



Strategy for Sweden's global  
development cooperation in sustainable  
social development 2018–2022



# 1. Focus

The objective of Sweden's international development cooperation is to create opportunities for people who live in poverty and oppression to improve their living conditions. Development cooperation will be based on the policy framework for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, the principles of aid and development effectiveness, and the new agreements reached by the international community in 2015: the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

Within the framework of this strategy, Swedish development cooperation will contribute to sustainable social development through improved, equitable and gender-equal health, quality lifelong education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). The strategy will apply during the period 2018–2022 and encompasses a total of SEK 7 100 million.<sup>1</sup>

The strategy will take its cue in particular from the Global Goals of the 2030 Agenda on good health and well-being (Goal 3), quality education for all (Goal 4), gender equality (Goal 5), and clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), and will contribute to the fulfilment of these goals within the framework of activities.

The activities of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) will contribute to the following objectives:

**Improved, equitable and gender-equal health, security and well-being throughout life**

- Enhanced and sustainable quality systems for health
- Improved access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including freedom from gender-based violence

<sup>1</sup> Contributions within the framework of this strategy are financed in line with the terms and conditions for appropriation 1:1 Development cooperation, expenditure area 7 or equivalent appropriation item in the appropriation directions concerning the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) for each financial year.

## 2. Context

- Improved access to clean water and safe and sustainable sanitation and hygiene in general, and within health care
- Enhanced capacity to promote healthier lives
- Enhanced capacity to prevent the adverse health impacts of environmental pollution and climate change

### **Improved, equitable, inclusive and gender-equal education and quality lifelong learning**

- Enhanced and sustainable quality systems for education and learning
- Improved opportunities for learning and knowledge acquisition, especially for girls and women
- Increased knowledge about sex and relationships, including sexual rights, and enhanced work in and out of schools to combat gender-based violence
- Improved access to clean water and safe and sustainable sanitation and hygiene in schools
- Increased knowledge and integration of sustainable development in education and learning

The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals are integrated and indivisible, balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development. Social and economic development within the planetary boundaries is dependent on the sustainable management of our planet's resources. Sustainable social development requires that people have access to knowledge and basic public services of high quality throughout their lifetime and are able to realise their potential and contribute to their own development and that of society. Holistic sustainable systems for health, security, education, and water and sanitation supply are mutually reinforcing, interdependent and indivisible elements of sustainable social development.

In general, major improvements have taken place in recent years for people living in poverty. Improved knowledge, technology and method development have helped to prevent, cure and stop the spread of diseases. More children than ever before are attending school and life expectancy has increased, as has access to water and sanitation.

Despite this progress, many challenges remain and the need for investments in human capital to achieve sustainable social development is considerable. Functioning systems for health, medical care, education, and water and sanitation are still lacking in large parts of the world. Major shortcomings remain in terms of equity, gender equality, and the quality of and access to basic public services. People's access to sexual and reproductive health and rights is inadequate. Never before have so many people been displaced, creating major challenges regarding access to basic social services, not least education, as children risk being left outside of the school system for their entire childhood. People, especially children, who are displaced or in conflict-affected and fragile states are particularly vulnerable and risk becoming the victims of abuse, discrimination and human trafficking. At the same time, there are significant needs in countries that have remained poor – often because of poor governance and corruption – despite a long period of peace.

Socially sustainable development is crucial if people and systems are to be

### 3. Activities

resilient and able to manage risks, shocks and challenges, such as the impacts of climate change, natural disasters, refugee situations, epidemics, etc. There is a great and growing need for effective and sustainable systems that are able to integrate and coordinate various challenges and cross-sectoral solutions.

Sweden's development cooperation will be based on and characterised by a rights perspective and poor people's perspectives on development. The rights perspective means that human rights and democracy are regarded as fundamental to development. This approach involves giving visibility, ahead of each contribution, to individuals and groups who are discriminated against, excluded or marginalised. This is to ensure that all individuals can enjoy their rights, regardless of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion or other belief, sexual orientation, or transgender identity or expression. The perspectives of poor people on development means that the situation, needs, circumstances and priorities of poor women, men and children must be the starting point for poverty reduction and the promotion of equitable and sustainable development.

Sweden's development cooperation must be socially, economically and environmentally sustainable, and gender-equal. Development cooperation is based on a holistic approach to the challenges, needs and circumstances of people and societies. The guiding

principle is that economic, social and environmental conditions and processes are to be understood and managed in an integrated context. Gender equality and the empowerment and rights of women and girls are both goals in themselves and a prerequisite and a means for achieving sustainable global development. Violence and armed conflict are among the largest obstacles to economic and social development, and development cooperation is an important part of conflict prevention. An environmental and climate perspective, a gender equality perspective and a conflict perspective must therefore be systematically integrated into Sweden's development cooperation.

Synergies between the different areas of the strategy must be harnessed. Particular emphasis must be placed on complementarity and synergies between the three strategies for sustainable development. Synergies with activities within the framework of other thematically focused strategies and regional and bilateral strategies will also be sought. Sida must ensure a holistic approach in all of Sweden's support to sustainable social development. Global

activities must help to ensure that Sweden's priority issues gain traction in international normative policy development in the areas addressed by the strategy.

Increased knowledge, access to information, dialogue and participation that promote equity and gender equality are recurrent themes that contribute to global policy and methods development and capacity-building. Sweden must stand up particularly for issues that are not sufficiently highlighted by other actors in international cooperation. Internationally agreed principles on aid and development effectiveness must be applied.

Global added value must be prioritised, but activities focused on a single region or several countries may also occur. Partnerships should be sought with a broad range of actors. Support via multilateral organisations must be consistent with Swedish priorities and approaches in cooperation with multilateral organisations. The Swedish resource base's experience, expertise and networks in different sectors of society must be taken into account in implementation. An innovative and flexible approach should be applied, including the use of innovative forms of financing.

Activities must be integrated and able to contribute to several goals simultaneously. Activities focusing on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) must be integrated in the strategy's two goal areas – health and education. These are particularly important and mutually reinforcing, and they enable better access to both health and education for women and girls.

Improved, equitable and gender-equal health, security and well-being throughout life. Activities will promote robust health systems, particularly at local level (primary care) and contribute to social security systems. These have the capacity to provide preventive care and treatment, as well as improved capacity to prevent and manage various risk factors and health threats, such as outbreaks of infectious diseases and antibiotic resistance. Activities will contribute to the development of knowledge, capacity and policy in the area of SRHR, including maternal and child health, combating HIV, ensuring safe abortions, and preventing prostitution and gender-based violence. Activities will also contribute to

strengthening sustainable systems for water and sanitation supply, promoting the use of adapted and sustainable technical or nature-based solutions, and increased knowledge about hygiene, sanitation and safe water management, which together with healthy eating habits are a prerequisite for good health. To promote healthier lives, support must be offered to global and regional actors working to strengthen preventive and health-promoting initiatives, particularly involving risk factors such as smoking, alcohol, poor eating habits, physical inactivity and road accidents. To reduce the risk of health impacts of environmental pollution, cross-sectoral activities are essential.

Improved, equitable, inclusive and gender-equal education and quality lifelong learning. Activities will take a holistic approach to learning, with a focus on helping to strengthen quality national education systems, including teacher training, at all levels – from preschool to vocational education and training, and higher education, including non-formal education. It is a priority for girls and boys to be able to complete equitable

and quality primary and secondary education that is free of charge. Activities will also contribute to increased opportunities to gain knowledge, particularly for girls, women and vulnerable groups, and improved sexuality education, knowledge about sexual rights, and prevention of gender-based violence in and outside of schools. Moreover, activities will contribute to schools ensuring access to clean water, safe and secure toilets, and knowledge about hygiene, especially for girls. Increased integration of education for sustainable development will be promoted in all learning processes to enhance the knowledge and skills individuals need to make informed choices about a sustainable lifestyle, environment and climate, human rights, and values and democracy issues.

This strategy will be followed up according to the principles and processes set out in the Government's guidelines for strategies in Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Reporting is to be conducted with reference to how activities contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.





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