (machete clanging³⁴, kidnapping a regional leader), which then subside into apparent passivity, silence and resignation when nothing changes. These 'double discourses' can be interpreted either as disempowerment, or as a kind of resilience or long-term strategy for survival in which people's sense of their lack of power is matched by a sense of dignity in keeping their discontent hidden behind a mask or shielded from the powerful.³⁵ They show that people in situations of poverty and marginalisation use

³³ Gaventa, J. (2006) 'Finding the spaces for change: A power analysis', *IDS Bulletin* 37(6): 23–33

³⁴ For details, please see the Nicaragua Country Report

³⁵ Scott, J. (1992) *Domination and the Arts of Resistance – Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven: Yale

not only participation, but also non-participation, resistance or open disobedience as forms of agency to survive difficult situations, or in response to closed or exclusive spaces.

Some of the same people who described their non-participation and resistance also used international and constitutional rights discourse to describe their demands for fair access to knowledge about rights, timely information, and full and equal inclusion in decision-making that affects them. In some cases, their attitudes to participation had changed for the better when community leadership had changed, with the arrival of independent leaders considered to be trustworthy. In other examples, people chose to participate when they felt it was dignified to get involved. Positive experiences of participation included spaces for reciprocal agricultural production, exchanges in which food and drink were given away, and joint work for mutual benefit, public good and solidarity, which maintain the image of the community. Some of these spaces for participation were experienced as life-restoring or spiritual refuges from daily pressures, discrimination and violence, but although they required participation, this did not make them ‘democratic spaces for citizen participation’ in a political sense. Rather, they are directly related to a sense of self-esteem, self-empowerment and belonging, as well as a commitment to individual or collective action for change.

4.1.3 Non-discrimination

In Nicaragua, discrimination is a fact of life for women, and for other social groups whose identities invoke discrimination. Discrimination is both structural – embedded in state policies and practices – and reproduced through individual and group agency. In all domains of life, strong forms of invisible power are at work, holding discrimination in place and keeping non-discrimination as, at best, an ideal that people can hardly imagine. Non-discrimination is only sought by well-organised groups representing the rights of minorities, such as people with disabilities. Discrimination helps to sustain the historically skewed distribution of public goods, by obliging people to solve their needs through relationships of patronage – whether with the state or other duty-bearers – instead of being able to claim them as rights.

Rights mean more, and have more potential as a change strategy, to organised minority groups than to the vast majority of the population against whom discrimination is completely normalised and invisibilised – such as women, rural people and the indigenous population. For most Nicaraguans living in poverty and marginalisation, non-discrimination – if they can imagine it – means taking on equal rights through personal changes such as having self-esteem, not subordinating oneself

to discriminatory attitudes in order to secure support, not accepting paternalistic gestures, becoming more self-reliant, trusting oneself to make one's own decisions, controlling one's own money and mobility, or shifting traditional gender roles and stereotypes. These changes require changes in families and communities that include shifts in values, equal control over the family economy, inclusive community organisation, robust collective representation, access to information and training, being able to question authority and express one's own religious beliefs or ideology without reprisals, acceptance of one another's differences, equal rights to decide and speak in community and public spaces, and access to being elected to decision-making and leadership positions. Other changes of attitude, law and policy in governance institutions at municipal, regional and national levels that are needed to promote non-discrimination include positive reforms on recent changes to laws negatively affecting women, access to general and specialised education, equal access employment, and income generation.

Ugandans living in poverty and marginalisation expect to be discriminated against, and do not expect parity in service access or gender equality. Gender discrimination is everywhere in Uganda, despite many years of women's rights efforts. In Pader, women and girls suffer particularly high levels of discrimination, as well as widespread sexual violence, with little resolution so far, even though local courts are hearing cases. People are also acutely aware of the discrimination against northern Uganda that led to the war, but they acknowledge that efforts are now being made to rebalance the situation. Elsewhere in Uganda there is widespread suspicion between different ethnic groups about favours to the larger groups that belong to the main alliance of power in Uganda. Even in Wakiso, where ethnicity is less distinct among the shifting peri-urban population, political conversations are quick to revive ethnic divisions.

4.1.4 Transparency and accountability

Pakistan has made some steps towards devolving powers to its provinces and local authorities, but this has not yet delivered improved services, as the provincial governments lack human and financial capacity. Far from increasing transparency or accountability, these changes have created uncertainty among different government departments about their roles, and have tended to reduce their effectiveness. People do not have expectations of transparent and accountable public services. Health services are especially poor in remote rural areas, with minimal government investment and very high rates of child and neo-natal mortality.³⁶ Public education in

³⁶ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/550876/unhealthy-revelations-pakistan-plagued-by-dismal-healthcare-system/>

rural areas is suffering from decades of neglect by successive governments, and as many as half of all children complete even primary education.

Pakistan's current political unrest reflects general public disillusion with politicians and the political system, and a perceived failure by successive governments to act accountably by getting to grips with systemic problems such as corruption and electricity outages. Although the country has more than 45,000 registered NGOs, the majority offer religious education and are located in the more developed provinces, and do not focus on demanding accountability or rights. NGOs face a number of threats, especially in insecure provinces, where they need government permission to work in certain districts, and where they face the threat of terrorist attack if they are seen to be promoting education for women or vaccination. Those receiving foreign funding are vulnerable to accusations that they are promoting Western donors' agendas; a recent tightening of the rules governing the registration of NGOs, and a Foreign Contributions Regulations Act is currently being enacted that will require all NGOs to declare all their sources of foreign income.

In this context, it was not always clear in the RC areas how the rights based approaches of LPOs were responding to people's own conceptions of their rights. For example, a project that aimed to promote child rights did not respond to the communities' main concerns about access to education and health care. Of the 25 target villages, 19 had no schools, yet the right to education was not evident in the programme design, and education was left to the efforts of retired teachers. There were no primary health facilities other than polio vaccination teams. While awareness of rights has increased, people's ability to claim their rights has changed little.

Ugandans in all three RC sites have little expectation of transparency in political decisions, nor do they expect a right to information. Even when officials do provide information, people point out that it is piecemeal and not guaranteed to be accurate. However, the rights-based work of two of the LPOs discussed in the following section show that a measure of transparency can be demanded and achieved through avenues such as research and media.

Talk of accountability generates a variety of responses in Uganda. Nobody expects accountability from government, particularly not from the country's leaders. Respondents in Wakiso explained how people in savings groups often are not accountable to each other, although in Pader and Mbarara the sense was that accountability in such groups is high. While people appreciate the work of NGOs when they can get access to it, and are aware that NGOs have to be accountable to donors and government, they do not feel that they themselves can hold NGOs to account or influence them.

In practice, rights-claiming in Uganda is largely local – claims are made on powerful individuals to provide assistance or opportunity, using bonds of kinship or promises of political support. People avoid making demands on local government for services

or resources that may be their right, as they fear being accused of being ‘opposition’. One NGO-supported community group was unable to demand a school from the authorities, even though they were entitled to one, and had been encouraged by an NGO to do so. The area councillor told the villagers “don’t bother going to the district because you are poor people and no one will listen to you; I’ll push this for you.”

Local people are pragmatic and spend their time and effort on production, consolidating mutual support and assets, and finding ways to become strong enough to withstand insecurity and negative politics. The state cannot be relied upon to uphold rights – it is more likely to take them away – but it can be cajoled, pressed or avoided. There are however a few successful and important cases of collective and individual rights-claiming which give reason for optimism, detailed below.

In Nicaragua, accountability and transparency are closely linked to the possibility for developing self-esteem and agency, the ownership of stand-alone rights, authentic participation, inclusive democratic practices and non-discrimination. The findings suggest that while there is an implicit demand for accountability, the concept itself and any system or culture of accountability are a long way off, requiring long-term strategies from civil society actors to unpack and transform the prevailing political culture.

Accountability for fulfilling rights means little or nothing in practice to Nicaraguans whose basic needs are neglected by the state; expectations that the state will exercise its role of duty-bearer are low or non-existent. Meeting pressing basic subsistence needs requires money; they are not seen as rights, even when meeting such needs is enshrined in legal, constitutional or international rights frameworks. The struggle for what should be rights is in fact a careful navigation of the power dynamics of paternalism, driven by a logic of securing basic needs by behaving as ‘good clients’.

4.1.5 A few signs of hope

A minority of those we spoke to in Nicaragua do retain a sense of rights, and perceive how their rights are being manipulated by power-holders. Vestiges remain of what participation used to mean in the context of the revolutionary struggle, and of how it used to bring with it empowerment, a sense of belonging and other related ‘enabling factors’. Given the country’s social revolutionary past and history of collectivism, Nicaraguans’ perceptions about what rights are and how they get realised, is undergoing enormous and disconcerting change.

There are also some signs of positive change in Uganda, where legislation demonstrates an increasing recognition of rights. Some instances of collective rights-claiming in health, housing and environmental protection, and the courageous activities of rights-claiming organisations, indicate some progress. While rights-claiming organisations are often threatened and sometimes closed down, there are

some important examples of progress – people insisting on their rights to an unpolluted environment and women standing up for equality.

In Pakistan, a positive shift in the last ten years has been the growth of a robust and independent judiciary which has played an important role in challenging the government on numerous issues, many of them concerned with human rights.

4.2 HOW ARE HUMAN RIGHTS BASED PRINCIPLES PUT INTO PRACTICE BY CSOs?

EQ6b asks “*What do the four human rights principles of participation, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability mean in their practice (by SFOs and partners), in the context of the key issue?*” Having already referred to the theories of change and logics of intervention of these organisations (EQ6a, in Section 3 and Annex 6), we focus here on how they apply the HRBA in different contexts, and what challenges they face in doing so.

4.2.1 Nicaragua

While all the SFOs involved in the evaluation espouse HRBAs, their vision, strategies and methodologies vary, and implementation challenges arise. SFOs and LPOs work on strategies for advocacy, information and training, to motivate people in situations of poverty and marginalisation to demand recognition of their rights. Successful work has focused on advocacy around legal frameworks and influencing the state through institutional spaces for coordination and dialogue, but in some sectors these spaces are closed, and SFOs cannot pursue change by this route.

Some SFOs and LPOs point to the state’s responsibility as duty-bearer, and aim to develop advocacy to counteract the current tendency towards privatised service provision. This sometimes leads to more emphasis on coordinating with and influencing the state, and less emphasis on influencing specific sectors of the population, or on strengthening the legitimacy of self-representation for citizen agency. We challenge these SFOs and LPOs to develop more diversified strategies to influence both the state and society.

A more society-focused strategy would seek to change discriminatory social and cultural values, attitudes and practices. A stronger citizen agency focus on self-esteem and educational campaigns would reinforce advocacy by building stronger, more independent constituencies. While the current imbalance is understandable in the present political climate, a lack of emphasis on building stronger constituency bases generates a risk of reinforcing existing patterns of exclusion.

One LPO that has a society-focused strategy works to address violence against women and child rights in indigenous communities. They sometimes found that community leaders themselves violate rights, and become defensive, creating

obstacles for the organisation's work and justifying practices as part of their cultural tradition. When this occurred, the LPO looked for other allies such as teachers, church leaders or members of the elders' council.

While most SFOs and their partners feel they have advanced their own rights based approaches, they pointed to a need for greater dialogue and shared analysis, both between themselves and with Sida, about the meaning of the HBRA in the Nicaraguan context. This would ensure more effective strategies and foster exchange and learning.

Some of the positive examples of *participation* from the RC sites and LPO work were change processes that strengthened people first, and then their organisations, in order to reinforce the idea of people as holders of inalienable rights. Where this has worked well, participants underwent transformations in their personal awareness, enabling them to become more autonomous. This has been especially important in developing women's and young people's leadership.

These examples, and comments from some SFOs, suggest that knowledge about rights and spaces for association is not enough to ensure active participation. Participatory approaches are needed that respect diversity of voices and leadership within communities, connect public and private dimensions, and work on helping individuals develop power from within. Such approaches may result in more authentic and effective forms of participation in organisational and public spaces.

Other examples – of young people in the Caribbean, women in the North Pacific, and people with disabilities locally and nationally – show the current importance of networks and representative organisations in ensuring collective actions that create a sense of belonging, develop new values and critical awareness, and contribute to participation in collective citizen action. Within most representative organisations there is a strong sense of a common cause, action and voice, and shared experiential knowledge. But when this common cause becomes a single discourse, there is danger that internal diversity is downplayed. At the June 2014 learning event, a discussion of the advances of a small producers' LPO pointed to the value of diverse opinions and internal dialogue for advocacy.

Creating spaces for participation in education, training and awareness-raising on self-esteem and knowledge of rights has been core to the strategies of SFOs and their partners. According to some, these spaces have been most successful when they have taken into account local experience and conditions, and enabled the incorporation of new practices.

Some challenges for work involving citizen participation and organisation include leadership and internal democracy (especially the renewal of leadership and the practice of leaders 'empowering' a few selected participants), methodologies for

participation and empowerment, autonomy, and financial sustainability and management.

Our findings show that in some SFOs there is timidity in addressing human and women's rights, due in part to the closure of space for independent critical citizens and civil society, but also to the perspectives and belief systems of the personnel and constituencies of the SFOs and their partners. Deeper debates are needed about empowerment, *non-discrimination*, and social and political exclusion and stigmatisation.³⁷

In some cases, there are inconsistencies between theories of change and internal institutional policies and practices. This can take the form of internalised discriminatory attitudes within organisations working with a gender perspective, leading to work for women's individual and collective empowerment being stereotyped. In some disability organisations, internal policies are needed to ensure the employment and training of people with disabilities as support staff.

Further discussion of intersectional approaches,³⁸ building on work being done across the Caribbean region of Nicaragua, could benefit all actors who are implementing the Swedish CS strategy in Nicaragua. Only one SFO involved in this research demonstrated sensitivity to regional approaches, through its focus on indigenous and Afro-descendent people's rights. There is insufficient learning from Caribbean experience on land rights, autonomy and diversity, and sustainable traditional economic and agricultural practices.

Across the Pacific and Caribbean regions of Nicaragua, there are some outstanding examples of work on social audits, citizen participation and electoral observation as mechanisms for demanding *accountability* and *transparency*, especially in relation to municipal and regional governance structures. But in Nicaragua, there are tensions about accountability and transparency, and some departments of the country municipalities have been instructed to ban the terms 'social audit', 'political/policy advocacy' and 'citizen participation'. This situation is of extreme concern, given our findings about widespread levels of corruption from the community upwards.

³⁷ This was a key outcome of the June 2014 learning event.

³⁸ Intersectional approaches go beyond 'multidimensional poverty' analysis by taking into account the compounding effects of different kinds of discrimination and marginalisation – e.g. on the basis of gender, disability, age, sexuality, ethnicity, rural/urban identities – and their complex interaction with other dimensions of social, economic and political exclusion. See also Recommendation 7.4.

In general there is little evidence of internal LPO accountability in our findings, and in some cases there are tensions between leaders' dual roles as board members and paid project staff. At the same time, most SFOs have worked with their partners on 'upward' accountability and transparency, especially in facilitating capacity building for strengthening administrative skills.

At least one SFO – Diakonia – believes there should be a 'downward' accountability system towards partners. They propose using the logic of Humanitarian Accountability Partnership³⁹ certification, a system of evaluating good practice in humanitarian aid frameworks, to enable the participation of LPOs in project monitoring and accountability processes. They also suggest that national NGO offices should be publicly accountable to their partners as a way of making visible and 'decriminalising' the work of civil society in public opinion. One of the LPOs suggested that this should include telling local partners how funding is used, both to establish greater transparency about implementation and to develop a relationship based on the same rules for all.

There is almost unanimous criticism among the SFOs and LPOs we met in Nicaragua for new results-based formats for accountability and administrative reporting, which require a great deal of administrative work that takes time away from programme work for both SFOs and LPOs. This affects CSOs working with international donors other than Sida, but we found that results orientation has in some cases undermined existing flexible relations between Sida, SFOs and their partners. Overall there is a clear demand for transparency in both directions and a general sense that, to achieve this, there needs to be greater downward accountability in the aid chain from both Sida and SFOs.

4.2.2 Pakistan

As in Nicaragua, LPOs in Pakistan are challenged by finding ways of providing services that respond to community needs whilst also cultivating local organisations and citizens capable of demanding rights. The strategic progression from needs to rights is not easy to achieve, and people's experiences of demanding their rights have had mixed outcomes. Nonetheless, there are positive examples in Pakistan.

³⁹ See www.hapinternational.org

In common with many similar well-respected national NGOs, Plan's LPO in Ghotki, the Rural Development Policy Institute (RDPI), takes a pragmatic approach to rights. In terms of the HRBA principles, both RDPI and the CBOs it supports promote greater *participation* by rural people, and are constantly pressing government agencies to be more transparent and accountable. Both the Ghotki and Chakwal projects try to operationalise the principle of participation, and specifically the right of children and youth to participate in decisions that affect them. In Ghotki, this means giving young people the responsibility for DRR.

For our RC communities, although practical results are more important than principles, greater awareness of rights is leading to increased voice. For example, in the Ghotki area during the 2013 election, people were able to publicly express their dissatisfaction with the old system under which they were often instructed how to vote by a candidate's paid henchmen, and they were openly critical about the promises offered by the candidates.

CBOs in Ghotki have won the trust not only of the communities but also of the district government; they feel they can now approach elected representatives with their demands. They have a good understanding of the human rights based approach, seeing its principles as important instruments for empowering the marginalised and reducing the gap between rich and poor.

These CBOs, working through a network of village organisations and groups, promote rights through advocacy, which they see as the most important tool for rights awareness. Their rights-promotion strategy works at three different levels: people, government departments and elected representative and other powerful local stakeholders. Rights-awareness activities with these three sets of actors include networking, seminars, and peaceful rallies and demonstrations.

We found that CBOs in the Ghotki area take a collaborative rather than confrontational approach, even in relation to more sensitive issues like 'honour killing'. They argue that a confrontational approach might be counterproductive as it would be likely to elicit a repressive response from the authorities; instead, they aim to raise their voices to raise awareness, and pursue advocacy, looking to resolve problems in non-violent ways through forming village-level groups and organisations.

Both the Labour Education Foundation (LEF) and the trade union it supports, the Labour Qaumi Movement (LQM), face considerable challenges in ensuring legal recognition of the rights of power loom workers. While the constitution and labour laws give workers the right to organise in trade unions and associations, and some basic employee rights, those who try to assert these rights are regarded as seditious. In 2010, after a LQM-initiated demonstration ended in a violent confrontation at a factory, six LQM leaders who were leading the campaign to get the employers to pay power loom workers the legal minimum wage were given jail sentences totalling 590

years. The justification for these punitive sentences was that the accused men had to be treated as ‘terrorists’, but LQM believes that the employers bribed the judge to ensure harsh sentences as a deterrent. The leaders remain in prison to this day.

At the international level there appears to be an excellent fit between Sida and the SFOs working in Pakistan – Plan Sweden, Save the Children Sweden and OPIC – as all three organisations and their partners follow a similar HRBA in their programming and reflect the HRBA principles in their work.

The greatest challenge in pursuing the HRBA in Pakistan is the lack of local democracy and *accountability*. Although there has been some devolution of power to the provinces under the current civilian government, governance remains highly centralised, making it very difficult for CSOs to hold government to account at district level. Our example of CBOs and NGOs working in Ghotki shows that, despite this, some progress can be made by working on positive relationships with specific local district administrations. What is far more uncertain is whether the current centralised local government system will deliver the basic services of health and education being advocated both by members of the communities we met during our RCs, and by their CBOs.

4.2.3 Uganda

Using the HRBA is difficult in Uganda, because the government does not give high priority to rights awareness or claiming among its citizens or its functionaries. Many organisations, notably those supported through Sweden’s CS strategy, claim to work with the HRBA, but they face unfavourable conditions. Most NGOs are not able to claim rights for their own freedom of operation, let alone creating space for people living in poverty to claim theirs. Some focus on providing basic services and forming small community organisations, while others advocate for better policies, but most do not feel strong enough to question structures of inequality.

This slightly negative overall perspective illustrates the reality of political power in Uganda, in which a relatively small elite controls the levers of development, through the economy, politics and the administration. Corruption is widespread. NGOs working on social development feel that they are constantly watched, and not encouraged to involve themselves in the political issues that underpin the absence of opportunities and the low level of support for people living in poverty. They are, however, appreciated for their tireless work to support the state in service delivery, and providing material and financial inputs to farmers and small businesses.

Shelter and Settlement Alternatives/Ugandan Human Settlements Network (SSA/UHSNET) the housing rights network supported by We Effect, considers its effectiveness comes from the active *participation* of its members, and that direct interface with communities has been useful in setting priorities. SSA/UNSNET also networks with allies in Uganda and abroad. The network promotes *non-*

discrimination in its efforts for people in difficult situations, and promotes the rights of those who are discriminated against – such as those with HIV/AIDS or disabilities – to housing. It also puts effort into dealing with gender issues. It promotes the participation of urban people living in poverty in both self-help and advocacy efforts, including calls for government and private sector *accountability* and *transparency* in basic protection and provision. It also makes significant use of the media for accountability and transparency.

SSA/UHSNET consciously combines advocacy and service delivery. Rather than leaving the task of concrete interventions to its members, it recognises that it needs to be directly active to support people living in poverty. It is not clear whether this is due to a results agenda driven by government and donors (e.g. facilitating savings and housing solutions, rather than working on more abstract and political matters such as legislation and policy), or to the priorities of members and communities. It is also not clear whether direct support is effective in achieving the objective of creating enabling conditions for housing; although the successful saving of US\$750 towards building a housing co-operative is an achievement for one particular group of women, it will have a minimal impact on achieving decent housing for them.

On-the-ground activities build community capacities to demand rights through collaborative work with leaders, as well as promoting dialogue on community challenges. But the network has yet to clarify the best way of balancing its direct support and advocacy work. SSA/UHSNET is aligned with the political realities of housing in Uganda, for example playing to the needs of political leaders for votes. But this alignment also means that their efforts – such as a slum clean-up day observed in this research – risk being attention-grabbing exercises, rather than consistent processes for improving enabling conditions. SSA/UHSNET leadership notes that most people living in poverty would be satisfied with a decent house, rather than the *right* to a decent house that may never be realised.

The National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE), supported by SSNC, has a strong grasp of the human rights based approach. In promoting environmental rights with an approach that respects all the players from diverse members of a community through to elite leaders, NAPE's work appears to be on course to uphold citizen rights, protect citizens from harm done by third parties, and provide compensation for environmental damage.

The organisation uses non-discrimination as a means of creating strength for its campaigns. The 'sustainability schools' it runs emphasise diversity in order to get different people involved. Different strengths – of women, young people, or traditional leaders – are deliberately sought, through NAPE's system of volunteers. Non-discrimination is also evident in the way professionals from Kampala will come and support local protestors to resist environmental incursions.

Participation also features quite strongly in NAPE's approach. Since their theory of change involves a mixture of quality knowledge and significant numbers of participants (a sense of the political weight of those protesting against an environmental abuse), it is important to NAPE to encourage the greatest possible number of people to take part. This is why the organisation puts emphasis on 'burning issues'. It is possible that if the issue were less threatening, poor people in particular would simply be less willing to act, having to make the usual delicate calculations of how to use their time and whether to risk their physical or other forms of capital.

On issues of *transparency* and *accountability*, NAPE reports that in order for it to remain safe as a small ant biting a large animal, it must make itself completely above suspicion by being transparent and accountable. It is not clear whether it extends the same degree of transparency and accountability towards community members and volunteers.

In its operational approach, NAPE shows respect for participation, transparency, accountability and non-discrimination. Looked at through a NAPE lens, it seems clear that the Swedish CS strategy is right to emphasise these ideals. But there are also other criteria that make it possible for NAPE to be successful. A combination of (a) the quality of the NAPE community approach, which is based on respect for people's ability to take up an issue and uses a mode of consciousness raising; (b) an issue large enough to threaten livelihoods; and (c) national level lobbying moving in concert with local action, can together lead to a change in conditions. When this happens, local people begin to see participation as worthwhile, contact the media and take part in demonstrations in an attempt to influence power-holders and duty-bearers and protect livelihoods. However, not all communities are faced with a threat as profound as oil pollution, and not all issues leverage international corporate social and environmental responsibility concerns in the way that the oil question does.

NAPE is an example of an organisation that supports citizens, including people living in poverty, to claim environmental rights from government and international companies. The organisation shows that it is possible to develop effective partnerships with whole communities using the HRBA. It also uses HRBA principles in its relations with allies and creates solidarity across differently positioned actors, all of whom have a part to play in pushing for change. It is a powerful coalition approach that includes other CSOs, both local and international. The organisation conducts dialogue with powerful actors in government and the private sector, backed by this substantial coalition.

Some members of government would prefer environmental organisations to conform to the individualisation and co-option agenda. According to NAPE's Director, the government tells environmental organisations that they should concern themselves with tree planting and cleaning sewage. NAPE resists these suggestions: "we are fighting for human rights and democracy. NAPE is not in service delivery."

NAPE's success also comes down to its support by groups such as SSNC, which provides it with core funding; its ability to put pressure not only on government but also on international companies that have concerns about their public profile and want to get a deal for oil extraction; and its genuine respect for the intelligence and capabilities of communities and natural leaders within them.

International Aid Services (Uganda) (IAS(U)) is operating in a way that focuses on immediate needs and self-help, in response to people's priority concerns related to livelihoods, but also issues of alcohol, sexual violence and leadership. It appears that IAS(U)'s contribution in leading on behaviour and action is appreciated by the groups to which it gives support. In Pari, Pader District we found that people took action without NGO support in relation to agricultural and financial matters, but they had not taken action on social issues such as sexual violence, nor had they found ways to counteract the vacuum of leadership. It may be that in this regard, IAS(U) leadership offers something that would not otherwise be available. Staff members agree that many of the enabling conditions that should be supplied by government are out of reach, because "the government is not responsive."

IAS(U) is addressing difficult issues which constrain people's material survival and psychological wellbeing. However, from a rights perspective, it is not clear whether the IAS(U) approach is enough to challenge lack of accountability and negative discrimination and whether it truly creates leadership, or simply reproduces an elite and exclusive leadership structure. The organisation is aware that it needs to ask itself if its approach could be more empowering, but knows the size of this task, given that local people do not feel empowered or demand accountability, generally fearing their leaders and feeling unable to challenge them. The LPO itself is discouraged from asking critical questions and making demands of local government, but nonetheless has increased its attention to matters of civic competence as its self-help income activities are hindered by poor local infrastructure.

The meaning and practices of the HRBA in Uganda are shaped by the realities of poverty and by the country and organisational context. Deep-seated patronage has made it difficult for NGOs to do their work in communities. Asking community members to speak up and demand their rights does not always receive favourable reception; many people have too much to lose and too little to gain.

A major challenge faced by LPOs in using a rights based approach is people's expectations that individual leaders rather than institutions are the only hope for meeting their needs. This has fuelled a system of political and elite patronage, where leaders are compelled to promise to deliver all kinds of services with very little reference to the institutions that are supposed to deliver them. It is not strange to hear politicians promising to deliver a road, hospital or electricity to a community while no discussion has taken place with any of the ministries in charge.

Another challenge is the politicisation of NGOs by government. Recent reforms of the NGO law ensure that NGOs are closely monitored and that they stay out of politics.⁴⁰ This new reality has led to significant self-restraint by various NGOs. In some cases their lack of boldness on sensitive issues is due to a conscious avoidance of anything that is considered political. The challenge is that any work which questions powerful politicians can be seen as work that is party-political. Speaking truth to power becomes a façade rather than a reality.

Despite the difficulties, Uganda can boast some remarkable, courageous civil society leaders and organisations. There are a number of civil society groups across the country involved in anti-corruption campaigns, including the Black Monday movement. In addition there are some important initiatives led by veteran civil society activists that aim to move away from donor-funded projects towards contribution-based movements with membership among people living in poverty.

Sida provides support to anti-corruption initiatives through its participation in the Democratic Governance Facility (€5.3 million in 2014), through the portfolio of the Sweden Embassy in Kampala. This facility, a multi-donor basket fund administered by a secretariat, has been able to fund several initiatives which do not involve partnership with international organisations. The facility appears to have made a contribution to the enabling conditions for a civil society watchdog role. It raises a challenge for the Swedish CS strategy: how, in supporting a vibrant and pluralistic civil society, can the strategy also support courageous actors to emerge and operate successfully on a wider and better-connected scale?

Some LPOs that we met during this study suggested that HRBA principles are not always in use in their relations with SFOs, who do not always treat them as equals. Nonetheless they value their relations with SFOs and the connections they make through them with international organisations working on similar issues. The LPOs have called for ‘capacity mobilising’ for themselves, rather than ‘capacity development’. They appreciate it when they are respected, with empowering and participatory processes helping to tap into and release the energies and talents already present. They feel that they need more help with creating enabling conditions, not only for people, but for civil society itself. LPOs complain that most of the time and effort they put into accountability has to be directed upwards towards their international funders.

⁴⁰ Uganda National NGO Forum (2013), *The Looming Danger for Ugandan NGOs: A Historical Analysis of the ‘Wiki-leak’ NGO (Amendment) Bill, 2013*, unpublished, Kampala: Uganda National NGO Forum

5 Plausible Contributions of SFOs and LPOs

This section explores the question of the *plausible contribution of CSOs and their partners to positive changes in the enabling conditions for people living in poverty to improve their lives* (EQ2), and as part of this analysis, *the role of CSO capacity development and enhancement* (EQ5).

5.1 WHAT CONTRIBUTIONS DO CSOs MAKE TO CHANGES IN ENABLING CONDITIONS?

EQ2 asks “*What actors, including the Swedish CSOs and their partners, can plausibly be inferred to be contributing positive changes in the enabling conditions?*”

First, a word on the term ‘plausible contributions’. Identifying clear impact from governance-related aid programmes is complex, because outcomes are not easily observed or quantified and it is difficult to separate the impact of any one contributory factor from another. This has led to the development of some realist approaches to evaluation which strive to avoid over-simplification and unjustified, excessive claims of attributable impact. The term ‘plausible contributions’ comes from one such approach, contribution analysis.⁴¹ In the case of this evaluation, it is challenging to identify plausible contributions of the Swedish CS strategy because:

- a) of the intangible and hard-to-observe nature of some of the impacts the strategy seeks, such as enabling conditions, empowerment and the realisation of rights
- b) many other actors are pursuing similar impacts in the same places and populations, so even where a positive change is detected, it is sometimes impossible to trace it to an effort connected to the strategy
- c) there is a long delivery chain. Sida might deliver support effectively to an SFO, the SFO might deliver support effectively to its LPOs, but the actual delivery of the impact depends on whether the support delivered down that long, multi-actor chain translates into the desired changes in the living

⁴¹ See *Inception Report* Section 1.3 and Mayne (1999) *Addressing Attribution Through Contribution Analysis: Using Performance Measures Sensibly*, Ottawa: Office of the Auditor General

conditions of people in poverty and marginalisation – who, by definition, are hard to reach.

It is important to note also that the general conditions for creating a vibrant and pluralistic civil society, especially in Nicaragua and Uganda, are *deteriorating*, and with them many of the conditions that would enable people to improve their lives. Therefore a contribution may be identified not only as ‘positive change’, but also as holding things in place, or even slowing the rate of deterioration.

Nonetheless, there are some positive contributions that we can point to. Nicaraguan civil society has managed to retain vitality despite worsening conditions, but has paid a high cost in the form of attempts at co-optation, repression and reprisals. The Swedish CS strategy may be helping to mitigate the effects of these disabling tendencies, even if there are no net improvements to speak of. The autonomy and power of Ugandan civil society has perhaps suffered worse from repression, but again Swedish support is a lifeline for those civil society groups taking a stand on issues of human rights, poverty and marginalisation. Pakistani civil society is enjoying more freedoms, albeit within certain political constraints, but the overall contribution of support via the Swedish CS strategy in Pakistan is quite small.

We have identified plausible contributions along four lines: legal and policy changes, organisation and leadership, a vibrant and pluralistic civil society, and enabling conditions for people to improve their living situations. We also identify some potentially less positive contributions.

5.1.1 Contributions to legal and policy changes

SFOs and LPOs included in this study, particularly those in Nicaragua and Uganda, have contributed to a range of legal and policy changes related to environmental law and rights, disability, ethnic minority, indigenous and Afro-descendent communities, education, political pluralism, food security and sovereignty, and agricultural production.

In Nicaragua, SFOs and LPOs have played a significant role in establishing new laws, regulations and budget allocations that recognise the rights of people with disabilities,⁴² and in ensuring their inclusion in the government’s social agenda through their own federation, FECONORI. Concerning the rights of the indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples of the Caribbean coast, SFOs and LPOs have played an

⁴² For example, Laws 763 and 675 on sign language

important role in monitoring the implementation of legal frameworks for the region's political autonomy and indigenous lands⁴³, and contributed to the elaboration and approval of the Autonomous Regional Education System and to achieving a positive legal judgement on the exclusion of the regional political party Yatama from municipal elections in 2000. SFOs and LPOs have also worked to strengthen advocacy by the population and the regional councils and, thanks to these and other efforts, there is now greater national government recognition of ethnic groups. SFOs and LPOs have also contributed to legal changes to further work on the right to food security and sovereignty, and to questioning national production models unfavourable to small agricultural producers.

In Uganda, NAPE has successfully mobilised members and communities to advocate for environmental protection laws. NAPE is demonstrating how to work successfully in the difficult conditions that surround civil society operation in Uganda. On the one hand, it seems to use the HRBA internally and in its relations with other actors, creating solidarity with people living in poverty, as well as creating a dialogue with powerful actors in government and using a coalition approach to work with other civil society actors, both local and international. On the other hand, the organisation works skilfully with the external conditions. NAPE does not find that donor funding distorts its choices, nor does it appear to suffer co-option by the authorities. It has an articulate leader, which may be particularly important in Uganda because of the culture of respect for individuals rather than institutions. NAPE's focus on 'burning issues' draws strength from the poor socio-economic conditions in communities as grounds for protest and lobbying. By contrast, SSA/UHSNET's advocacy on housing rights includes calls for government and private sector accountability and transparency, but its contributions appear to be stronger in facilitating direct support to communities than in achieving policy change.

In rural Pakistan, LPOs and CBOs are successfully engaging in local policy processes, resulting in greater interest shown by district government in these communities and a higher level of direct interaction between them. There are now protest demonstrations by children demanding educational opportunities and schools for their villages. A year ago, children had raised this issue in discussions, but now they are mobilised and have carried out peaceful demonstrations for the right to education, and the community has sent applications to the education authorities.

In the power loom workers' case, however, there has been little impact on employment laws or workers' rights. The trade union needed a longer period of

⁴³ Autonomy Law 28 from 1987, and Law 445 on territorial demarcation

support and mentoring from the LPO to equip them for their significant advocacy struggle – strengthening the leadership and their abilities to negotiate on behalf of members, and stemming the decline in membership.

5.1.2 Strengthening organisation and leadership

The SFOs and LPOs included in this study have contributed to the organisational strength of certain groups and to civil leadership in all three countries. In Nicaragua, disability advocates and indigenous rights advocates stand out. The organisational strengths enhanced among these and other civil society actors include citizen participation, democracy and leadership skills, internal organisation, monitoring, evaluation and learning approaches, management and administrative skills, and knowledge.

With support from an SFO, one Nicaraguan LPO has successfully enlisted new young leaders and promoted a rights-based model of leadership among indigenous youth. We found it to be successfully increasing the transparency of electoral system in the region and feeding a slow but positive change in democratic values. Its SFO-supported work has helped ease inter-generational tensions in indigenous communities, with positive impacts for both the overall governance model and practices, and possibly, although not demonstrably, for rights realisation. SFOs have also helped LPOs to secure Humanitarian Accountability Partnership certification.

In Pakistan, Plan's partnership with RDPI has delivered real benefits for both organisations, and RDPI's capacity has now developed to the point where it should be able to receive its funding direct from donors like Sida, rather than have it channelled through an international NGO. This should be seen as a sign of success for RDPI, rather than a shortcoming for Plan. However, in the flood-affected areas of Sindh there are uncertainties about whether, in the absence of further natural disasters, the same funding will be available for CBOs in the future as there has been in the last four years. International NGOs could have a real role in the future of these CBOs if they were able to provide them with more long-term support, perhaps aimed at helping them become sustainable social enterprises, but we found no examples of this kind of funding.

In Uganda, both NAPE and SSA/UHSNET have strengthened local constituency and user groups, and enhanced their capacities to demand rights. NAPE's efforts to link community-based organising and national level lobbying and media work has been particularly effective in mobilising these groups and building coalitions around environmental rights issues. While IAS(U) has been successful in forming community self-help groups and local leadership around livelihoods, it is now turning its attention to strengthening civic competencies for engaging with government to voice demands.

5.1.3 Strengthening a vibrant and pluralistic civil society

In Nicaragua, LPOs working in a diverse range of fields have increased their conceptual clarity about the HRBA with support from SFOs. Capacities have been built in advocacy and in ways of demanding state accountability to citizens (e.g. social audits, electoral observation, monitoring the implementation of legal frameworks and policies). In some cases where an SFO has clearly contributed to rights awareness, the LPO and its constituents have subsequently realised certain rights (e.g. individual and collective indigenous rights). Nonetheless there are enormous challenges for CSOs in taking independent or critical positions towards government actors and the ruling party, and most spaces for state–civil society dialogue are closed.

In Uganda, NAPE’s coalition-building and campaigning work is notable for building solidarity among differently positioned actors around common demands, and involving them all in pushing for change. The vibrancy and plurality of this coalition enables NAPE to enter into dialogue with powerful actors in the state and private sector, and to resist co-optation. However, on a larger scale it is not evident that current political conditions in Uganda allow the development of a vibrant and pluralistic civil society that can defend and demand the rights of people living in poverty. SFO support in the form of vertical partnerships with individual LPOs is important, but not sufficient to nurture a civil society that can stand up to government. This would require greater support for alliances across different kinds of civil society actors, citizens and other kinds of leaders.

In Pakistan, the research finds that SFO support for LPO activities is having a modest effect on discrete issues of concern to local people’s livelihoods and to children’s health and wellbeing, and that this is strengthening community-based groups and new leadership. Evidence of efforts to strengthen a vibrant and pluralistic civil society is less visible, but there are small signs. A group of CBOs in Ghotki, for example – with help from Plan, via RDPI – have succeeded in coming together with other civil society actors, and getting local authorities to pay attention to their demands. The main question is about the sustainability of these groups, as their support is tied to short-term projects rather than longer-term constituency and coalition building.

5.1.4 Creating enabling conditions for people to improve their lives

In Uganda, partly due to the conditions limiting scope for civil society advocacy on rights, most contributions of SFO and LPO activity are to be found in direct support for services in communities – that is to say, supporting people’s survival strategies rather than their rights. Nonetheless, there are examples of SFO and LPO contributions to small changes in enabling conditions, as noted above.

An LPO in Nicaragua has contributed to positive changes in enabling conditions for people with disabilities to overcome discrimination and live well. It achieved this by

securing mandatory training for teachers, and orienting this training to make the issue of educational inclusion visible. This has been achieved through the LPO's participation and influence in a multi-stakeholder forum that includes government, and by using a rights framework, rather than by taking on a needs-based approach in order to make its claims more acceptable to government. Other LPOs in Nicaragua have brought about improved living conditions through sharing techniques for organic food production and collection, forestry, and the conservation of local seeds, water and soil. LPOs have contributed to small-scale ecological solutions that build resilience based on local knowledge and resources, and serve as a replicable model at community, municipal and national levels. Their work is also contributing to awareness about climate change and disaster preparedness.

In Pakistan, Rahnuma – Plan's local partner in Chakwal – has demonstrated its long experience and strong commitment to improving adolescent sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Partnership with Plan has enabled Rahnuma to improve the way it relates to and supports adolescents. Previously it saw adolescents as a single group, but Plan encouraged it to divide them into three sub-groups according to age and develop materials suitable for the different needs of each. Our research suggests that local organisations like the Ghotki CBOs are achieving positive change. Uses of Sida funding via Plan range from supporting the construction of small embankments to facilitate people's access to their lands, to capacity building on DRR that played a pivotal role in enabling community members to shift their movable assets in good time ahead of the 2013 flood.

5.1.5 Less positive contributions

One SFO working in Nicaragua warns that if 'positive changes in enabling conditions' means 'enabling marginalised and vulnerable people to speak out', then this could – in the current socio-political and ideological context – actually mean increasing people's vulnerability. Another observes that its successes in strengthening the governance structures and practices of an LPO have been undermined by livelihood needs of board members, which make these elected civil society leaders double as paid staff of the organisation, distorting their incentives and governance functions.

An area where some respondents noted that no plausible contribution is being made is the serious discussion of new democratic tendencies and models in Latin American states and civil societies. Although this topic is of pressing importance for Nicaraguan

civil society, it is not being debated because of the sensitivity of doing so under the current regime.

In all three countries, a major area of concern is how often SFOs and LPOs alike felt that their contributions to reducing poverty were severely constrained by the time-consuming and demanding nature of aid management systems. Many LPOs and some SFOs find their transformative potential thwarted by the opportunity costs⁴⁴ imposed by results-based reporting requirements; one LPO stated that it felt more controlled than supported by its SFO. LPOs' scope for diversifying, or for thinking and acting strategically, is drastically limited by funding modalities. Particularly problematic aspects were lack of core funding (many are funded only for specific programmes), detailed budget itemisation, and rigid and tightly defined reporting requirements.

Uganda-based SFOs and LPOs argued that the strong drive to list quick and concrete results in narrow sectoral categories takes away the incentive for local organisations to address systemic causes of poverty, inequality and marginalisation. They are not given the time or money to work on these hard-to-measure aspects of development.

All in all, many sources point to the finding that the bureaucratisation of aid relationships is seriously hindering the development of rights-based work and the implementation of participatory methodologies. Enabling these, rather than hindering them, would require deeper and longer-term strategies that really take into account the voices of people living in poverty and marginalisation.

5.2 WHAT ARE THE PLAUSIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CSO CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT?

EQ5 asks *“What plausible contribution can be inferred to the role of CSO capacity development and enhancement in the context, and in relation to the key issue?”*

At the start of section 5.1 we discussed the difficulties of claiming that the Swedish CS strategy has had its desired impacts, given the nature of those impacts, the shape of the aid delivery chain, and the multiple actors working towards those objectives. Similarly, the development of capacity is also a hard phenomenon to reliably detect and attribute to a specific cause, and it cannot automatically be assumed that newly developed capacity will be invested in what the aid donor intends – in this case,

⁴⁴ ‘Opportunity cost’ refers to the value of something that is lost when an alternative course of action has been chosen: time and energy invested in one activity causes a trade-off with the potential benefits of other activities one might pursue.

enabling conditions and better quality of life for people living in poverty and marginalisation. These caveats aside, there are reasonable grounds for inferring plausible contributions in a number of cases.

Capacity development work supported by SFOs in all three countries has had a range of forms and aims. Broadly, SFOs have aimed to develop LPO capacity to effectively deliver conditions to enable people living in poverty and marginalisation to improve their living conditions and quality of life, and LPOs have aimed to develop citizens' capacity to do this. We have searched for evidence that the capacity development has happened, and evidence that it has had this desired effect on living conditions and quality of life.

5.2.1 Capacities and awareness for realising rights

In Nicaragua, SFOs and LPOs have contributed to strengthening the capacity of citizens and their organisations in terms of making them aware of their rights, making these rights more broadly visible and thereby improving the prospect that they will be realisable, developing leadership and networking qualities and practices, promoting citizen engagement, strengthening agricultural resilience, and supporting organisation and marketing among agricultural producers. It should also be noted that much capacity development in the form of gender and rights awareness-raising has taken place in Nicaragua over the decades, supported by many different actors, and that some of it has had empowering impacts which Swedish support contributes to and builds on.

In Uganda, the Swedish CS strategy has contributed to enhancing the capacity of LPOs to apply the HRBA, with greatest success where the LPO is already a rights-oriented organisation. This suggests that the strategy should not claim to build capacity, but instead emphasise the assumption that SFOs will partner with rights-oriented groups. Asking LPOs to be more challenging to their SFO partners on making the rights based approach relevant to Ugandan conditions could go some way towards making the HRBA more effective.

This raises an important question: do SFOs encounter difficulties in realising the HRBA in their relations with local partners? Do they find local partners unwilling to explore the value of the HRBA? Why is the HRBA more an ideal than a reality for most? To some extent, we observed delicate relations between international and local organisations, with international organisations trying not to tell their Uganda partners what to do. They try to give partners latitude to make their own decisions, while at the same time insisting on heavy reporting requirements. Partnerships are highly prized, and we may underestimate how hard it is for partners to nudge one another out of old habits. It is important to note that these tensions are not unique to relations between Swedish and Ugandan NGOs.

5.2.2 Capacities to subcontract and implement projects

In both Chakwal and Ghotki, Pakistan we found that the capacity of CBOs can be strengthened through project implementation, even when the project is not explicitly about capacity development. Thus the implementation of the DRR project around Ghotki helped to increase CBO expertise in this field, and the experience of implementing Sida-funded projects helped to enhance CBO implementation capacity. Many of the CBOs feel they have the potential to become district-level organisations but feel they need continued support to reach that level. The question also remains as to what degree these project-implementing capacities translate into capacities for implementing the HRBA.

When reports state that a CSO requires increased capacity, it is not always clear what this means in practice. Sometimes, a lack of educated CBO leaders is noted, but educated leaders are not always essential, and there are cases of resource capture where an educated minority takes over a CBO for its own benefit. Most CBOs in rural areas face human resource constraints: there are few educated people available within the communities and they cannot afford to bring staff from the city. Alternatively, capacity development sometimes means that an outside agency – a large local NGO or an international NGO – tries to strengthen a CBO to implement a specific project, but then withdraws without strengthening the CBO's ability to raise its own resources. The experience of the Chakwal SRH project suggests that sustainability may be more difficult to achieve when a CBO is asked to finance an activity previously started by an international NGO, rather than one it has initiated itself.

Similarly in Uganda, as noted above, the capacity development carried out via SFOs and LPOs is doing less to build civil society and promote rights, than it is doing to support poor people's survival strategies through capacities for project management. However, the primary purpose of the strategy is to build an effective civil society, which can work as a body to fight against the conditions that are infringing human rights. Thus the support should be for advocacy and service delivery organisations to constitute a stronger civil society. LPOs say that SFOs do not do enough to support them in standing up to government in a climate of hostility toward civil society.

5.2.3 Organisational and leadership capacities

Foreign funding of LPOs needs to be based on a careful analysis both of the capacity of the LPO and the wider context of the issues that the funding is meant to resolve. In the case of OPIC's funding of LEF, there appears to have been inadequate analysis of LEF's own capacity, and its ability to cope with normal donor financial accountability requirements. Although the intention was for a long-term partnership, funding was terminated early because of concerns about LEF's financial management. This early termination then had negative impacts both on LEF itself, and on the Power Loom Workers Union which it was supporting.

In Chakwal, Sida – via Plan – was funding AFCs run by Rahnuma, providing young people with information on SRH. These centres were very popular with young people, but the project has now come to an end, and it is far less clear what long term changes in attitudes or behaviours, if any, these centres will have brought about within the short time scale of this project.

In Nicaragua, an LPO which noted earlier difficulties with its SFO acknowledged changes for the better. The SFO had taken a respectful distance from the LPO's strategy development and leadership in a way that was consistent with the empowerment and autonomy principles that both organisations prioritised.

5.2.4 Mobilising capacities and convening spaces

The term capacity development is often interpreted to mean the acquisition of abilities and skills, and the replication of best practices. It assumes both that these things are lacking, and that capacity – closely related to power – is an object that can be given and acquired. These assumptions about capacities and their development do not do justice to the deeper work highlighted in some of the positive examples we found, especially in Nicaragua (several examples), but also to some extent in Uganda (e.g. NAPE). These successes involved providing or strengthening processes, methodologies and safe spaces for reflection and action, allowing participants to combine knowledge and awareness through sharing, comparing and re-shaping their own histories. This provided a vital foundation for strengthening collective organisational processes so that they could effectively fulfil needs and realise rights. If we take it that these safe spaces, methodologies and processes are important ingredients of enhanced ability to improve living conditions and quality of life – as our evidence suggests – then they are an important way that SFOs and LPOs have contributed to creating enabling conditions.

However, even if we allow that an assessment of plausible contributions to capacity development needs to include the construction of these personal foundations for organisational development, there is more to it than that. The successful enhancement of citizen participation in developing civil society goes beyond the delivery of isolated inputs – even reflective inputs destined to build up people's agency as citizens. From our findings, capacity seems to be enhanced more readily and successfully in safe spaces where diverse actors can engage subjectively, cross-fertilise ideas and combine their energies with a view to developing actions around common causes. Such spaces included the workshops held in Uganda and Nicaragua in the course of this evaluation to discuss emerging findings with SFO and LPO representatives.

Rather than recommend that Sida – through the Swedish CS strategy and the actors involved in delivering it – facilitate this sort of space, we need to pose the question of whether it is the most appropriate convenor for cross-fertilisation between a country's civil society actors. This question is especially important given the sensitive nature of

the Nicaraguan and Ugandan contexts and the implications for CSOs of being stigmatised as agents of foreign aid donors. If Sida is not the most appropriate convenor, how can spaces such as these be facilitated under the present circumstances, and who might be better placed to convene them, and how might Sida support such an initiative?

6 Relevance, Alignment and Feasibility

This section addresses EQ4, which asks “*What is the relevance, alignment and feasibility of the theory of change, strategies and interventions of the Swedish CSOs and their partners?*” We explore this question in relation to the realities and perceptions of people living in poverty, the understandings and actions of CSOs, and the aspects of the Swedish CS strategy emphasised in this evaluation.

At this stage it is worth restating the purpose and focus of the evaluation. The Swedish CS policy aims to support “a vibrant and pluralistic civil society in developing countries that contributes effectively, using a rights-based approach, to reducing poverty in all its dimensions” and to create conditions that will “enable people living in poverty to improve their lives”.⁴⁵ The Swedish CS strategy, which makes the policy operational, has two objectives: *strengthened civil society capacity* to apply a human rights based approach to voice and service provision, and *enhanced democratisation and respect for human rights*.

This evaluation was asked to focus on the HRBA and the strengthening of civil society capacity to apply it, and to infer the plausible contributions of Swedish CSOs and their partners to these aims. The HRBA gives priority to four human rights principles – participation, accountability, transparency and non-discrimination – intended not as outcomes, but as a process and as a way of working. The HRBA also consists of human rights standards from international and regional treaties and laws. In a HRBA the human rights standards are used to advance intended outcomes. The methods for applying this approach are to listen to the perspectives of people living in poverty and marginalisation, and to clearly understand the context, notably “knowledge of local power structures in the provinces and sectors where Sida works.”⁴⁶

The HRBA principles underpin the Swedish CS strategy, both as a starting point and as a process for understanding and addressing the specific contexts and power relations that underlie poverty and marginalisation, and that prevent the realisation of human rights. As a way of working, they provide “a starting point analyses and

⁴⁵ Government Offices of Sweden (2009b) *Op. cit.*, p.7

⁴⁶ Sida (2012) *Op. cit.*, p.61

assessments and a... basis for dialogue, cooperation and follow-up.”⁴⁷ They are there to guide cooperation strategies, and the partnerships and relationships used to pursue them.

As noted in the introduction, this understanding creates an expectation about what should be changing if poverty is to be reduced, and implies *theories of change and action* for those organisations seeking to fulfil Swedish cooperation aims. This evaluation is focused on understanding this change process, the way it is perceived and supported by different actors, and degree to which it aligns with the realities, perspectives and change strategies of people living in poverty.

In this section, we examine whether and how the Swedish CS strategy, as carried out by the Swedish CSOs and their partners, is *relevant*, *aligned* and *feasible*. We do this in three parts, highlighting strengths and challenges for each of the criteria.

6.1 RELEVANCE

Are the programmes, approaches and theories of change of the Swedish CSOs and their partners relevant to people’s priorities and perceptions of what changes are desired in the conditions that would enable them to improve their lives?

6.1.1 Strengths

In all three countries there is evidence that the core elements of the Swedish CS strategy, and the way they are understood and implemented by the Swedish CSOs and their partners included in this study, are *relevant* to the priorities, perspectives and desired changes of people living in poverty and marginalisation. The focus on enabling greater voice and representation through vibrant and pluralist CSOs is highly relevant in contexts of ever-widening social, political and economic polarisation.

The relevance of *voice* and *representation* – facilitated by the HRBA principles of participation and accountability – is particularly marked in Nicaragua, where Sida no longer has bilateral programmes, and where there has been government hostility to Sweden’s outspoken stance on human rights and non-discrimination, especially related to women:

The reference to voice places emphasis on the autonomous agency of citizens in speaking for themselves, communicating with others, exercising authentic

⁴⁷ Government Offices of Sweden (2010), *Change for Freedom: Policy for Democratic Development and Human Rights in Swedish Development Cooperation, 2010–2014*, Stockholm: Sida and Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p.11

forms of participation and creating ruptures with silence and resignation. This process of finding voice implies the need for important work on subjectivity and self-esteem to bring to the fore a discussion of the invisible forms of power underlying exclusion and marginalisation, while helping to reveal people's hidden discourses. This is essential in achieving greater accountability and transparency in access to resources of all kinds, in order for people undergoing poverty and marginalisation to change their basic living conditions. It also contributes to an urgent critique emerging from civil society actors about rights, discriminatory practices and hybrid forms of participation and patronage, thus contributing to a deeper re-visioning of Nicaraguan society and the relationship between citizens and their community, local, regional and national governance structures. (Nicaragua Report)

In Pakistan, where there has been a flourishing of civil society actors and interesting organisations working at local, district, provincial, and national levels, the relevance of *vibrancy and pluralism* was noted. The Pakistan findings celebrate the long experience of many LPOs and their evolution from smaller, and in some cases service-oriented, NGOs often with a local or district focus, into well-established national NGOs, with a strong advocacy and research component.

In Ghotki, we found surprisingly rapid change, much local activism, and unexpected alliances emerging between the local administration and NGOs. We found that the Child-Centred Disaster Risk Management project had helped enhance the standing and capacities of CBOs in two new areas – DRR and child rights. While all CBOs face challenges when they work on rights and tackle issues relating to power and the social order, the CBOs researched here have not as yet faced any serious threats, and they gain strength from working collectively. (Pakistan Report)

In the Ugandan context the Swedish CS strategy was found to reflect a clear understanding of the key factors required to pursue social justice. In a setting where political power is highly centralised in the Executive and the governing National Resistance Movement, and where government intolerance towards critical or alternative perspectives is growing, a focus on vibrancy and pluralism is particularly important. Despite the relevance of the strategy's vision, and despite finding SFO-supported programmes highly relevant to people's *needs and survival strategies*, we found that most SFO-supported programmes were less relevant to addressing the *structural problems* underlying poverty and exclusion. This is not surprising given the governance situation and constraints on civil society.

Thematically, in Nicaragua we found the highest relevance of programming and organisational theories of change in relation to the priorities and perspectives identified by people in the RC sites.

This is especially true for work on strengthening people's self-reliance; fostering fair, transparent and inclusive forms of economic interdependence, organisation and decision-making in their communities; and increasing their access to quality education with focuses that counteract discrimination and exclusion. The research team heard life stories and saw first-hand evidence of change in people's sense of hope and willingness to engage in processes of transformation when some of these key elements changed. (Nicaragua Report)

6.1.2 Challenges

In all three countries, the political conditions for civil society actors to pursue the HRBA is constrained, albeit to different degrees. At present, Pakistan appears to offer the best conditions, as long as CSOs are cautious and build good relationships with local and national authorities; the growing strength and independence of the judiciary is also signifies an historical opening of political space. By contrast, in Nicaragua and Uganda – despite recent histories of strong civil society engagement in governance – political space appears to be closing rapidly.

Ugandan CSOs do not have an easy environment in which to work, as their calls for accountability, anti-corruption, equality and security are discouraged by government, and their role is reduced to service provision and humanitarian aid. Conditions for civil society freedom appear to be worsening. The Uganda study finds the Swedish CS strategy and its implementation relevant to poor people's *struggles for survival*, but with room for improvement, specifically in building an *effective space for civil society*, and thereby creating space for ordinary citizens to claim rights. The way the strategy is being put into effect in Uganda is less relevant to people's desires for more systematic, equitable and accountable provision of economic opportunity, services, security and justice.

While higher degrees of relevance were found in Nicaragua, the theories of change and interventions of SFOs and LPOs were sometimes found to be contributing to necessary but not always sufficient conditions for advancing rights. One challenge that stands out is the issue of *intimate and emotional responses to poverty, trauma and violence* and the need to work more on this dimension with methodologies that strengthen personal growth and resilience.

Sida's focus on the four HRBA principles may implicitly favour political and collective strategies for enhancing civic engagement and democratic governance. While this political domain of concern with obligations between duty bearers and rights holders is vital, it does not explicitly address the social, psychological and intimate dimensions of power relations that prevent the realisation of human rights. The application of the four principles tend to produce theories of change focused on more formal, legal, institutional and political relations between citizens and states, but do not prioritise action on the less visible social, cultural and ideological norms of

power that reproduce poverty, marginalisation and the negation of rights – as observed in the RC visits.

In all three countries, while some theories of change were found to be explicit and effective, others were either diffuse, too narrowly focused or divorced from local realities. In Pakistan we found gaps between the formal rights discourses of organisations and the realities and needs expressed by people at the household level, particularly concerning livelihoods, health and education. The child rights agenda championed at the global level, for example, was not always relevant to urgent local priorities. In Uganda, by contrast, a needs orientation tended to overshadow a human rights perspective.

In Nicaragua the study found differences in the interpretation and depth of understanding of the themes being addressed by SFOs and LPOs, and a degree of fragmentation in the way in which themes are framed conceptually and methodologically. This may be due partly to the way knowledge tends to circulate more vertically – up and down the chain from international donor to SFO to LPO – than horizontally – between SFOs, or between LPOs – within the aid architecture. These differences, however, are rich sources for discussion and mutual learning, which in turn can enhance Sida's multi-faceted vision and shift towards a new stage of greater dialogue, learning and synergy.

6.2 ALIGNMENT

Are the programmes, approaches and theories of change of the Swedish CSOs and their partners aligned with the strategies of multiple actors at different levels, including actions being taken by local people themselves, to create enabling conditions to improve their lives?

6.2.1 Strengths

The same challenges that pertain to *relevance* make it especially difficult to achieve significant degrees of *alignment* across a diverse range of actors, perspectives and change strategies. Alignment means not only shared understandings and approaches at the strategic level, but congruence between the organisational systems, processes, relations and dynamics that connect Sida operationally with SFOs and with national, local and grassroots civil society actors.

We found that there is greater alignment at the level of strategic intent and understanding than at the level of operations and partnerships. In Pakistan a good strategic fit was found to exist between the SFOs and their local partners, but this was less evident at the level of implementation. Nonetheless, positive examples of alignment were cited, such as in relations between Plan, its national partner, and village-level CBOs and their networks in Ghotki. Likewise in Sindh, Save the Children Pakistan's DevCon partnership is strengthening smaller NGOs with a strong

rights orientation, and they in turn are joining wider networks in the child rights movement.

In Nicaragua, a number of forces are working against effective alignment. However, the alignment between SFO and LPO programmes and the intentions of the Swedish CS strategy seems closest when the programmes are developed through participatory processes with methodologies combining personal growth, self-esteem, sharing histories, and exchanging and developing specific skills for collective action. This is especially true where this work contributes to creating or strengthening inclusive spaces for self-representation, and therefore a greater sense of belonging, ownership and legitimacy.

In Uganda, the Swedish CS strategy was found to be enabling SFOs to provide solidarity and support to an impressive range of LPOs: nine SFOs partner with 42 diverse Ugandan organisations and an even larger number of small community groups, contributing to the vibrancy and plurality of civil society. These organisations are busy across Uganda supporting projects in community groups, schools, clinics, local government, co-operatives, advocacy campaigns and so on. Relationships between Sida, SFOs, LPOs and CBOs were found to be generally healthy, facilitating an effective flow of resources to service delivery and advocacy projects and promoting vertical relationships of learning and solidarity from local to international levels. This is not without challenges, but some positive examples are highlighted in the country report.

We found that the Swedish CS strategy in Uganda was variably aligned with the practices of its 42 LPOs, whose work is not always in line with the expectations of the strategy. The degree of alignment can be represented in a typology of three kinds of local organisations:

- Type A (least aligned): Most organisations in Uganda work to supplement government services, making space for citizens to participate within non-transparent, discriminatory, and unaccountable government structures.
- Type B (partially aligned): Some organisations advocate for policy change, working to challenge government constructively, but bound by the rules of that same often non-transparent, discriminatory, and unaccountable government.
- Type C (most aligned): A small number of organisations act as independent critical bodies, attempting to raise the cost to government of failing to respect the rights of its citizens, and sometimes suffering the consequences of their actions.

While the third type of organisation is a minority among Ugandan CSOs, and among SFO partners, there are positive lessons to be learned from their activities.

6.2.2 Challenges

Picking up from the typology of Ugandan organisations, it is important to recognise the contextual forces that drive NGOs into becoming unaligned. While Sida promotes a human rights based approach even in service delivery activities, the Ugandan government pushes NGOs to fill gaps in service provision without concerning themselves with economic, social or political rights. Advocacy is discouraged, especially on issues that have any kind of political element. Development organisations find themselves pulled in two directions by the expectations of different authorities. For many, service provision is a good approach to anti-poverty efforts, since it provides direct support to poor people. They operate with the apparent belief that material support or training will lead directly to empowerment, hoping that this will lead citizens to press effectively for rights and democratisation, leading to changes in the system that impoverishes them. But this approach is not always logical or successful, and there is little evidence of systematic change in how services are provided or rights upheld.

Another challenge that arises in all three countries is the tendency toward specialisation and fragmentation of effort by local CSOs and their Swedish partners. In Pakistan we found good congruence in strategies, but not in operations, particularly given the tendency to focus on quite small, specialised and tightly time-bound projects which are likely to have little impact on fulfilling human rights.

Likewise in Uganda, civil society resources are divided and subdivided into individual projects. As a result the Swedish CS strategy does not promote effective horizontal learning or solidarity among actors. While delivering on services and evidence for policy change, local organisations are not enabled to take advantage of possible synergies to tackle overall problems of rights in Uganda. As noted above, Sweden supports an impressive diversity of civil society activity, but efforts are atomised and barely contribute to transforming democratisation or human rights. While the flows of finance and knowledge supported by the Swedish CS strategy are clearly a source of benefit, they are not creating a groundswell of coherent demand for change.

There is also a problem of fragmentation in Nicaragua, described in terms of need to move from vertical to horizontal civil society relationships. In learning and validation events, the Nicaraguan SFOs and LPOs agreed that citizens' empowerment requires more horizontal face-to-face relationships and flexible grassroots processes that take into account particular social and political contexts. They stressed that this approach is what enables interventions to contribute to facilitating spaces and opportunities for people to address and gradually overcome the challenges they face in developing their individual and collective voice and agency.

Results-based management is given as a major reason for the persistence of vertical relationships. Despite the multidimensional theory behind the Swedish CS strategy

and the HRBA, implementation is based on vertical funding relationships, with resources in some cases passing through extensive organisational chains before reaching LPOs and CBOs. This vertical approach risks fragmenting the alignment and synergies between the overall strategy and specific organisational or contextual realities, and between diverse national and local actors working in a common direction. It could be argued that an excessive or unilateral emphasis on aid architecture alignment counteracts the diversity and flexibility needed to implement a human rights focus that aims to strengthen marginalised voices, or encourage vibrancy and pluralism.

The dominance of vertical relationships is especially difficult to overcome when limited space is available for strategic dialogue between SFOs and their partners, or for debates that might contribute to greater horizontal alignment at country level. When a strong emphasis is placed on administrative relations and upward accountability to donors – as in results-based management – the absence of spaces for deeper dialogue and alignment can reinforce resigned pragmatism among LPOs. It can also reduce political transparency and reinforce the emergence of double discourses between the particular local or national agendas of CS actors and Sida's universal human rights vision.

Similarly, in Pakistan, the results orientation, with its focus on short-term and highly specialised projects, is seen as working against strategic alignment with the HRBA. The pressure for increased aid effectiveness and for delivering short-term results⁴⁸ diverts attention and resources away from the longer-term structural changes that the Swedish CS strategy aspires to.

In Nicaragua, some SFOs appear to be using a core-funding approach with LPOs, however this is not the most common approach. Sida representatives say they have actively encouraged SFOs to work through core support, but the interest has been very low. Several SFOs in Nicaragua relate this to the specificity of the results-based formats required as reporting mechanisms. Another reason may be due to the systems in place with global CSOs such as the LWF with multiple donors. This is an area that evidently requires deeper reflection, discussion and coordination between Sida and its partners to reach an agreement that defines partners in relationship to Swedish civil society, and opens up dialogue on funding and reporting policy issues in order to maximise the effectiveness of the CS strategy.

⁴⁸ The delivery of measurable results is the fourth of the five central pillars of aid effectiveness in the OECD's Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm>

SFOs and LPOs in Nicaragua also expressed serious concern about what they saw as the general growth of business logic in international aid circles, which leads to all support being channelled through projects – to the exclusion of core (institutional) funding – and demands measurable results over very short periods, which then function as evaluative parameters for refinancing. Most feel this is having a negative effect upon their longer term visions and their relationships because of the diverse nature of CSOs and the complex dynamics of rights-based development, empowerment and social change. The business logic also tends to change the SFOs and LPOs themselves by demanding accountability through uniform organisational and operational structures, and by reinforcing a competitive marketing dynamic.

In Pakistan, alignment between the Swedish CS strategy, SFOs and LPOs is limited by the nature of Sida's civil society partnerships. These include on the one hand organisations like churches and trade unions, which are clearly members of domestic Swedish civil society, and on the other international NGOs, which have a base of support in Sweden but pursue an essentially international agenda, including strong adherence to international human rights principles. This situation opens up a gap between the principles of the HRBA, as espoused by the international NGOs, and the actual practice of CSOs governed from afar, and alignment across the gap is weak. Our intention is to point out this difference, not pass judgement on which is better.

Sida has never been especially prescriptive about what it is prepared to fund under its civil society strategy. This may well be a sound approach but there is a risk that Sida will fund projects which partners would have implemented anyway, with little scope for influence via the strategy. What seems to be missing is a real dialogue between Sida and the SFOs about how exactly they can best promote the specific objectives of the strategy and the HRBA.

6.3 FEASIBILITY

Are the programmes, approaches and theories of change of the Swedish CSOs and their partners feasible in terms of their plausible contributions (and in relation to what other actors are contributing) to creating enabling conditions for people to improve their lives?

6.3.1 Strengths

Feasibility is essentially about how realistic it is that the strategy will be fulfilled by SFOs and LPOs in the various contexts in which they are working. We now know that the contexts we examined are challenging, making relevance and alignment difficult; they also present difficulties for feasibility of the strategy. Nonetheless, as noted in Section 5, we found many positive examples of the plausible contributions of SFOs and their partners to creating enabling conditions – all of which reflect well on the feasibility of the strategy.

In Nicaragua the strategy was found to be feasible or realistic in the sense that human rights in this complex context can only be realised through changing enabling conditions, making space for voice and representation, and supporting local actors to nurture a vibrant and pluralistic civil society. Sweden's historic cooperation in Nicaragua provides a solid foundation and intimate knowledge of the country and its history, which favours the medium- to long-term HRBA to developing citizens' voices and strengthening civil society.

The interrelation between organised social sectors – including trade unions, and people with disabilities and youth activists – in Sweden and Nicaragua, exchanging experiences and sharing ideas beyond the funding relationship was noted by some SFOs and LPOs as important. In the view of the research team, this contributes to the sustainability and feasibility of the strategy and is an element that could be further developed and deepened. On the other hand the historical experience of Nicaraguan citizens has also contributed to establishing creative, vibrant and bold forms of organisation that are opening up new methodologies and spaces for self-representation, legitimacy and voice.

Despite challenges, it is not impossible to make progress on human rights, democracy and anti-poverty in Uganda, as has been demonstrated by NAPE and other well-managed and clear-sighted organisations and membership associations. Although some commentators argue that the situation is worsening for civil society in Uganda, there are others who point to indications that change for the better is under way. While there are important processes and new ideas within civil society, there is also a fair amount of complacent and unsustainable project delivery activity.

6.3.2 Challenges

The strategy is based on the theory that by building the rights-claiming capacity of citizens and CSOs, services will improve, rights will be enhanced and poverty reduced. The strategy also indicates that democratisation can be encouraged by CSOs taking a mediating role between citizens and the state. Under present conditions in Uganda, it is unrealistic to assume that citizens living in poverty are going to be able to demand change from their government, or that CSOs are going to be effective mediators.

The Ugandans living in poverty we encountered in our RCs did not see NGOs in general as a route to social transformation, but as sources of much-appreciated assistance, and as just another aspect of unaccountable and unpredictable governing structures. This perception highlights a problem. The lack of true partnership between people living in poverty and the organisations that want or claim to support and represent them, undermines their ability to work together well.

While we have identified some positive examples (e.g. people with disabilities and indigenous rights in Nicaragua), much CSO advocacy has a limited effect in the short term. The political economy and conditions under which advocates operate are unfavourable in all three countries. It may be necessary to consider increasing the intensity of effort in order to overcome the difficulties. At present the feasibility of the Swedish CS strategy is undermined by the fact that it in effect tries to achieve two slightly contradictory things: rights and democratisation on the one hand, and capacity development of CSOs on the other (as a primary driver for achieving this)⁴⁹. It is not a given that developing CSO capacities will lead to the realisation of democracy and human rights.

Reflecting a broad tendency within much donor-funded civil society support in Uganda, we find that the concept of capacity development is not being put to use to strengthen an independent and effective civil society able to influence the realisation of political, civil, economic and social rights. Instead capacity building tends to create small, often quite weak, organisations at local level.

Avoiding the atomisation of civil society could be achieved, for example, by including in the Swedish CS strategy a specific programme for creating enabling spaces, mobilising capacity for horizontal solidarity. Or it could create a stronger link to other Sida support made available through the bilateral programme. To achieve a strong, vibrant civil society in Uganda, the strategy should emphasise the creation of enabling spaces for civil society actors in their efforts to transform the system that tramples on the human rights of people living in poverty. It would put an emphasis on capacity *mobilising* (as distinct from capacity *development*) within civil society, and would give priority to internal co-operation for creating a powerful civil field.

Likewise in Nicaragua the vertical and fragmentary effects of the aid architecture and results framework tend to undermine the feasibility of a more horizontal, collaborative and solidarity-enhancing approach to civil society. If these operational drivers can shift, it will enhance the feasibility of the strategy by opening up space and time to develop greater shared understanding, strategic alignment and synergies among diverse civil society actors.

⁴⁹ The Swedish CS Strategy identifies civil society actors as 'a driving force' for achieving the strategy's 'objective for support of democratisation and human rights', and states that the 'roles of CSOs in developing countries as collective voices and organisers of services should be the focus'. Government Offices of Sweden (2009a) Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations 2010–2014, Stockholm: Sida (UF2009/28632/UP, 10 September 2009, p5).

At the same time, Nicaraguan actors identify vulnerabilities and risks due to the current atmosphere of polarisation and hostility towards civil society, especially its most independent expressions. We found evidence of widespread fear of marginalisation, exposure or exclusion by the state, and a corresponding reproduction of hybrid forms of participation based on historic patterns of dependency and loyalty. This emerged not only in the RC sites, but also among civil society actors including some of those involved in the implementation of the Swedish CS strategy.

Similar arguments are made in relation to the feasibility of the Swedish CS strategy in Pakistan. It is unrealistic to expect major changes in attitudes, behaviours, and social relations as a result of very small amounts of foreign funding with short-term expectations. In Ghotki, for example, we found that the need to improve and diversify livelihoods, build the capacity of CSOs, and follow through on campaigns to improve health and education require a much longer time scale than has been allowed for in the current project designs. The post-project financial sustainability of the Chakwal AFCs is also not clear.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

The Swedish CS strategy works when the right conditions and actors are in place. We have identified examples of activities and conditions that permit successful civil society partnerships and the formation of wider alliances and movements, which help create enabling conditions – legislative and practical – for people to improve their lives and realise their rights. These include:

- Sida's CSO framework support to SSNC is passed on to NAPE in Uganda in the form of core support, who in turn use it quite effectively to shape alliances with communities and professionals, and to mobilise international support, in lobbying for environmental rights.
- In Nicaragua, SFOs are supporting LPOs to advocate for indigenous and disability rights, helping to enshrine these rights in the law, and to mobilise the capacities of affected groups and the identification and formation of new local leaders to put these rights into practice.
- Pakistani CBOs and children's groups in rural areas, supported by an effective LPO linked to Plan, are joining forces to make their voices heard by district government in their appeals for basic education and other essential services and infrastructure.

These are cases to learn from. The degree of relevance, alignment and feasibility in these examples is relatively high by comparison with the degrees observed across all the sites and organisations we looked at. Factors which appear to contribute to success include:

- the enabling role of core support (vs project support) for LPOs, which is the case with NAPE but appears to be much rarer than anticipated by Sida
- the combination of multiple strategies from local awareness raising and organising, to alliance formation, to national and global advocacy, as in the Nicaragua and Uganda examples above;
- the mobilisation of existing capacities and alternative forms of leadership, as in the Nicaragua example above;
- facilitation by SFOs of joined-up work and horizontal networking of their LPOs and other local organisations and actors, as in the Pakistan example above.

However, while these factors are within the sphere of influence of Swedish civil society and its partners, all three country contexts included in this study present severe structural constraints that lie *beyond* their sphere of influence. These

undermine or overwhelm the chances of the strategy making positive changes in enabling conditions.

We recognise that project and service delivery interventions are complementary with HRBA principles, if implemented with this intent. However, our evidence shows that SFOs' and LPOs' ways of applying the HRBA does not contribute as much as it could to a more vibrant and pluralistic civil society. Our evidence strongly suggests that a perceived pressure to demonstrate results among the SFOs and LPOs is compromising the application of HRBA principles.

In this section we draw conclusions related to five key themes from our findings, and make specific recommendations for Sida and SFOs in relation to each theme.

7.1 REVISIT EXPECTATIONS OF RESULTS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND PARTICIPATION

The evidence suggests that some organisations are being held to account over how compliant, rather than how transformative, they are. Some Sida, SFO and LPO actors place more emphasis on upward accountability to donors than on their accountability to communities, or on internal and horizontal accountability. This is all the more true in contexts of high aid-dependency, such as Uganda. In our learning and validation events, Sida clarified that SFOs and LPOs are not explicitly required to adopt such detailed and onerous results-focused measures as those they have in place. But many of these organisations stated that they feel undue pressure through reporting systems, and that this distorts their downward accountabilities and longer-term, transformative visions and objectives.

These problems could be addressed with a better alignment in the understanding and practical applications of results and accountability. If the Swedish CS strategy is about creating the enabling conditions for people living in poverty and marginalisation to improve their lives, its key actors need to be more centrally accountable to those people, and be answerable to them for performing effectively and in ways that are transformative, empower them and reduce the root causes of their marginalisation.

LPOs, in dialogue with the SFOs, are well placed to reflect critically back to the SFOs and Sida which elements of the Swedish CS strategy come across as idealistic and unrealistic from their country perspective, and which come across as feasible and vital. This would help Sida and SFOs frame and possibly re-calibrate their desired results more realistically, and achieve greater alignment of expectations. But the LPOs will only manage to reflect back critically when they feel safe and comfortable enough in their (power) relationships with SFOs and Sida; otherwise, for very rational reasons, there is a strong likelihood that they will say what they think others want to hear.

Similar tensions arise in practices of participation, both as it is encouraged between LPOs and communities, and in promoting citizen engagement with the state. Participation can be “cosmetic labelling, to look good; co-opting practice, to secure local action and resources; and empowering process, to enable people to take command and do things themselves.”⁵⁰ Sida and SFOs are of course aware of the danger of co-optation and cosmetic labelling. But in contexts where participation has developed particular connotations associated with particular political regimes (e.g. Uganda, Nicaragua), or with high levels of aid dependency and susceptibility to ‘donor fashions’ (e.g. Uganda), the dangers are very real.

Citizen participation, we found, can easily be overcome by rational passivity, where people living in poverty choose to collude as clients of powerful patrons, rather than demand rights as citizens in relation to duty bearers. People have expectations of at least getting something, and of avoiding further exclusion or worse. In the RCs, this rational passivity emerged as a strong psychological dimension of poverty. Honest debate and deliberation are necessary to achieve conceptual and practical alignment in approaches to participation and accountability.

Measures are also needed to ensure synergy among the different civil society actors in their advocacy strategies and efforts to mobilise citizens as rights holders, and to influence public opinion. These measures should take into account evidence from this study about how advances have been made in influencing the state, but also about the ways in which the state influences civil society, and the importance of strengthening all citizens’ awareness of their position and potential agency and voice as rights bearers.

7.1.1 Recommendations for Sida

If Sida does not require such onerous results-based practices as some SFOs and LPOs have adopted, it should act in consequence in its dealings with SFOs, and make sure that it does not unwittingly push SFOs and their partners to adopt them.

Sida should enter into critical and open dialogue with SFOs and their partners about the results orientation, and explore how results-based frameworks can be made fit for

⁵⁰ Chambers, R. (1994) *Paradigm Shifts and the Practice of Participatory Research and Development*, IDS Discussion Paper No. 2, Sussex: Institute of Development Studies, p. 1

*purpose in relation to cooperation strategies focused on citizen empowerment, democracy and human rights.*⁵¹

7.1.2 Recommendations for SFOs

*SFOs should critically examine their internal and partnership results monitoring and reporting systems and indicators. Given the risk – recognised in development aid management literature – of a strong results focus distorting aid relevance and effectiveness, they need to ensure that these are not creating distortions in the implementation of human rights based approaches to reducing poverty and marginalisation.*⁵²

SFOs could re-focus the attention of staff and partners on their organisational mission and mandate, and ask themselves what this means for their accountabilities: to whom they should be primarily accountable and what changes in practice this might require; who else they need to account to; and how to achieve this without compromising their primary accountability relationships.

7.2 SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN UNFAVOURABLE CONTEXTS

All three countries, in different ways, are at historical moments in which efforts to strengthen civil society and citizens' rights are viewed with suspicion by the state. In Nicaragua, many coordination and decision-making structures are established as closed or invited spaces, which exclude citizens and organisations with more outspoken critical voices. Our findings suggest that creating more enabling conditions for people living in poverty and marginalisation in these contexts generally means swimming against the political current – which presents enormous challenges to CSOs.

⁵¹ Logframes and theories of change, often used as tools of results frameworks, can also be used in ways that support rather than obstruct adaptive management, learning-oriented approaches, and complex socio-political change processes.

⁵² A widely recognised, and widely lamented, truth summarised by Andrew Natsios (Director of USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance 1989-91) in his article *The Class of the Counter-bureaucracy and Development*, is that "[a] central principle of development theory – that those development programmes that are most precisely measured are the least transformational, and those programmes that are most transformational are least measurable". See <http://www.cgdev.org/publication/clash-counter-bureaucracy-and-development>. See also Eyben, Rosalind 2013, 'Uncovering the Politics of "Evidence" and "Results"': A Framing paper for development practitioners', available at <http://bigpushforward.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Uncovering-the-Politics-of-Evidence-and-Results-by-Rosalind-Eyben.pdf>

Yet there is a lack of horizontal alignment on a country level among Swedish-supported actors about what participation in these spaces can and cannot achieve in terms of strengthening civil society. Explicit recognition is sometimes lacking that unfavourable contexts might call for unusual modes of support by SFOs and Sida to LPO actors or representatives of people living in poverty. In other cases, there is explicit recognition but it has not materialised into concrete action, such as facilitating alternative and innovative ways of working.

Given the aims of the Swedish CS strategy, the actors who deliver it, and the complexity and diversity of contexts, Sida and the other strategy actors could deepen their thinking and collective strategising about *what civil society strengthening actually means and needs to look like* in each of the contexts. In these contexts, it is also vital to open the discussion about how to *strengthen the voices of citizens* who are being marginalised and discriminated against for various reasons.

7.2.1 Recommendations for Sida

Within countries where Sida is present via the Swedish Embassy and which currently present unfavourable conditions for CSOs to claim rights or otherwise engage with government, strive to ensure coherence among the various forms of Swedish civil society cooperation, aid, trade and international relations. This would enable mutual alignment among Sweden's actors around the aims of the CS strategy and respect for independent civil societies.

Support the facilitation of safe processes for dialogue, contextual analysis and joint strategising among civil society and other actors in challenging country and regional contexts, in order to empower and entrust SFOs and LPOs to express their views and contribute to strategies.

Consider adopting or promoting more widely the forms of 'political accompaniment' and safe spaces for expression that various Swedish government actors provide to endangered human rights defenders and other civil society leaders, and at-risk groups in risky contexts.

7.2.2 Recommendations for SFOs

Prioritise more horizontal coordination and networking with other SFOs, LPOs and other civil society actors in Sweden and in-country, to develop shared analysis and strategies for working in problematic country and regional contexts.

Develop and apply models of political accompaniment of LPOs, liaising between them and Swedish government representatives where this is strategically valuable in terms of protecting individuals, organisations or the civil society space in general.

7.3 SUPPORT ENABLING SPACES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AS A 'FIELD'

The Swedish CS strategy, like that of most cooperation agencies, is underpinned by an assumption that civil society is a collection of associations, and in practice favours particular organisational forms.⁵³ An alternative view of civil society sees it instead as a 'field' of public interaction and opinion. This field can provide a counterweight to excesses of elite power, open channels for citizens and groups to demand change, enable expression of the beliefs and interests of ordinary people, and create mechanisms of redress for those who suffer inequality and discrimination.

In conditions that are hostile or unresponsive to rights-claiming by CSOs, supporting individual organisations such as the SFOs and LPOs involved in the strategy may not be enough. In such contexts, CSOs are not sufficiently supported or encouraged to cooperate with each other to change the deep structural conditions that disable people living in poverty, and to address the conditions that constrain the freedoms and powers of civil society itself.

The Swedish CS strategy could do more to enable joined-up action. Civil society as a field is made up of the interaction of a wide range of people, organisations, opinion, culture, ideas and events, not just associations that manage and deliver projects. A strategy that views civil society as a field would put emphasis on making the field itself work better, not just its individual components. The objective would include the creation of enabling spaces for civil society actors in their efforts to transform the conditions that obstruct human rights based development.

This study has highlighted the importance of enabling conditions, not only for people living in poverty, but for civil society itself, in terms of the broad (if narrowing) arena where it operates, and the spaces and mechanisms by which civil society actors engage with one another and with powerful actors and governance processes. Supporting civil society as a field calls for solid collaboration and alliances, safe spaces, time, and legitimacy for strategic dialogue. Careful thought is needed about what incentives civil society actors need in order to engage in these spaces, as well as how to be aware of – and compensate for – the opportunity costs to them and their other work. It will also require relaxing the pressures and incentives to deliver other kinds of results (see 7.1 above).

⁵³ This is evident for example in the frequently used shorthand term 'CSO strategy', which we have avoided here.

In Nicaragua and Uganda, there is definitely potential for more systematic dialogue among the Swedish-supported SFOs, LPOs, CBOs, Sida and other civil society actors and supporters. We would not necessarily expect a similar process to unfold in Pakistan, where a much smaller number of actors is involved in delivering the Swedish CS strategy. There, the potential critical mass of Sweden-supported actors needed to engage in dialogue to strengthen civil society was not evident. This raises questions about the viability of Sweden's CS strategy in Pakistan, where there is neither a large number of SFOs nor a visible Embassy-led programme focused on civil society.

Stronger links are needed between the SFOs and Sida's other partners and support mechanisms for civil society strengthening (e.g. Sida partners working with civil society at the sector and network level, nationally and globally). While the research did not examine these partnerships, it did not find examples of synergy between such initiatives and SFOs' and LPOs' implementation of the strategy.

If Sida can provide empowering, enabling conditions for the LPOs and SFOs to reflect together upon their country knowledge, light will be shed on the existence and nature of several current 'disablers' (negative or pessimistic attitudes towards international rights frameworks); power relations that directly exacerbate poverty and marginalisation at various levels of governance or through private sector actors; and gaps or over-optimistic assumptions in theories of change. This will permit Sida and SFOs to identify and make improvements in relevance, alignment and feasibility.

Where Swedish Embassies are present and Sida works bilaterally (as in the Uganda example), its civil society strategies need to be more joined up with those of the SFOs and LPOs. All of these challenges can best be addressed through dialogue, shared analysis and joint strategising among civil society actors at all levels, in specific contexts.

7.3.1 Recommendations for Sida

Explore these suggestions for supporting enabling spaces and processes for the strengthening of civil society as a 'field' in specific country and regional contexts.

Emphasise 'capacity mobilising' within civil society, which implies the release of existing potential and energies, rather than 'capacity development'. Prioritise internal cooperation and alliances among civil society actors to create a more powerful field.

Recognise that the civil society field, in each country context, will have dynamics and impetuses of its own, and that its needs for support from Sweden, SFOs or LPOs might consist as much of (non-partisan) political accompaniment as of project funding.

Make more strategic links between framework support, civil society support through Embassies, and support for global and national organisations working on civil society dialogue and alliance-building. In some cases, Embassies might be well positioned to convene these processes.

7.3.2 Recommendations for SFOs

Support strategic spaces and processes of dialogue among LPOs, with the aim of strengthening civil society as a field rather than as individual organisations. SFOs with good reach and experience in supporting dialogue should offer to convene these processes.

Emphasise ‘capacity mobilising’ within civil society, which implies the release of existing potential and energies, rather than ‘capacity development’. Prioritise internal cooperation and alliances among civil society actors to create a more powerful field.

Recognise that the field, in each country context, will have dynamics and impetuses of its own, and that its needs for support from Sweden, SFOs or LPOs might consist as much of (non-partisan) political accompaniment as of project funding.

7.4 DEEPEN ENGAGEMENT WITH MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY

Nearly all actors involved in the Swedish CS strategy recognise that poverty and marginalisation are complex, multidimensional and linked to inequitable power relations. Indeed, Sida has a pioneer among cooperation agencies in understanding and promoting a multidimensional perspective on poverty, for example through its support for Participatory Poverty Assessments. But more effort is needed to develop deeper and shared understandings of these intersecting dimensions, and to locate the entry and leverage points for structural change. Actors involved in the strategy are working from different angles, on specific issues, and with somewhat different understandings of poverty and exclusion, and how these all intersect. Common understandings of these multiple dimensions and their interactions in each cultural and historical context (as highlighted in section 3.1) need to be developed as part of building more effective strategies for civil society.

Greater alignment is needed among Sida, SFOs and LPOs in the application of a multidimensional and intersectional approach to gender, disability, age, sexuality, ethnicity, rural/urban identities, and other bases of social, economic and political exclusion. These diverse dimensions of identity, inclusion and exclusion interact in dynamic ways in different cultures and contexts, and include profound psychological dimensions such as rational passivity. Creating and maintaining such understanding among Sida and Embassy staff, SFOs, LPOs and other key actors and allies at all

levels of the strategy would contribute towards more strategic and joined-up actions to address these multidimensional and intersectional dynamics of poverty.

Sida is not alone in encountering difficulties and contradictions when it tries to improve the conditions of people living in poverty and marginalisation *through a strategy of support to CSOs*. Neither is this evaluation alone in finding that CSOs in heavily aid-dependent countries are not necessarily – or perhaps are no longer – channels for efficient delivery of resources and benefits to people living in the most extreme poverty and marginalisation. While we have found that Sida-supported CSOs in some cases are not reaching those in extreme poverty, we do not recommend that Sida stop funding these CSOs. It is more a question of openly acknowledging and accepting that the poorest and most marginalised are often not reached with the inputs provided under the strategy, and working out how best to deliver the strategy so that it furthers Sida's commitment to creating enabling conditions for these groups.

7.4.1 Recommendations for Sida

Engage the SFOs in a learning dialogue, under safe conditions (i.e. in a way that explicitly does not threaten the SFOs' future funding prospects with Sida), about who they themselves are and who their LPOs are within the social fabric of their countries. This should extend to whether they and their LPOs are well placed to extend the benefits of the Swedish CS strategy to those in the worst poverty and marginalisation.

Building on the outcomes of the learning dialogue proposed above, explore with SFOs the question of how each of them can best help extend the benefits of the Swedish CS strategy to those in the worst poverty and marginalisation: whether by channelling resources through to these groups in highly targeted ways to improve their practical conditions, or by conducting policy advocacy and campaigning to make legal frameworks and policies more equitable or redistributive in orientation.

7.4.2 Recommendations for SFOs

Reflect within the organisation on what the organisation is and who its LPOs are within the social fabric of Sweden (for the SFOs) and of the LPOs' countries. This should extend to whether the SFO and its LPOs are well placed to extend the benefits of the Swedish CS strategy to those in the worst poverty and marginalisation.

Building on the outcomes of the learning dialogue proposed above, explore the question of how the SFO and its LPOs can best achieve this: whether by channelling resources through to these groups in highly targeted ways to improve their practical conditions, or by conducting policy advocacy and campaigning to make legal frameworks and policies more equitable or redistributive in orientation. Be prepared to share these reflections with Sida and other SFOs if a suitably safe space is provided for this purpose.

7.5 CONTEXTUALISE THE HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH

This evaluation has shown that the HRBA, as advanced within the framework of the Swedish CS strategy, plays out very differently in different contexts. One important differentiating factor is class structure and how class interests affect the scope for collective action for people in poverty.

For example, where there is a clear constituency with shared interests that is ripe for forming into a collective rights-claiming actor, which can express a collective voice and undertake collective action about these shared interests (for example in the movement of people with disabilities in Nicaragua), what happens resembles the ideal-typical model of citizens engaging with government and successfully claiming the realisation of their rights.

In contrast, in Uganda where the quality of public schooling experienced by people in poverty is very bad, there is no clear constituency with shared interests that will form into a powerful collective and effectively claim from the government the right to free primary education of an acceptable quality. This is because anyone who is ‘upper-poor’ or middle-class takes the option of exiting⁵⁴ from a failing public school system and sends their children to private schools, rather than exercising voice or loyalty. The problem appears to be worsening, or at least not improving, and there is no effective rights-claiming movement that aims to secure free, quality primary education for all Ugandans.

This illustrates the importance of a highly contextualised development of the meaning of the HRBA – i.e. what it means to claim and attain human rights in a given context. This does not equate with cultural relativism or undermine the universalism of rights frameworks. It is merely a recognition that while rights are universal, the contexts in which they need to be claimed and realised are so diverse that the pathways to those rights need to be similarly diverse. The choice of tactics might be between options as diverse as: supporting grassroots LPOs to mobilise citizens to demand budget transparency at the local government level; supporting capital-city-based LPOs and/or SFOs to lobby a minister to support the passage of a bill; and supporting a theatre

⁵⁴ Here we use as shorthand Hirschman’s (1970) description of the three options – voice, loyalty and exit – that face consumers in the face of deteriorating quality of goods or services. See Hirschman, A.O. (1970) *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

group to produce satirical productions that challenge the power of certain widespread discriminatory social norms.

Sida is currently providing a set of inputs, selecting intermediate actors to cooperate with, and delivering the inputs through these actors within a universalist international rights framework. If Sida wants to support civil society to do better work, it needs to deepen its theory as to how the inputs it provides and the actors it works with will achieve the conditions of liberated, pluralist and vibrant civil societies – in all these contexts and with their respective constraints and difficulties.

7.5.1 Recommendations for Sida

Using the very considerable relevant experience and learning resources Sida has built up, support and encourage SFOs to undertake power-aware and socially-aware context analysis in order to identify which tactics will work best for them or their LPOs to advance the HRBA in a given context. This would enable SFOs and LPOs to apply the HRBA in additional ways that address the social, psychological and intimate dimensions of power that undermine rights, to complement the civic, political and institutional emphasis implicit in a focus on the four principles.

7.5.2 Recommendations for SFOs

Draw on SFOs' own in-country experience and that of members of their LPOs to make good tactical choices about best how to advance the HRBA in specific country contexts, localities, sectors or subgroups of the population, and be prepared to justify these by reference to high-quality context analysis.

Annex 1-3 Country Reports- Nicaragua, Uganda and Pakistan

Note: The Nicaragua, Uganda, Pakistan country reports are provided as separate documents

Annex 4 Team Organisation and Management

The project is managed by the Swedish Institute for Public Administration (SIPU-International, the contract holder with Sida), and is implemented jointly by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and International Organisation Development (IOD PARC), and coordinated by a core evaluation team. The evaluation team is supported by a Project Advisory Group (PAG) representing SFOs and their methods network, external advisors; and by an internal working group in Sida (led by Elisabeth Berg Khan, Project Manager Sida/CIVSAM). Sida's internal working group members are also members of the PAG.

A team leader and evaluation manager, along with two technical advisors, support the three country team leaders, each of whom has a team of two to three researchers, to carry out the RCs, meso-level inquiries and appreciative inquiries with organisations. In each country, a local partner is responsible for logistics, transportation, accommodation, events and any assistance required with translation or documentation.

Global	Team Leader – Jethro Pettit (IDS) Project Manager – Karin Metell Cueva (2012–13), Christian Carlbaum (2014–15) (SIPU) Technical Advisors – Rosemary McGee (IDS), Sadie Watson (IOD PARC)* Administration – Richard Douglass (IDS) Finance – Katy Miller (IDS)
Nicaragua	Team Leader/Researcher – Helen Dixon (IDS) Researchers: Edurne Larracoechea (IDS), Salvador Garcia (IDS) Assistance in country: Francisca Jessop, Sandra Centeno, Jairo Zelaya, Peter Clarke
Pakistan	Team Leader/Researcher – Hugh Goyder (IOD PARC) Coordinator/Researcher: Mir Quasmi (SIPU) Researchers: Mahe Nau Haider (2013) (IOD PARC) Samia Raoof Ali (IOD PARC)
Uganda	Team Leader/Researcher – Patta Scott-Villiers (IDS) Researchers: Josephine Ahikire (IDS), Richard Ssewakiryanga (IDS), Eberhard Gohl (SIPU) Assistance in country: Dancan Muhanguzi, Harriet Pamara, Joanita Tumwikurize, Margaret Nakibuuka, Margaret Aduto, Edward Musisi, Daniel Opio

* On maternity leave from July 2013–2014, with Hugh Goyder representing IOD PARC

Quality assurance and risk analysis

Management and quality assurance followed the OECD/DAC *Quality Standards for Development Evaluation*, as specified in the ToRs and tender. David Lewis (London School of Economics, UK) served as quality assurance advisor. A risk analysis was performed twice for Pakistan (November 2012 and March 2013) and once each for Nicaragua and Uganda (March 2013).

Project Advisory Group (participants full time or partly)

Lorentz Forsberg (SMC), Nina Larrea (LO-TCO), Charlotta Widmark (Uppsala University), Åsa Nilsson (SSNC), Tanja Ehrenberg (OPIC), Christer Ormalm (Green Forum, formerly Sida), Mattias Brunander (Rädda Barnen), Johanna Leander (OPIC), Begoña Barrientos (Sida/HUM formerly Sida/CIVSAM), Katrin Aidnell (Sida/UTV), Esse Nilsson (Sida/MENA), Elisabeth Berg Khan (Sida/CIVSAM), Carl-Johan Smedeby (Sida/SPF formerly Sida/CIVSAM), Lennart Peck (Sida/UTV), Karolina Hultström (Sida Metodsam, formerly Sida/UTV)

Annex 5 Purposive Sampling

The following table shows specific sampling strategies that we have used in a sequenced, inter-connected way in this study, all within a broad logic of purposive sampling (see Methodology section). For each strategy we give first the text-book definition of what it is used for, followed (in *italics*) by how we used it.

Type of samplin	Purpose
Theory-based	<p>Finds examples of a theoretical construct and thereby elaborates and examines it.</p> <p><i>We used this to start off with, when we consulted with SFO staff and reviewed SFO documents to develop our 'spotlight approach' and select sites. In this case the 'theoretical constructs' of which we sought examples were of people in poverty and marginalization within the actual or possible fields of influence of LPOs which receive support from SFOs within the frame of the Swedish CS strategy, in the three countries.</i></p>
Intensity	<p>Involves information-rich cases that manifest the population intensely but not extremely.</p> <p><i>We used this to identify RCA sites and, within sites, to identify individuals of particular interest to listen to and observe.</i></p>
Snowball and chain sampling	<p>Identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know which cases are information-rich.</p> <p><i>We used this within sites to identify people to listen to and observe during RCs, and to identify actors to interview in the meso-level inquiries.</i></p>
Extreme or deviant case	<p>Learns from highly unusual manifestations of the phenomenon of interest.</p> <p><i>We used this in following up on 'outlier' or counter-intuitive cases or indications identified during RCs and meso-level inquiries.</i></p>
Stratified purposeful	<p>Illustrates subgroups, facilitates comparison.</p> <p><i>We used this within sites to identify people to listen to and observe during RCs, to identify actors to interview in the meso-level inquiries, and to ensure that we were not missing out any important subgroups who might not be as accessible as others in the meso-level inquiries.</i></p>
Opportunistic	<p>Follows new leads, takes advantage of the unexpected.</p> <p><i>We used this so as to make the most of the little time available for the RCs and meso-level fieldwork.</i></p>
Convenience	<p>Saves time, money and effort but at the expense of information</p>

and credibility.

Due to restrictions of time and budget in the study, it was necessary to balance convenience sampling against the other approaches listed, to some extent; we deliberately used all the other approaches listed above so as to counter negative effects of convenience sampling.

Adapted from Miles M.B. and Huberman A.M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (Second Edition), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, p. 28

Annex 6 Theories of Change and Logics of Intervention

Organisation	Theory of Change	Logic of Intervention	Comments
Nicaragua			
MyRight	Access to education for people with disabilities leads to capacities for integration, advocacy and defence of rights and income via access to employment.	Three-part strategy: (i) strengthening individual capacities of people with disabilities; (ii) strengthening organisations of people with disabilities; and (iii) creation of public opinion and influencing public policy.	Aim in this period was on social inclusion, in accord with the UN's <i>International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</i> .
LPO working with people with disabilities, supported by MyRight	People with disabilities will gain personal and collective strengths in demanding rights; access to education will enable social integration and fulfilment of rights; legal frameworks will enable rights.	Advocacy and networking for inclusive education is main focus; supporting members' access to education and learning resources; professional/vocational training for workforce; sports as a vehicle for social inclusion.	Main ways of working are policy advocacy, membership development, communication and institutional development. Plans to do more with gender, environment, children and youth.
Diakonia	People have access to information about their rights, become aware of what this means, take responsibility for their reality, gain capacities, organise themselves in groups to mobilise and make demands on	Works through partners with three strategies: (i) strengthening organisations; (ii) training about rights and other issues; and (iii) creation of alliances between organisations and diverse key actors.	More than 25 years' experience in Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua, with focus on autonomy rights of indigenous and Afro-descendant people, especially women and young people; promotion and defence of

	state, and advocate change in unjust social structures.	People need access to information about their rights and duties, and to strengthen themselves as individual and collective actors to promote positive change in society and policies. New leadership and improved values are vital for participation.	Educational campaigns and leadership networks for young people. Defence of human rights and autonomy rights via community education and organising; political lobbying and policy advocacy; non-discrimination and intercultural approach.	human rights; and humanitarian aid and climate change. Current focus on child rights, training for youth leaders; campaigning against violence against women; and regional autonomy of the Caribbean Coast people.
LPO working on human rights and autonomy with the Caribbean Coast population, supported by Diakonia				
Church of Sweden (CoS) (through Lutheran World Federation (LWF))	CoS: Transformative change by strengthening poor people's economic, social and cultural rights, which will contribute to their access to food, sustainable livelihoods, safety, education, health, democracy, justice and peace.	CoS: Transformative change by strengthening poor people's economic, social and cultural rights, which will contribute to their access to food, sustainable livelihoods, safety, education, health, democracy, justice and peace.	CoS and LWF: focus on building capacities and strengthening CSOs; advocacy with partners and allies. LWF work in Nicaragua is based on "HRBA, 'Actions without Damage', and a gender focus."	LWF focus in Nicaragua: coordination/alliances for advocacy with movements and local organisations to achieve sustainable livelihoods, natural resource management, public policies, and disaster risk management/response
LPO working on integrated eco-sustainable development supported by LWF.	A dignified life based on a more equitable society and eco-sustainable development requires conscious participation, strengthening local entities, and working in an integrated way with rural community organisations to improve the quality of life.	A dignified life based on a more equitable society and eco-sustainable development requires conscious participation, strengthening local entities, and working in an integrated way with rural community organisations to improve the quality of life.	Works to strengthen institutions: community organisations and local governance structures; and promotes citizen participation in municipal policy spaces.	Specific aims focus on food security, water and sanitation, reducing vulnerability, promoting social and gender equality, and preventing and mitigating disasters. Work on gender and masculinities are transversal. LWF support focuses on food security.

Organisation	Theory of Change	Logic of Intervention	Comments
Pakistan			
Plan (Pakistan) , supported by Plan Sweden/International	Realising children's rights via strengthened civil society and responsive governance; strengthening local and national CSOs to enable them to participate in planning, monitoring and holding decision-makers to account	Sectors for this study: disaster risk reduction, strengthening local institutions and communities, policy; Adolescent SRH: creating AFCs, combined with service provision and advocacy.	Flood resilience in affected communities in Ghotki, Sindh province, via RDPI (LPO); Promoting AFCs in Chakwal via Rahnuma (LPO)
Rural Development Policy Institute (RDPI) , supported by Plan International	Rural development requires effective joint action of local government and NGOs; holding government to account via combination of research, advocacy, CBO capacity-building and service delivery.	In flood-affected areas of Ghotki, works through five local CBOs formed by local activists to work on specific issues; giving voice on social and political justice issues; DRR focus has been on agricultural recovery and local infrastructure.	Started as a local activist group that expanded into respected NGO after 2007 earthquake and 2010 flooding.
Rahnuma , supported by Plan International	Strategy based on five 'A's': Advocacy for SRH; Access to services; meeting SRH needs of Adolescents; minimising risks of unsafe Abortions; and combating AIDS/HIV; includes women and youth empowerment, promoting microcredit, political participation.	In Chakwal, promoting AFCs to provide safe and supportive spaces for young people, and youth leadership.	One of the oldest NGOs in Pakistan, founded for family planning and mother and child health service delivery. Now moving toward policy advocacy and rights based approaches.
Olof Palme International Centre (OPIC)	Empowering people to change their societies and lives through collective action and global solidarity.	Focus on women, youth and activists.	Previously funded LEF in Pakistan.

Labour Education Center (LEF), supported by OPIC	Conscious, informed and gender-sensitised workers, women and youth groups will challenge inequality, discrimination and violence and demand democratic rights; organising and training trade unions and informal sector women.	Emphasises participatory approach and linking of social, political and economic rights. In Faisalabad, supports the Labour Quami Movement, the power loom workers' trade union, mobilising workers to voice and claim their rights.	Was also supported by Swedish Teachers' Union and Forum Syd. Does awareness-raising, networking; linking issues of peace, health, environment, gender and human rights.
--	--	--	--

Organisation	Theory of Change	Logic of Intervention	Comments
Uganda			
International Aid Services (IAS), member of Swedish Mission Council (SMC)	Vision is to see a "godly transformed society" and mission is to "save lives, promote self-reliance and dignity through human transformation going beyond relief" by strengthening local groups/organisations with financial, material and spiritual assistance.	Focus on humanitarian needs and Millennium Development Goals in Africa; works through operational partners in country, such as IAS(U) Uganda.	Holistic approach with priority to water, education, agriculture, natural resources, livelihoods, health and church support.
International Aid Services (Uganda), (IAS(U)), local partner of IAS	Mission is to "save lives, promote self-reliance and dignity and enable people to invest in their future." Transforming mind-sets of dependency through community-led organisation and self-reliant projects.	Livelihood support programmes with communities helped to resettle after conflict: oxen, ploughs, seeds, agricultural training; hygiene, sanitation; vocational training for formerly abducted girls.	Methodology called Accelerated Community Transformation for community problem-identification/solution. Recently integrating human rights training, advocacy and voice into programmes.

We Effect (formerly Swedish Cooperative Centre)	Mission is to “strengthen the capacity of member-based, democratic organisations to enable women and men to improve their living conditions, defend their rights and contribute to a just society”.	Focus on changing power relations behind poverty, self-help, local democracy and HRBA, following principles of the international cooperative movement.	Areas of focus include rural development, housing, gender equality and access to land.
Shelter and Settlement Alternatives/Uganda Human Settlement Network (SSA/UHSNET) , membership network, partner of We Effect.	A credible forum of slum dwelling communities, local organisations and human settlement agencies will raise public awareness, influence policies and mobilise technical and financial resources for decent, affordable housing.	Implementation is through members; focus is on changing attitudes of diverse policy makers toward slum dwellers and shaping policies. Offers capacity building, research, data, lobbying and advocacy of multiple public, private, media and religious actors. Mobilises community participation, ownership	Young network, still gaining influence. Now 57 member groups. Support from We Effect mainly institutional building of network. Leading public dialogue and awareness-building on land, affordable housing and public-private partnerships. Rights awareness and mobilisation.
Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC)	Protecting the environment by spreading knowledge, documenting threats and influencing politicians and policy.	Focus areas are climate change, seas and fishing, forests, agriculture and environmental toxins.	Works through partners in Sweden and 24 countries. Supports NAPE and others in Uganda.
National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) , local partner of SSNC	An alliance of the political weight of communities and the intellectual contribution of professionals will enable Uganda to protect and conserve its environment and maintain fair economic growth.	Research, public communication and awareness raising, mobilising people to act on environmental rights, alliances and solidarity. Overcoming people’s fear of reprisals and hopelessness. Finding solutions by working with government and private sector.	High profile campaigns, e.g. to protect Mabira forest from clear cutting. Community-driven mobilisation and political force is recent addition to theory of change; includes over-coming community divisions, gender issues, group formation and sub-granting.

Annex 7 Terms of Reference

10 January, 2012
GLOBAL/Unit for Civil Society
Elisabeth Berg Khan

Case number: 2011-001257

A multi-year results-oriented evaluation of Sida's support to civil society actors in developing countries via Swedish CSOs - based on Poor people's reality

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Information about Sida. Sida works according to directives of the Swedish Parliament and Government to reduce poverty in the world. The overall goal of Swedish development cooperation is to contribute to making it possible for poor people to improve their living conditions. Sida is organized in nine departments. The unit for Civil Society of the Global Department is in charge of handling the Government Appropriation Item Support via Swedish Civil Society Organizations.

1.2 Introduction. Civil society organisations (CSOs) have a key role in reducing poverty and a particular importance and special potential to contribute to democratic development and increased respect for human rights in developing countries.⁵⁵ For this reason, a substantial part of Swedish development cooperation is implemented in collaboration with CSOs at global, national, regional and local level.

In 2009, the Government decided on a Policy for support to CSOs in developing countries which constitutes a normative framework for all direct and indirect Swedish support to CSOs in developing countries, including development assistance given via Swedish CSOs.⁵⁶ In the same year 2009, the Government decided on a Strategy for support via Swedish civil society organizations 2010-2014, in which the positions, starting points and principles laid down by the Government in the policy apply to the

⁵⁵ Pluralism – Policy for support to civil society in developing countries within Swedish development cooperation, page 9, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2009

⁵⁶ Ibid

strategy.⁵⁷ The strategy is used by the Government to direct Sida's support via Swedish CSOs under the special CSO allocation and, where applicable, the allocation for Reform Cooperation in Eastern Europe. According to the strategy Sida is responsible for the follow-up of the effects of the support. On the basis of the strategy, Sida has developed instructions, which have been implemented since March 2010. These instructions govern the provision of grants to the Swedish CSOs with which Sida has entered into an agreement concerning a framework grant within the Government Appropriation Item Support via Swedish Civil Society Organizations. According to the strategy, Sida is to undertake necessary changes to its guidelines and instructions so as to be able to monitor and measure the effects achieved in relation to the objectives of the strategy, and to manage for development results. Sida is to ensure that Swedish CSOs report results in relation to the strategy from 2011 onwards.

According to the CSO-strategy, "A thorough, results-oriented evaluation is to be carried out during the strategy period. This evaluation is to be designed and implemented in cooperation with Swedish CSOs. The evaluation is to be started early in the strategy period, focus on medium- term effects and allow scope for Swedish CSOs and their partner organisations to draw thematic and methodological lessons from it. A midterm review of the implementation of the strategy is to be conducted in 2012."⁵⁸

These terms of reference provide guidance for the execution of a multiyear results-oriented evaluation. It is suggested to adopt a bottom-up perspective and use approaches and methodologies where poor and discriminated people will be consulted and participate in the study. For the purpose of the evaluation, a mixed methods approach should be used, which includes Reality Checks and additional methods such as quantitative studies or others, which will track trends and changes over several years. The evaluation is planned to start at the beginning of 2012 with a base-line/pilot study and to continue by two follow-ups in 2013 and 2014.

1.3 Guiding principles of Government policy and strategy. The overall objective of Sida's support via Swedish CSOs is to contribute to creating conditions to enable poor people to improve their living conditions.⁵⁹ The support is also, where applicable, to contribute to the objective of reform cooperation in Eastern Europe.

⁵⁷ Strategy for support via Swedish civil society organizations 2010-2014, UF2009/28632/UP, 10 September 2009

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 9

⁵⁹ Strategy for support via Swedish civil society organizations 2010-2014, p. 12

Support to CSOs in developing countries should be based on poor people's perspectives on development and the rights perspective⁶⁰ through the four guiding principles of participation, non-discrimination, transparency, and accountability.

In the strategy for Sida's support via Swedish CSOs there is a specific objective which reads:

A vibrant and pluralistic civil society in developing countries that, using a rights-based approach, contributes effectively to reducing poverty in all its dimensions.

In order to achieve this objective, support is to focus on capacity development of CSOs in developing countries so that they can apply a rights-based approach in their roles as collective voices and service providers, as well as contributing to democratization and increased respect for the human rights of poor and discriminated people. This is explicitly being expressed in the two objectives:

1. Enhanced capacity of civil society actors in developing countries to apply a rights-based approach in their roles as collective voices and organizers of services
2. Enhanced democratization and increased respect for the human rights of poor and discriminated people.

The prospects of achieving the objective number two is expected to be enhanced by the effects aimed at in objective number one. A vibrant and pluralistic civil society requires independent civil society actors and organizations with sufficient capacity to take action for their own established objectives. Support to capacity development of partner organizations should therefore be included in all sectors in which the Swedish CSOs choose to work. The capacity building support helps strengthen the ability of civil society actors to identify and effectively resolve problems, develop relevant knowledge among individuals, develop operational capacity of organizations and facilitate cooperation between different actors with the ultimate goal to contribute to reducing poverty in all its dimensions, including democratization. Achieving this objective includes ensuring that people living in poverty have knowledge and awareness of their rights, and the capacity to act individually or collectively to claim these rights (so called 'agent'). Consequently, support is to focus on strengthening the opportunities for groups and individuals to demand their own rights and influence their own living conditions.

1.4 Main features of the cooperation. In 2010, the Government appropriation amounted to 1.2 billion SEK, and during 2011, an amount of 1.5 billion SEK will be

⁶⁰ The two perspectives are spelled out in Sweden's policy for global development

disbursed from the appropriation item mainly to fifteen Swedish framework CSOs. Via this appropriation, Sida supports a large number of cooperation partners of Swedish CSOs in over one hundred countries worldwide for a vast range of development activities on different themes and in different sectors.

The objectives and approach of the strategy which governs the use of the appropriation require a long-term perspective in the cooperation between Swedish CSOs and their partner organizations. Therefore the system of long-term framework agreements is being maintained. The guiding principle is that support is based on local forms of organization and participation in developing countries. It is however, the Swedish CSOs, Sida's contractual partners which are responsible for the content and design of operations carried out with funds from this particular Government appropriation. The aid effectiveness principles are considered important components such as to increase the ownership by the organization by aligning with the priorities and systems of partner organisations and an increased proportion of core and programme support and donor coordination. The predictability of aid through long-term agreements is also an important aspect of increasing ownership by the local organization.

There is a well-established system for the annual reporting of Swedish CSOs' to Sida on grants received within the frame of the CSO-strategy. In addition, the organizations are required to report on Sida supported projects and programs to Sida's CSO data-base annually. In order to assess the capacity of framework organizations Sida frequently have systems-based audits carried out of the organizations. Moreover, in connection with new applications from the framework organizations, Sida carries out sample assessments of randomly selected initiatives at field level. Also, Sida has a system for assessing existing and potential new CSOs according to a set of criteria to determine if they should have a framework status or not.

2. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The main 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 CSOs⁶¹ 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.

3. EXPECTED RESULTS

⁶¹ within the appropriation item governed by the CSO-strategy

Specific guiding questions - which reflect the expected results below should be formulated in the inception phase in accordance with the approach and methodology of the evaluation as indicated in section 6. The expected results of the evaluation are:

- a) To learn if, how and why/why not the support given has contributed to creating conditions which poor and discriminated people/the target groups perceive enable them to improve their living conditions and quality of life;
- b) To gain knowledge on what changes poor and discriminated people/the target groups recognise as a result in the context of the support given through the projects/programs of partner organisations;
- c) To find out if there are other results in the context of given support – expected and non-expected results, positive and negative - which are not being recognised by poor and discriminated people/the target groups;
- d) To find out what a rights perspective means to poor and discriminated people and how they suggest to change their living conditions and quality of life in the context of given support;
- e) Based on the findings in a) to d), to find out to what extent the projects/programs are perceived as relevant by poor and discriminated people/the target groups;
- f) To find out to what extent (if, how and why) partner organizations supported by Swedish CSOs have contributed to the results in a) to c). As there might be other factors affecting the results, such as other organisations working on and supporting similar out-comes, the question of attribution should be dealt with in a wider perspective in the analysis of the results.⁶²
- g) To find out in what way the partner organizations of Swedish CSOs have applied poor people's perspectives on development and the rights perspective in their projects/programs of given support (through the principles of participation, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability) and to what extent this might have contributed to the results in a) to c);

⁶² By attribution we mean the ascription of a causal link between observed (or expected to be observed) changes and a specific intervention. Note: Attribution refers to that which is to be credited for the observed changes or results achieved. , Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, Published by Sida 2007 in cooperation with OECD/DAC

- h) To find out in what way support to capacity building of local civil society organizations/the partner organizations of Swedish CSOs in the projects/programs of given support, might have contributed to the results in a) to c), and what role the Swedish CSOs might have played in the context.

The evaluation is expected to assess the above mentioned aspects in relation to relevance, effectiveness and sustainability. The evaluation criteria of cost efficiency and impact will not be a focus of the evaluation. It should be possible to draw thematic and methodological lessons over time and to gain knowledge on accurate methods to show reliable results at out-come level.

4. INTENDED USE AND INTENDED USERS

- The findings will provide lessons learned and recommendations for Sida, Swedish CSOs and their partner organisations in developing countries about the relevance and effectiveness of the support given in creating conditions to enable poor and discriminated people to improve their living conditions and quality of life.
- The lessons learned and recommendations will be used in Sida's dialogue with the Swedish framework CSOs and by the Swedish framework CSOs in their dialogue with their partner organizations to enhance results and help designing projects/programs to effectively create conditions to enable poor and discriminated people to improve their living conditions and quality of life.
- The evaluation will provide Swedish CSOs and their partner organizations with tools for measuring reliable results and help improving the reporting of accurate and relevant results to Sida and other stakeholders.
- The results of the study will be used by Sida to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the CSO-strategy in contributing to creating conditions to enable poor and discriminated people to improve their living conditions and quality of life. The lessons learned may be used by Sida in its input to the mid-term review of the CSO-strategy in 2012, and to the future elaboration of the forthcoming new strategy at the end of the evaluation period in 2014.
- Intended users are also the local partners and people who participate in the process-oriented studies who instantly can learn from the findings and reflections evoked by the evaluation process.

5. SCOPE AND TIMEFRAME

The Sida-support via Swedish CSOs may entail a long chain of grant transmissions before the support reaches people in the field. There are nearly 2,000 projects and

programs registered in Sida's CSOs database for 2010 with activities in over one hundred countries. These cannot all be covered in an evaluation.

According to the CSO-strategy a thorough, results-oriented evaluation is to be carried out during the strategy period. We suggest that a thorough evaluation means in-depth studies of selected activities where poor people are living, in contrast to a broad study of many activities at the different levels of given support. This means that focus will be on studying results of partner organisations' activities at field level and does not entail a capacity study of Swedish framework CSOs; the latter being carried out regularly in other studies.

As it is difficult to make a representative sample of all projects and programs at field level, it is suggested to make a strategic sample according to certain criteria. Considering the fact that the evaluation should have a learning focus and there is an ambition to draw thematic and methodological lessons from the study it is suggested that selection be done according to CSOs' most common roles and activities. The CSO strategy recognizes the potential of CSOs in their roles as collective voices and service providers. The following aspects and functions should be considered in selecting projects/programs to be evaluated: Empowerment, awareness rising, advocacy, watch-dog, policy development and enforcement, and service delivery.

Sustainable development projects and programs require long time frames to be successful. Therefore a multi-year study is recommended. While choosing projects/programs to be evaluated the different time phases should be considered. Projects/programs where support is already phased out/or about to be phased out may be included in the study. It is suggested that the evaluation starts at the beginning of 2012 with a base-line/pilot study and continues by two follow-ups in 2013 and 2014. Even this could be considered a short time period in the context of capacity building. In the future it may be decided to carry out additional follow-ups which are not part of these terms of reference.

A multi-year, in-depth study is time consuming and entails a considerable amount of data collection and processing. Considering required evaluation resources, it is important to limit the number of projects/programs to be evaluated. The number ranges from a minimum of six to a maximum of fifteen, with locations in three countries. It is suggested to choose two conflict /post-conflict countries and one country characterized by a stable environment for CSOs. Pakistan and Uganda are chosen as the former and Nicaragua as the latter. Even if the study does not focus on Swedish framework CSOs it is suggested that selected projects/programs should be selected among partner organizations of at least six to nine different Swedish framework CSOs.

6. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Appropriate methodology and methods to be used in the execution of the evaluation will be worked out in detail during the Inception Phase of the evaluation by the Evaluation Team in close cooperation with the Project Advisory Group (see section 7.3). Here follow some guidelines and suggestions for the Evaluation Team to be

considered while suggesting approaches and methodology to be used in the evaluation.

6.1 General guidelines

According to emerging practice, the overall study and analysis may involve the following stages:⁶³

1. Defining the boundaries of the project/program to be studied (Objective and scope)
2. Identification and selection of key stakeholders (The target group/s and boundary groups or organisations that will experience change as a result of the intervention; or will contribute to a change)
3. Developing a theory of change (It tells the story of how people living in poverty/the target groups/ boundary groups or organisations were/are involved in the project/program and their perception and belief of how their lives have changed or will change.)
4. What goes in (Identifying inputs for each outcome)
5. What comes out (Identifying results at out-come level)
6. Valuation of inputs and results
7. Verification
8. Narrative

To carry out an overall CSO-strategy evaluation – with a top down perspective – implies the risk that important results as perceived by people living in poverty may be overlooked and not detected. It is therefore suggested to adopt a bottom-up perspective and use approaches and methodologies where poor and discriminated people will be consulted and participate in the study. For the purpose of this evaluation it is proposed to use methods of Reality Checks with qualitative and participatory evaluation methods.

Considering the context and objectives of the local partner organizations' projects/programs, results may be followed up at different levels such as individual, organization and society. Depending upon the scope, goals and scale of the projects/programs to be studied, it might be challenging to find methods of Reality Checks that can be applied at all levels, including in some cases regional and international levels. In order to find out poor peoples' reality in these cases, methods of triangulation⁶⁴ should be suggested and used. The Evaluation Team may therefore

⁶³ Social Return on Investment: A practical guide for the development cooperation sector, Context, international cooperation, Utrecht

⁶⁴ The use of three or more theories, sources or types of information, or analysis to verify and substantiate an assessment (By combining multiple data sources, methods,

suggest a mixed methods approach, which includes Reality Checks and additional methods such as quantitative studies or others.

For reference an example of Reality Checks is described below, including suggestions for a study to be carried out in three distinct parts. Sida will give guidance and support to the Evaluation Team during the evaluation process in conducting the Reality Checks.

All Sida evaluations (and reviews) must adhere to the OECD/DAC Evaluation Quality Standards. The execution process and the study reports will be assessed in relation to the standards prior to Sida's approval.

6.2 Example of Reality Checks

Sida launched and introduced the methodology of Reality Checks for the first time in Bangladesh in 2006 and has since produced yearly Reality Checks, covering the health and education sectors.⁶⁵ A more recent initiative of Reality Checks is introduced in Mozambique in 2011.⁶⁶ To use the methods of Reality Checks entails a rigorous yet methodologically dynamic process where trends and changes are being tracked in annual longitudinal studies. Guiding principles are immersions (i.e. overnight stays in people's homes or nearby) participant observation and listening - and a variety of participatory approaches where transparency in the method, the process and the results is integral.

The emphasis of the Reality Check approach is on qualitative, participatory and innovative methods for listening to poor people's perspectives on development in order to capture the multidimensionality of poverty, offer insight into causal processes and allow for the triangulation of information from different sources.⁶⁷

For the purpose and intended use, the evaluation could be carried out in three distinct parts and a methodology for the execution of each part is developed, where Part 1 adopts methods of Reality Checks. Guiding discussion themes (rather than specific questions) should be formulated to be used in each part. These should reflect the

analyses, or theories, evaluators seek to overcome the bias that comes from single informants, single methods, single observers or single theory studies.), Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management

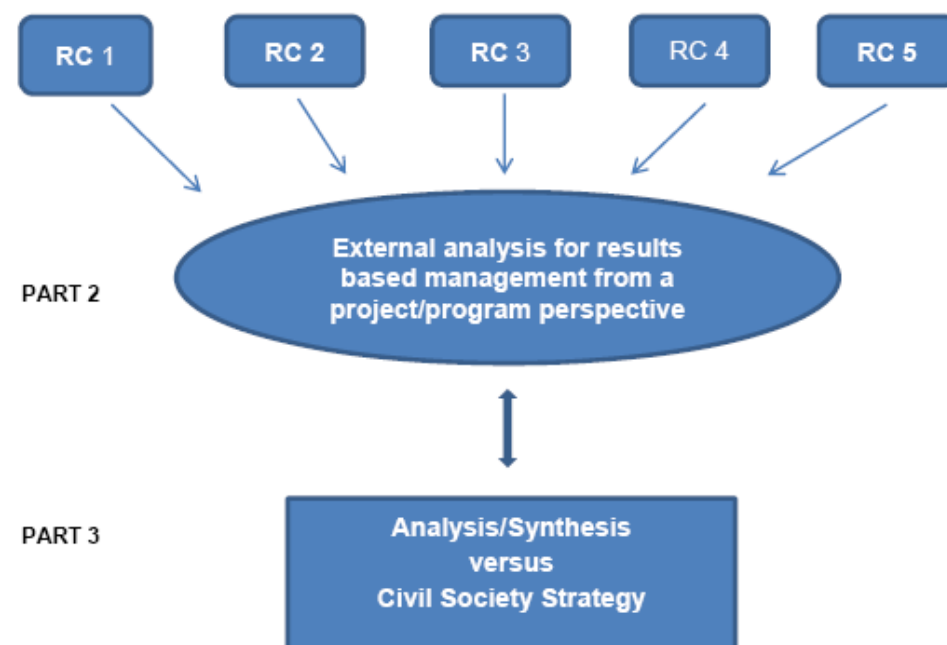
⁶⁵ Terms of Reference, Bangladesh Reality Check – Phase IV, 2010-2012, Embassy of Sweden, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Memo 2009-11-12

⁶⁶ Terms of Reference, Implementation of Reality Checks in the Niassa Province, Mozambique, Embassy of Sweden, Maputo, Memo 2010-12-16

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 6

expected results as mentioned in section 3 of these terms of reference. Below follows a figure and description of the three parts illustrating how the part of Reality Checks (RC) could feed into the other parts of the study. Both the baseline and the periodical follow-ups should be conducted according to the same parts.

PART 1



PART 1 – Reality Checks at community level⁶⁸

This part is managed by the project/program participants in a participatory process in which a theory of change is developed. This process is initiated and facilitated by the Evaluation Team. The Reality Check is primarily a ‘listening study’ rather than conventional data collection, evaluation or monitoring, but an approach which will help focus more directly on people living in poverty. The Reality Checks will consist of observing a number of development processes and statements that can be articulated as indicators and thus be monitored and evaluated. It will engage people and encourage them to formulate their own results, or views of results, or desires for results.

PART 2 – Result Based Management Level⁶⁹

This part entails an analysis done externally by project/programme staff and possible other staff/the Evaluation Team in order to meet the demands of results-based

⁶⁸ Measuring Empowerment? Ask Them, Jupp, Dee, Ibn Ali, Sohel, Barahona, Carlos, Sida Studies in Evaluation, p. 26

⁶⁹ Ibid.

management from a project/programme perspective. It may consist of the combination and/or translation of qualitative data derived from the Reality Checks into more traditional quantitative data. This part will also help enhance the reliability and validity of the evaluation.

PART 3 – The synthesis versus the CSO strategy

This part entails an external analysis in which the synthesis - derived from the analysis from Part 2 - will be compared to the Civil Society Strategy. The analysis will be carried out by the Evaluation Team. The purpose is to analyse – with the help of indicators - to what extent (if, how and why) the support via Swedish CSOs has contributed to the objectives of the CSO strategy. The indicators will be developed during the Inception Phase.

7. MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION

7.1 Management The evaluation is managed as a project of Sida's Civil Society Unit where the head of the Civil Society Unit, decides on the planning, execution and follow-up. There is a project leader who leads and monitors the operational work. The project has a working group for management of the evaluation and a project advisory group. A project Evaluation Team is being contracted to prepare and execute the evaluation according to these terms of reference.

7.2 Project Working Group. The main task of the project working group is to assist in the operational work and decision making process regarding the planning, execution and follow-up of the evaluation. The group consists of four representatives from Sida/Civil Society Unit and one from Sida/Evaluation Unit. Other Sida staff will be invited from time to time to attend working group meetings according to different needs of expertise in the process.

7.3 Project Advisory Group. The purpose of the Project Advisory Group is to give advice and input to the different stages of the evaluation, as to planning, execution and follow-up. All participants are expected to allocate time for the preparation and participation in two meetings per semester. The participants of the Sida Project Working Group (Section 7.2) are also members of this group together with four representatives of Swedish framework CSOs. These CSO representatives will coordinate feed-back and input from the other framework organizations through their own "PUU -network" during the different stages of the evaluation. In addition, the Project Advisory Group also consists of three other participants with special competence: one Social Development Adviser, one research fellow in Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology, and one CSO representative from the Swedish Industry. Other people may be invited to meetings from time to time according to different needs in the process.

7.4 Evaluation Team Sida will contract an Evaluation Team to execute the evaluation according to the tasks and requirements of qualifications as described in section 8 below.

7.5 Stakeholder involvement Relevant stakeholders of the Swedish framework CSOs' partner organisations - with representatives of their net-works and target

groups/beneficiaries - should be consulted during the evaluation process and given the opportunity to contribute. The criteria for identifying and selecting stakeholders should be specified during the inception phase. The rights and welfare of participants in the evaluation should be protected. At the same time the evaluators are independent in their assessments, conclusions and recommendations. Anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants should be protected when requested or as needed. The Evaluation Team is responsible for all necessary permissions from informants regarding the documentation of their contribution in the evaluation process.

8. SCOPE OF ASSIGNMENT

8.1 Scope of work

The Evaluation Team should conduct the following tasks:

1. Inception Phase

- a) Based on the purpose, the expected results, intended use and scope of the evaluation, to formulate criteria for the selection of projects/programmes to be evaluated;
- b) Based on the criteria worked out in a) and the guidelines given in section 6 about approach and methodology, to propose appropriate research methodology and methods to be used in the evaluation;
- c) To identify and suggest how to manage challenges with regard to the proposed research methodology and methods to be used;
- d) To clarify key concepts and definitions to be used in the execution of the evaluation;
- e) After Sida's approval of the criteria, to suggest concrete projects/programs to be evaluated;
- f) To suggest guiding questions for the operationalization of the baseline/ pilot study. The questions should correspond to the expected results in section 3;
- g) To develop a special plan for learning and participation during the evaluation process, (for example on methodological approaches to measure results based on poor peoples' reality, information about findings of the evaluation, exchange of ideas and experience, etc.)
- h) In a special document called "Inception Report" present suggestions made regarding task a) – g. A draft inception report shall be presented to Sida for discussion and approval. The final inception report, reflecting possible changes required, will serve as a guiding document for the rest of the evaluation.

2. Execution/Study Phase

The Evaluation Team is responsible for executing the evaluation as follows:

- To facilitate the participatory evaluation process and to collect data;
- To compile and analyse the data.

3. Lessons learned and recommendations

The Evaluation Team is responsible for:

- Based on the findings, drawing conclusions and making recommendations to Sida;
- Preparing a written Pilot/Base-line Study Report and Periodical follow-up Reports to Sida in which findings, conclusions and recommendations are clearly distinguished.

4. Managing the evaluation process

- To participate in Project Advisory Group meetings as needed;
- Upon agreed plans, to coordinate and execute the Pilot/Base-line study and the Periodical follow-up studies;
- Upon agreed plans, to coordinate and be responsible for the planning and execution of learning activities for Swedish CSOs and their partner organisations;
- To participate in work-shops and seminars with CSOs and Sida where findings are being disseminated and to facilitate in the process of making recommendations for future support and review of the CSO-strategy.

8.2 Time schedule and work plan

2012

April: Inception Phase April - May: Evaluation/study Phase: Execution of Pilot/Baseline study

May - June: Preparation of draft Pilot/Base-line Study Report. Submission of report to Sida for reconciliation with Sida and Project Advisory Group.

June/August: One day work shop with Swedish Framework CSOs on Final Baseline study where joint recommendations may be developed.

June/August: Submission of Final Report Pilot/Baseline Study to Sida. Dissemination of Final Report Pilot/Baseline Study to Swedish Framework CSOs.

In addition, learning activities in workshops should be planned and take place in Sweden or/and in the field during the year.

2013

February-March: Execution of Periodical Follow-up No. 1 – Evaluation against Pilot/Baseline Study.

March – May: Preparation of study report, submission to Sida and workshop where joint recommendations may be developed, see above year 2012;

June: Submission of Final Report Follow-up No. 1 to Sida. Dissemination of Report to Swedish Framework CSOs.

In addition, learning activities in workshops should be planned and take place in Sweden or/and in the field during the year.

2014

February-March: Execution of Periodical Follow-up No. 2 – Evaluation against Pilot/Baseline Study and Follow-up No. 1.

March – May: Preparation of study report of Follow-up No. 2, submission to Sida and workshop where joint recommendations may be developed.

June: Submission of Final Report of Follow-up No. 2 to Sida. Dissemination of Report to Swedish Framework CSOs.

In addition, learning activities in workshops should be planned and take place in Sweden or/and in the field during the year.

8.3 Reporting and approval of assignments including budgets

Inception work and report

Upon signing of the contract with the consultant who has been chosen in the tender process to carry out the evaluation, time and budget for the inception phase will be approved by Sida. The Evaluation Team shall present a draft inception report, covering the tasks outlined in section 8.1 Scope of work, to Sida for discussion and approval. The final inception report approved by Sida, reflecting possible changes required, will serve as a guiding document for the rest of the evaluation. It will also contain detailed work plans and budgets for the pilot/baseline study and learning activities during 2012.

Pilot/baseline study and report 2012

In accordance with the final inception report, the Evaluation Team will carry out the baseline study and learning activities. The consultants are expected to produce the following documents:

- One draft synthesis report, to be discussed with Sida and CSOs in workshops, summarising the findings and recommendations of the baseline/pilot studies of all projects/programs according to the guiding questions/expected results of the evaluation. It should also summarise the consultants' experience and lessons learned

(methods, tools, etc.) gained whilst carrying out the baseline/pilot study of all projects/programs. In attachments to the synthesis report, individual reports of each project/program studied should be annexed. The synthesis report including annexes shall be approved by Sida. The number of pages for the synthesis report and the annexes is to be agreed by Sida in the inception phase.

-Based on the final inception report and the recommendations from the approved synthesis report, a proposal shall be presented for the follow up study and learning activities to be carried out during 2013. The proposal for 2013 shall include a detailed work plan and budgets for discussion and approval by Sida.

Follow up study and report 2013

In accordance with the final inception report and approved work plan and budgets for 2013, the Evaluation Team shall carry out the follow-up study and learning activities during 2013. The consultants are expected to produce a similar synthesis report, as stated above for the baseline/pilot study, to be discussed with Sida and CSOs in workshops. Based on the inception report and the recommendations from the approved synthesis report for 2013 a proposal shall be presented for the follow up study and learning activities to be carried out during 2014. The proposal for 2014 shall include a detailed work plan and budgets for discussion and approval by Sida.

Follow up study and report 2014

In accordance with the final inception report and approved work plan and budgets for 2014, the Evaluation Team shall carry out the follow-up study and learning activities during 2014. The consultants are expected to produce a similar synthesis report for 2014 as stated above for the baseline/pilot study and follow up study for 2013, to be discussed with Sida and CSOs in workshops. The final synthesis report for 2014 shall also include a Three Year Final Report covering all three years' of study for discussion and approval by Sida.

Termination of individual studies

In case a draft report is of such bad quality that Sida is of the opinion that excessively substantial rectifications would be necessary to ensure that the report fulfils its expected purpose and requirements as outlined in the final inception report, Sida can decide to terminate the study of a project/program in question.

Archive and Copyright

All produced material and copyright of photos belongs to Sida unless negotiated otherwise. The consultant shall create an easily accessible electronic archive for photos, videos, audio tapes, drawings, and field reports which can be used also by external persons for purposes authorised by Sida in consultation with the consultant. One copy of the archive will remain with the consultant, and one will be lodged with Sida. All original materials should where possible be stored at Sida. The consultant is responsible for all necessary permissions regarding the documentation.

8.3 Profile of the Evaluation Team and requirements for personnel

The Evaluation Team shall consist of a team leader and team members. The team leader will lead and be overall responsible for the entire evaluation process. The team

members are expected to take shared responsibility for data collection and analysis. The tenderer should propose a team leader for the entire evaluation and three country teams, one each for Pakistan, Uganda and Nicaragua.

The team leader and the suggested team members shall submit CVs and references verifying that they possess the relevant qualifications and experience as stipulated in the Tender Invitation Document, section 4.3 and 7.4.

In addition, gender balance should be considered while composing the Evaluation Teams and that the teams should include professionals from countries and regions concerned comprising people who know the local language. The evaluators should be independent of the evaluated activities and have no stake in the outcome of the evaluation.

9. OTHER

Sida should be given the opportunity to join the evaluations teams during the evaluation in the field as part of continuous Sida internal competency building.

REFERENCE LITERATURE

Guidelines

-Pluralism, Policy for support to civil society in developing countries within Swedish development Cooperation, Regeringskansliet, Government Offices of Sweden

-Strategy for support via Swedish civil society organisations 2010-2014, UF2009/28632/UP

-Sida's Instructions for Grants from the Appropriation Item Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations, Adopted March 2010 (with corrections as of July 2010), Sida

Methodology

-Measuring Empowerment? Ask Them, Quantifying qualitative outcomes from people's own analysis, Sida Studies in Evaluation, 2010:1

-Terms of Reference, Bangladesh Reality Check – Phase IV, 2010-2012, Embassy of Sweden, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Memo 2009-11-12

-Terms of Reference, Implementation of Reality Checks in the Niassa Province, Mozambique, Embassy of Sweden, Maputo, Memo 2010-12-16

-Basic Approach and Methods for the Bangladesh 'Reality Check', Sida, Draft 2007-03-23

-Swedish Democracy Promotion through NGOs in Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Peru, Outcome-oriented Evaluation of Diakonia's Latin America Programme, Sida Evaluation 2008:02

-Outcome Mapping Evaluation of Six Civil Society Projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sida Evaluation 2008:17

-Social Return on Investment – A practical guide for the development cooperation sector, Context, international cooperation, Utrecht, the Netherlands, October 2010

-Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, DAC Guidelines and Reference Series, OECD 2010

-Evaluating Development Co-operation, Summary of Key Norms and Standards. OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation, OECD

Annex 8 Expected Results, Methodology Aims and Evaluation Questions

Expected results (Terms of Reference, p.5)	Methodology aims (Inception Report, p.14)	Evaluation questions (Inception Report, p.37)
<i>Through reality checks</i>		
(a) Learn if, how and why/why not the support given has contributed to creating conditions which poor and discriminated people/the target groups perceive enable them to improve their living conditions and quality of life	Understand people's perceptions of and hopes for changes in the enabling conditions needed for them to improve their living conditions and in their own power and ability to bring about change.	EQ1. 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 each key issue ⁷⁰ (e.g. workers' rights, young people's livelihoods)?
(b) To gain knowledge on what changes poor and discriminated people/the target groups recognise as a result in the context of the support given through the projects/programs of partner organisations.	Understand what changes people recognise as having occurred or not as the result of Swedish CSO (and partner) programme interventions, or other forces.	EQ2. Which actors, including the Swedish CSOs and their partners, can plausibly be inferred to be contributing positive changes in the enabling conditions?
(c) To find out if there are other results in the context of given support – expected and non-expected results, positive and negative – which are not being recognised by poor and		

⁷⁰ One key issue was identified for each research site before fieldwork started.

discriminated people/the target groups.		
(d) To find out what a rights perspective means to poor and discriminated people and how they suggest to change their living conditions and quality of life in the context of given support.	Understand how people perceive and experience the four key principles of Sweden's HRBA to development.	EQ3. What does a human rights based perspective mean to people living in poverty and marginalisation, in the context of the key issue?
(e) Based on the findings in a) to d), to find out to what extent the projects/ programs are perceived as relevant by poor and discriminated people/the target groups.	Understand how people perceive the relevance of Swedish CSO programmes, interventions and capacity building in relation to their realities and concerns.	EQ4. What is the relevance, alignment and feasibility of the theory of change, strategies and interventions of the Swedish CSOs and their partners?
Expected results (Terms of Reference, p.5)	Methodology aims (Inception Report, p.14)	Evaluation questions (Inception Report, p.37)
<i>Through meso-level and organisational inquiry, building on reality check findings</i>		
(f) To find out to what extent (if, how and why) partner organisations supported by Swedish CSOs have contributed to the results in a) to c). As there might be other factors affecting the results, such as other organisations working on and supporting similar outcomes, the question of attribution should be dealt with in a wider perspective in the analysis of the results.	Draw plausible inferences as to contributions of Swedish CSOs and their partners to perceived changes in the enabling conditions and power of people living in poverty to improve their lives, taking into account wider context analysis and the contributions of other actors and forces.	EQ5. What plausible contribution can be inferred to the role of CSO capacity development and enhancement in the context, and in relation to the key issue?
(g) To find out in what way the partner organisations of Swedish CSOs have applied poor people's perspectives on development and the rights	Identify how the four principles of the HRBA (participation, transparency, accountability, non-discrimination) are	EQ6a. What are the theories of change and strategies of Swedish CSOs and their partners? EQ6b. What do the four human rights principles of

perspective in their projects/programs of given support (through the principles of participation, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability) and to what extent this might have contributed to the results in a) to c);	understood and practiced in the theories of change and programme strategies of Swedish CSOs and their partners, and how this has shaped their contributions to changes in the enabling conditions.	participation, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability mean in their practice, in the context of the key issue?
(h) To find out in what way support to capacity building of local CSOs/partner organisations of Swedish CSOs in the projects/programs of given support, might have contributed to the results in a) to c), and what role the Swedish CSOs might have played in the context.	Explore what the role of capacity building and strengthening of CSOs, specifically by Swedish CSOs and their partners, has played in contributing to changes in the enabling conditions.	



Evaluation of the Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations 2010-2014

Final Synthesis Report

This report synthesises the findings and recommendations from an evaluation of Sweden's Civil Society Strategy 2010–2014 as implemented by Swedish civil society organisations and their national partners in three countries – Nicaragua, Pakistan and Uganda.

The purpose of the evaluation was to find out if, how and why/why not Sweden's support to civil society organisations has contributed to the overall objectives of the strategy.

The Reality Check Approach was used to understand the realities and perspectives of people living in poverty combined with 'meso-level' and organisational inquiries. The findings were used to explore the theories of change of the organisations in relation to people's realities, in order to analyse the strategy's relevance, alignment and feasibility.

SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Address: S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Valhallavägen 199, Stockholm

Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64

E-mail: info@sida.se. Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>

