

Strategy for research cooperation and research in development cooperation

2015 – 2021



REGERINGSKANSLIET

Government Offices
of Sweden

Strategy for research cooperation and research in development cooperation 2015–2021

1. Expected results

This strategy governs the use of funds that, under appropriation 1:1 International aid, are allocated under the appropriation item ‘Research cooperation’ in the Government’s appropriation directions for the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and under the appropriation item ‘Development research’ in the letter of appropriation for the activities of the Swedish Research Council, for each financial year. The strategy is valid for the period 2015–2021. Sida’s activities are expected to contribute to results in areas 1–3 in the strategy, while the Swedish Research Council’s activities are expected to contribute to results in area 4.

Activities in the context of the strategy are intended to contribute to strengthened research of high quality and of relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development, with a primary focus on low-income countries and regions. This is achieved through contributions that strengthen these countries’ capacity to undertake high-quality research training and to conduct, communicate and utilise high-quality research in the fight against poverty and for economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development. The activities also include contributions at global, regional and national level that specifically aim to promote high-quality research in areas of particular relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development in low-income countries, and contributions that promote research that, through innovation, can contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development. The activities also include support to high-quality research in Sweden that is of relevance to development.

Through synergistic and mutually supportive initiatives in the areas outlined above, Sweden will contribute to strengthening research capacity and research-based knowledge to tackle poverty-related problems and challenges, primarily in low-income countries. The Government considers that support to research within the framework of the strategy, in all disciplines, should be guided to a greater extent by an environmental and climate perspective, in order to contribute to equitable and sustainable global development. The Government also considers that research cooperation and support to research should be based on, and implemented in accordance with, a clear gender equality perspective, as part of a consistent application of a rights-based perspective.

Sida’s activities within the framework of the strategy are expected to contribute to the following results in areas 1–3:

Strengthened research of high quality and of relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development

- 1. Focusing on capacity-building for research, primarily in low-income countries and regions*

- More partner countries have capacity to independently undertake research training and conduct high-quality research.
- More women undergo research training and conduct research.
- Strengthened conditions and capacity among national and regional research actors to participate in international research and research dialogue.
- More partner countries and regional research actors have capacity to formulate and implement national and regional research strategies.
- More partner countries and regional research actors have improved competence and strengthened infrastructure for scientific communication.
- Strengthened capacity among universities in partner countries to communicate research findings that are potentially beneficial to the development of society.

2. Focusing on global, regional and national research of relevance to low-income countries and regions

- More research findings of relevance to development at global and regional research organisations and at universities in partner countries.
- Greater impact of a gender equality perspective in research.
- Findings from relevant international research have a greater impact on national and regional research.
- Findings from national and regional research have a greater impact on international research.

3. Focusing on the promotion of research that, through innovation, can contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development

- More interfaces, networks and cooperation established between actors from research institutions on the one hand, and the business sector, public authorities and civil society on the other.
- Improved conditions for researchers to develop innovative ideas with the potential to contribute to the emergence of new products and services that contribute to poverty reduction and a sustainable society.
- Reinforcement of the role of universities and their contribution to innovation processes and systems.

The Swedish Research Council's activities within the framework of the strategy are expected to contribute to the following results in area 4:

Strengthened research of high quality and of relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development

4. Focusing on Swedish research of relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development in low-income countries

- Strengthened high-quality research in Sweden that is of relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development in low-income countries.
- Strengthened knowledge exchange and collaboration between researchers in Sweden

and researchers in low-income and lower middle-income countries, with a focus on research that is of high quality and of relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

2. Activities

The Government considers that research-based knowledge is an important foundation for poverty reduction and promoting the conditions for equitable and sustainable development. Support for research cooperation and research contributes to science-based critical analysis and public debate, to national knowledge-based policy to reduce poverty in its various dimensions and to sustainable societies. Support for research cooperation and research within the framework of the strategy, with a primary focus on low-income countries, can include a range of different thematic areas and issues that are highly relevant in order for people living in poverty to be able to improve their situation within a context of sustainable societies. Relevant research issues therefore cover a very broad range that includes human rights and groups with special conditions and needs, health, gender equality, sustainable agriculture and fisheries, land ownership and land use rights, the environment, the impact of climate change, inequality, democracy, conflicts and migration.

Research cooperation is to be long-term and cover four complementary areas (1–4) that together contribute to *strengthened research of high quality and of relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development*. Support to research cooperation and research is also to contribute to the implementation of Sweden's Policy for Global Development (Govt Bill 2002/03:122). Contributions focusing on capacity-building to undertake research training and research in low-income countries and regions is to remain the core activity of research cooperation, both through further development of existing cooperation and through opportunities to initiate new cooperation in countries and regions in which Sweden pursues strategy-based cooperation (area 1). Research cooperation is also to include support to research deemed to be of particular relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development in low-income countries and regions (area 2), and contributions that promote research that, through innovation, can contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development (area 3). Support to Swedish high-quality research of relevance to poverty-related problems and challenges, primarily facing low-income countries (area 4) is also to be included.

Research-based knowledge derived from both Swedish and international research is to be an important starting point for analysis of the broader context and policy design, as well as for the planning, implementation and follow-up of bilateral and multilateral development cooperation initiatives and the implementation of Sweden's Policy for Global Development.

Scientific quality is to be a decisive criterion in all decisions on contributions within the framework of the strategy. Nonetheless, they are to be clearly guided by the criterion of relevance for development, in accordance with the objective of the expenditure area (International aid). Research cooperation is to be implemented so as to promote communication, cooperation and co-financing with other donors and research funders, and with actors in the partner countries, in the EU and internationally, as well as in Sweden. Activities are to follow internationally accepted research ethics guidelines, be free from all forms of discrimination, promote equal research relationships and otherwise be pursued in

accordance with good scientific practice. A gender equality perspective is to permeate all initiatives with respect to both the content of activities and the actors involved. Research cooperation is to strive to ensure that intellectual freedom and the freedom to acquire and disseminate knowledge are respected. Acceptance of risk must always be seen as a part of the conditions of research and research cooperation, not least because far from all research generates immediately applicable results.

Sida's initiatives (areas 1–3) are to be implemented in countries and regions in which Sweden pursues strategy-based cooperation, and at global level with respect to research of particular relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development. Sida can involve universities, institutions and researchers in Sweden within the strategy areas for which it is responsible.

The Swedish Research Council's initiatives (area 4) are to contribute to strengthening development research in Sweden, both through support to individual researchers, and to knowledge exchange and the initiation of cooperation between researchers in Sweden and researchers in low-income and lower middle-income countries.

Synergies are to be fostered between different areas of activity and levels of research support within the strategy areas. Complementarity and synergies are to be sought between initiatives implemented within the framework of the strategy by Sida and the Swedish Research Council, between this strategy and other thematic and geographical strategies, and with other support to research within development cooperation, as well as between Sida, the Swedish Research Council and other research councils, actors and funders.

Strengthened research of high quality and of relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development

1. Focusing on capacity-building for research, primarily in low-income countries and regions

Support to research and analysis help build domestic capacity, which is a sustainable way of strengthening responsibility for, and ownership of, a country's own development.

Activities in this area therefore aim at long-term strengthening of capacities and capabilities of research actors, primarily in low-income countries and regions, to identify important areas for research and to allocate resources to plan, implement, utilise and make available research for the development of society. This can be achieved through support to the development of sustainable research systems, research capacities and infrastructure (such as laboratories, ICT and libraries), as a foundation for conducting high-quality higher education, research training and research in attractive and sustainable environments, for quality-assuring, issuing calls for, evaluating and communicating research, and for participating in, utilising and adapting international research to a country's or region's own needs and challenges.

Strengthened research capacity is to be seen as the overall effect of development in different parts and at different levels of a research system. Contributions are therefore to foster the building of institutional, and thereby also individual, research capacities. The need to increase women's access to research training and opportunities to conduct research is to be highlighted. Contributions can also promote the building of national research capacity by strengthening or stimulating the establishment of research councils that can quality-assure and ethically scrutinise research, and mobilise, distribute, evaluate and follow up on research funding. Moreover, support can be given to the drafting of research policy and research strategies, and to building regional mechanisms for research funding, research coordination and knowledge acquisition and dissemination.

2. Focusing on global, regional and national research of relevance to low-income countries and regions

Activities in this area are to contribute to increasing research-based knowledge with the emphasis on issues and circumstances of particular relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development in low-income countries. It is important to direct resources at the most neglected research areas, where there is great need for knowledge to tackle complex development challenges, including from environmental, climate and gender equality perspectives. Taking national and regional policies and development plans and international and global commitments as a starting point, research institutions and researchers are to strengthen their ability to identify and formulate research issues of relevance to society.

Research of particular relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development can be promoted via support to regional and international research institutions and networks within different thematic areas (e.g. environment, climate, agriculture, energy, trade, health). This area can also include support to EU programmes with a focus on research and research cooperation that are of relevance to the different dimensions of poverty, primarily in low-income countries.

As research capacities have gradually been strengthened in an increasing number of low-income countries, and as national ownership of the research agenda is strengthened, today more countries are able to contribute to research-based knowledge to meet the challenges they face. Support to research can therefore also be directed to a greater extent towards universities in partner countries, in addition to support to regional and global research actors.

Collaboration between international, regional and national researchers (including research exchanges between researchers in developing countries) is important in terms of good research results (including from comparative research), increased dissemination and utilisation of research results, and the development of research capacities (area 1). Findings from research of relevance to low-income countries are also an important knowledge base for Swedish development cooperation as a whole.

3. Focusing on the promotion of research that, through innovation, can contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development

Technical and social innovations have the potential to contribute to sustainable improvements in the living conditions of people who live in poverty and vulnerability. Activities in this area are to contribute to strengthening the role of research as a driver of development by stimulating communication and collaboration between research institutions, the business sector, decision-makers and civil society, including collaboration with stakeholders in a country, on specific challenges and problems that they face. Support to innovation systems can help ensure that research findings can be utilised to a greater extent by contributing to solutions to poverty-related challenges and problems. The contribution of research to innovation can be a matter of finding ways to adapt and apply existing and new knowledge to circumstances and needs in low-income countries. Moreover, development-related innovation research can contribute to strengthening countries' innovation systems.

Support to collaboration between research activities and application requires a system in which, for example, product development and the spreading of innovations are supported by an institutional structure with functioning copyright law and other supporting infrastructure. Support to research that is expected to lead to innovations with the potential to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development is to be preceded by an assessment of the needs and interests of potential users.

Support to increased application of research can be tied to research cooperation initiatives in different thematic areas at bilateral, regional and global level, and to initiatives implemented in other parts of development cooperation.

4. Focusing on Swedish research of relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development in low-income countries

Activities in this area aim at strengthening Swedish research that is of high quality and of relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development in low-income countries. Experienced researchers in development research in Sweden contribute to global knowledge of the causes and consequences of poverty and possible solutions to it, and to knowledge about whether societal challenges are being tackled in a sustainable way in low-income countries and regions. Knowledge exchange and cooperation between researchers in Sweden and in low-income and lower middle-income countries are important in order to maintain internationally competitive Swedish research expertise in the area of research of relevance to development.

The Swedish Research Council is to contribute to expected results in this area by taking responsibility for calls for, preparation, evaluation, follow-up and reporting of support to Swedish development research that is of relevance to low-income countries, and project grants for initiating cooperation and knowledge exchange between researchers in Sweden and in low-income and lower middle-income countries (Swedish Research Links).¹

3. Follow-up

The Government's guidelines for results strategies in Sweden's international development cooperation are to be applied to follow-up of Sida's activities within strategy areas 1–3. The Swedish Research Council is to report on its activities within strategy area 4 in its annual report, and in accordance with its appropriation directions issued by the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

In accordance with the guidelines for results strategies, Sida and the Swedish Research Council are both to participate in consultation on the implementation of the strategy, with a view to promoting dialogue, exchange of experience and synergies between the two agencies' contributions. Sida and the Swedish Research Council are also to conduct dialogue on the implementation of the strategy as a foundation for coordinated and concerted action.

¹ In accordance with the OECD DAC's country classification



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