

Review of Sida's Research Cooperation

Synthesis Report

Krister Eduards



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This report is part of *Sida Evaluations*, a series comprising evaluations of Swedish development assistance. Sida's other series concerned with evaluations, Sida Studies in Evaluation, concerns methodologically oriented studies commissioned by Sida. Both series are administered by the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit, an independent department reporting directly to Sida's Board of Directors.

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Foreword

Sweden has provided support for research on developing countries and research cooperation with developing countries since 1975. Research cooperation has developed from a project involving a national research council and individual researchers to more institutional support aimed at building up sustainable research capacity. Research support is administered by Sida's Department for Research Cooperation, SAREC, and forms approximately 6% of total Sida allocations for development cooperation. The support is divided into three main areas: 1) bilateral university cooperation 2) support to international and regional organisations and networks and 3) support to Swedish research on developing countries.

In its Government Directives and letter of appropriations for 2006, Sida was tasked to carry out a review of Sida's research cooperation. The task was given to the Secretariat for Evaluation and Internal Audit (UTV) who have commissioned five independent consultancy teams to each carry out a study of certain aspects of the three operational areas plus SAREC's organisation. In addition, SAREC has commissioned a study of Sida's Development Research Council. Please see below for a list of studies.

Due to the limited amount of time available for this review, it has not been possible to carry out a straightforward evaluation of the entire Sida research cooperation. However, taken together the studies that have been completed provide a comprehensive examination of this operational area. The studies concern the goals for research cooperation, the capacity and design of the organisation, efficiency of implementation, relevance and goal fulfilment. This report is a synthesis of the six studies and summarises their primary observations, conclusions and recommendations.

Eva Lithman

Head of Secretariat
Secretariat for Evaluation and Internal Audit

Six Studies:

- Sida Evaluation 06/13, Evaluation of Sida Information and Communications Technology Support to Universities, Alan Greenberg, Americo Muchanga
- Sida Evaluation 06/17, Sida/SAREC Bilateral Research Cooperation: Lessons Learned, Ad Boeren, Tom Alberts, Thomas Alveteg, Erik W. Thulstrup, Lena Trojer
- Sida Evaluation 06/22, Organisationsstudie av SAREC, Lina Lenefors, Lennart Gustafsson, Arne Svensson
- Sida Evaluation 06/24, Sidas U-landsforskningsråd, Olle Edqvist
- Sida Evaluation 06/27, SARECs stöd till svensk u-landsforskning, Enrico Deiacco, Andreas Högberg, Börje Svensson
- Sida Evaluation 06/40, SAREC Support to International and Regional Thematic Research Programs, 2000–2005, Main Report, Amitav Rath, Gunilla Björklund, Mary Ann Lansang, Francisco Sagasti, Oliver Saasa
- Sida Evaluation 06/40:1, SAREC Support to International and Regional Thematic Research Programs, 2000–2005, Individual Reports and Cases, Amitav Rath, Gunilla Björklund, Mary Ann Lansang, Francisco Sagasti, Oliver Saasa

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Summary

The government letter of appropriations for 2006 directed Sida to review Sida's research cooperation. The Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit (UTV) commissioned five studies: bilateral research cooperation; cooperating universities' IT functions; regional and international research; development research in Sweden; and SAREC's organisation. At the same time the Sida Research Committee commissioned an evaluation of Sida's Development Research Council. This report is a synthesis of all of these.

Bilateral research cooperation with universities in Sweden's cooperating countries is assessed to be well in line with its primary goals. The shift of approach towards an increasing emphasis on institutional capacity development, including management, infrastructure and strategy development, has been successful. The projects were assessed as meeting local and institutional needs. SAREC support may also be relevant from a general development and poverty perspective, although effects would tend to be indirect and only observable over the long term.

Anticipated results and effects are seldom defined and quantified in advance, which means measurement of the impact is difficult. Collaboration and coordination with other stakeholders in cooperating countries could be improved, as could the sustainability of results. Cost efficiency was considered positive, while some problems were identified concerning the effective use of the Swedish academic resource base. Most positive was that the programme is demand driven, that it strengthens the cooperating countries' ownership of projects, and that it secures the participation of highly qualified academics.

Recommendations include that the programme should further develop cooperation between universities and the users of research findings, and that research directly or indirectly contributing to poverty reduction and to economic growth be awarded higher priority. In addition, the authors propose that synergies with other activities financed by Sida should be utilised more, that research support should be coordinated better with other research financiers, and that sustainability be emphasised more. Finally, it is recommended that SAREC should station staff in the field and develop a comprehensive system for reporting, follow up and evaluation.

The separate report on IT support is positive. Results were often well in excess of expectations. Among the more intriguing spin off effects was that the universities' IT specialists became leading IT personalities. The study recommends several inputs that should continue and be expanded.

SAREC's thematic support via international and regional research institutions and networks is to four main areas: medical and health care, the environment and natural resources, natural sciences and technology, social sciences and the humanities. The authors assess this support as broadly in line with Swedish development goals, the Millennium Development Goals, and relevant to the needs of developing countries. The choice of channels and themes was by and large adequate; although efficiency assessment was not gone into deeply, cost efficiency is summarised as positive.

SAREC's strategy of supplying core support to the organisations and networks, rather than earmarking funding for particular projects, is considered positive. However, new and challenging issues have not been adequately or systematically dealt with. Follow up and evaluation is considered weak, as are the strategic links between SAREC funded activities at international and regional levels, and those at country levels.

The study recommends that research in Sweden and in developing countries on common development issues be strengthened, and that research is designated as a cross-sectoral activity within bilateral cooperation. In addition, SAREC is advised to develop cooperation with regional thematic research networks, and to utilise their experience for programme identification, follow up and assessment, and for employee exchange for example. Finally, SAREC's follow up and evaluation function should be improved, including the introduction of instruments for the measurement of results and of capacity development.

Two studies have been made of Sida's support to development research in Sweden. The impact of this support on the Swedish research society at large is deemed to be limited, SAREC's contribution being marginal in relation to total national research funding. However, it is significant for certain groups of researchers. Both studies agree that more money should be allocated to development oriented research. One considers that Sida's support is at a reasonable level and that further funding should come from other financiers, while the other considers it should come from Sida as well.

The extent to which Swedish universities are engaged in development research varies greatly. Of Sweden's 39 universities, five receive more than 60% of SAREC's support for Swedish research via U-FORSK, Swedish Research Links, bilateral, regional and international programmes and for HIV/AIDS research. The authors maintain that SAREC's support is concentrated to too few institutions. They also find that criteria for the selection of Swedish partners for bilateral research cooperation are not clearly defined, and lack transparency. They recommend that the whole process be made more open. SAREC's administration of the allocation is considered satisfactory.

One of the reports recommends that SAREC's support to Swedish development research should take more account of the needs of Sida and of development cooperation, and in this way enhance its relevance for development cooperation.

The authors found that operative goals for research support were measurable in neither quantitative nor qualitative terms, and that they were neither adequately followed up, nor related to Sweden's Global Development Policy (PGU). The connection between overall policies, Sida's primary goals, the objectives of SAREC operations as a whole and the objectives of support to Swedish development research should be clarified. They recommend that SAREC formulate new operational goals for the support to Swedish development research.

They also point out that SAREC acts on two different playing fields – international development cooperation, and Swedish development research. Different rules and norms apply. In development cooperation, the importance of research is judged by policy makers, whereas in the research funding community other quality criteria apply. A follow up system covering administration and financing should be developed, which also delivers qualitative and quantitative reporting of scientific results and their relevance for development.

In the organisational study, SAREC's organisational form is seen as a combination of development cooperation authority and research council. Within Sida, SAREC's mandate is perceived as relatively clear. However, there is still potential for further integration, cooperation and synergy effects between SAREC and other parts of Sida. The goals and results dialogue with the Government Office needs to be intensified, as does SAREC's own systematic follow up of results. The authors agreed that research cooperation should continue to be a separate allocation item. SAREC is considered to be understaffed in relation to its tasks. The challenge for SAREC is to develop working methods and the flexibility necessary to implement research cooperation in accordance with the stipulated goals and strategic priorities.

It is recommended that Sida intensify an experience and results-based policy development as to the role of research in development cooperation, with clear links to poverty issues. The choice of research as a profile area should be considered in a possible area concentration. It is proposed that Sida could become lead agency in the field of research cooperation. It is recommended that dialogue with the Ministry for Foreign affairs and with other Sida departments and the embassies be intensified. SAREC's internal organisation should be further developed in order to increase flexibility and efficiency and to decrease vulnerability.

The relatively extensive material has some common themes: development research is of growing importance, not least due to globalisation, This means that what is labelled development research is actually relevant to Swedish

interests too. The authors generally recommend increased funding of development related research, and propose that Sweden should promote the importance of research as part of development cooperation internationally.

Swedish research cooperation is also considered to be generally good, and the authors conclude that Sida should be able to play a leading role internationally. A second common theme is the demands made by the Swedish Policy for Global Development and the Paris Agenda on SAREC's bilateral programme. Some authors advise that Sida designate research cooperation as cross-sectoral, which excuses it from satisfying government demands for sector concentration within bilateral cooperation. But no one proposes that research cooperation be exempt from the demands of the Paris Agenda as concerns harmonisation or local ownership for example.

A third common theme is the development and poverty relevance of research cooperation. Here studies propose that SAREC should analyse its operations from a poverty perspective with the aim of increasing poverty relevance. Several authors looked for more attention to goal, policy, and strategic issues as well as to goal and performance management; strategic work should be undertaken with regard to the choice of themes and channels for research cooperation. In several areas it was suggested that links should be strengthened between operations financed by SAREC and by other stakeholders.

SAREC's successful focus on institutional support bilaterally and on core funding of international and regional organisations invites a continuation. Finally, several practical recommendations were made of how SAREC could improve the impact of its activities.

1. The Task

Sida has been tasked by the Swedish Government to strengthen the research capacity of developing countries, promote research that contributes to poverty reduction and fair and sustainable global development. In addition Sida must contribute to strengthening research in Sweden that is relevant to development. The goal for Sida's research cooperation according to Sida's annual directives and letter of appropriations is that future support will be provided:

- for poor developing countries in order to build up good quality research environments, to train researchers and to develop methods for planning, prioritisation and financing of research;
- in the form of financial and scientific resources aimed at supporting the production of new knowledge and the promotion of utilisation of research results that are of importance to development;
- to promote scientific cooperation between researchers in Sweden and in developing countries as well as the participation of Swedish researchers in development research and research cooperation.

Within Sida, research cooperation activities are administered by the Department for Research Cooperation, SAREC, which is one of the agency's five sector departments. Allocations for 2006 under allocation item 8:1.32 Research amount to MSEK 975, which is approximately six percent of Sida's share of development cooperation appropriations. This amount will be calculated in a nominal fashion for the next few years so that it will continue to represent six percent of total allocations.

Sida's Research Board takes the decisions concerning support to international research programmes, support to research in Sweden on developing countries, the composition of and mandate for scientific reference groups for support to research in Sweden on developing countries, and support to regional research cooperation within a framework established by the Director General.

For 2001–2005, SAREC disbursements by type of research programme are shown in the summary below (MSEK):

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
U-FORSK	76.1	83.6	88.0	94.2	98.9
Swedish Research Links	8.0	8.0	9.2	17.5	29.1
Bilateral programmes	216.4	224.2	183.1	217.7	249.1
Regional programmes	190.6	207.1	207.5	186.9	184.0
International programmes	258.3	249.8	239.1	251.1	273.3
Other	0.6	4.7	16.1	6.6	12.6
Total	750.0	781.4	743.0	774.0	847.0

In Sida's annual directives and letter of appropriations for 2006, it was tasked by the Government to carry out a review of the Sida's research cooperation. The task was given to the Secretariat for Evaluation and Internal Audit (UTV) who commissioned five studies on support to: bilateral research cooperation, cooperating universities' IT functions, regional and international research, Swedish development research, and SAREC's organisation. At the same time the Sida Research Board implemented an evaluation of Sida's Research Council. This report is a synthesis of all these studies.

2. Strengthening Developing Countries' Research Capacity

2.1 The Programme

One third of Sida's research support is utilised for bilateral cooperation programmes together with research institutes in Sweden's cooperating countries. This bilateral research cooperation, which was initiated in 1975, is aimed at strengthening developing countries' research capacity and improving their access to knowledge of key importance to poverty reduction.

In the first ten years of bilateral research cooperation the majority of funding was channelled through national research councils in cooperating countries. When many of these proved to lack the ability to prioritise research on a scientific basis, activities were complemented with individual PhD training using the sandwich method (please see below). Training of researchers was supplemented by investments in infrastructure and equipment. With the help of additional activities within libraries and archives, Swedish support attempted to promote the establishment of the necessary research environments. Since the 1990s, the programme has consequently gained an increasing emphasis on institutional rather than individual development.

Currently the intention is both to support the growth of research cultures at national universities and to contribute to the establishment of national research strategies that are coordinated with the countries' strategies for development and for poverty reduction.

Sida regards a national research capacity as essential if any nation is to be able to create its own analysis capacity and be able to manage its own development processes. Domestic research capacity also makes it possible for a country to utilise international research results and contribute to global, shared knowledge. Strengthening universities, as primary agents of research and research training, provides a good basis for the development of knowledge, human resources and research strategies. The idea is that each country will have at least one research university which, over time, can become a resource for the establishment of an expanded national research and higher educational sphere.

In addition, independent research capacity makes it possible to adapt the country's secondary and tertiary education to its development strategies, at

the same time as it can transfer in international expertise of relevance to the country's development.

In 2004, more than MSEK 223 was disbursed for bilateral cooperation programmes in fourteen countries. As a part of this review of research support via SAREC, four of these countries have been examined in the form of independent studies – Bolivia, Mozambique, Nicaragua and Tanzania – and a summarised report has been made of these. The authors have looked in detail at the programmes' results, effects and relevance, the sustainability of the effects plus the cost efficiency of the operations. They have also studied how the design and implementation of the programmes have affected their results. One separate study has also been carried out concerning the IT support that has been provided for cooperating academic institutions over the past eight years.

2.2 Study of Bilateral Cooperation Programmes

Relevance

The authors felt that the method used by SAREC – assessments with the help of scientific committees, internal and external advisers – to identify objectives of cooperation does ensure that these are relevant in that they respond to the prioritised needs of the cooperating partners. Whether they also respond to the prioritised development needs in the countries concerned is another question entirely. It is not always easy to combine the ambition of creating academic research capacity with the desire for research results that can be rapidly applied in reality. The conclusion is that the majority of SAREC projects may be relevant to poverty reduction, but in these cases the effects are usually stated in an indirect fashion, in a long term perspective.

Goal Fulfilment

The four country programmes are in different phases of development. Consequently they are able to illustrate different aspects of research cooperation and together they provide a broad assessment of it. One fundamental assessment is that the transfer to working methods more focused on institutional capacity development has exerted a positive effect on operations and the academic institutions, as well as the cost efficiency of the cooperation. The combination of direct project inputs with activities within management, infrastructure and strategy development has generated good results within the university world of these four countries.

Sida's approach to cooperation has generally assumed a process-oriented character which provides room for flexibility during implementation. Consequently anticipated results and effects are seldom quantified in detail in advance which, as the authors point out, makes measurement of the pro-

grammes' effects difficult. Instead they attempt to assess operations in these four countries on a more aggregate level and find that they are well in line with the main goals of the bilateral research programme – even if goal fulfilment (for various reasons) varies considerably between projects within different institutions. They report that operations generally were fully in line with the primary goal of strengthening countries' research capacity. The current research capacity in these countries would not have existed without SAREC support and in at least one country the desired research culture was under development.

In addition the studies state that the results of research support will only be used to a very limited extent in society outside the university world or in the private sector, and only occasionally be applied in operations with a poverty reduction focus. The link between research activities and national poverty reduction is often weak, not least in cases where both areas lack strategic governance. As one possible reason for this it has been suggested that SAREC does not perhaps emphasise the necessity of poverty reduction in project selection, another reason could be that growth in welfare only occurs as an indirect effect of increased knowledge. The authors feel that a more direct connection to poverty issues can be achieved without affecting the quality of research or research training.

In addition they found that coordination between research cooperation and other projects and programmes or countries supported by Sida or other donors could generally be improved. There are opportunities as yet unutilised for Sida to use the research capacity created in other projects or to allow other operations financed by Sida to generate ideas and consequently result in more poverty related research within universities.

According to the authors, the successful effects of cooperation – functioning research capacity – is achieved as a gradual development process in three phases. The first phase, which consists of extensive support to academic research training and for purchase of certain equipment, generally results in the production of academic theses only. The second phase, in which support to research training decreases but inputs concerning equipment and project financing increase, networking and production become more extensive. In the third phase the projects are able to prove their strength in the form of independent production. At this point, with their documented productivity, they have also become competitive applicants for research grants and have begun to attract funding sources other than Sida. Sida is then able to begin to cut back on support.

The major part of the projects in the four country programme studies are currently in phase one or two according to the authors, while a few projects in Tanzania are moving into phase three. The transfer to combined programmes including elements of management, infrastructure and strategy support has helped to shorten the establishment period. A number of other

effects have also been noted such as articles published regionally, curricula reviews, international research cooperation and networks as well as the establishment of research strategies.

Cost Efficiency

The programmes' cost efficiency is assessed as positive by the authors, even if they also state that their assessments have been complicated by the fact that anticipated results and effects, stated above, are seldom quantified in detail in advance. Building up research capacity is a complicated, long term process that requires participation, patience and resources. The path to this goal can be very long and winding but the shift to a more institutional approach has contributed to higher levels of efficiency of implementation. Improved management and administrative structures in these programmes has similarly enhanced efficiency. Additional gains could be made from improved cooperation between different researchers and between different projects. In addition the authors appreciate Sida's efforts to move more of the responsibility for management of financial resources to the cooperating institutions although they do point out the risk of delays and that allocated resources may be underutilised.

Certain efficiency problems have been identified concerning the use of the Swedish academic resource base for capacity development, including the difficulty of finding relevant partners in Sweden who also have the time and other resources for cooperation. The most commonly used model – the sandwich model – is assessed as having the advantage of several doctoral students carrying out research in a subject of local relevance, but also a disadvantage in that it often requires considerable training inputs during their period in the home country which prolongs their period of study. The latter effect can be observed most clearly in institutions that still have no established research culture.

The authors also report that all Sida's cooperating partners express appreciation of their cooperation relationship with SAREC staff and of the flexibility of the programme, which is assessed as contributing to efficiency in a valuable manner.

Sustainability

The authors analyse the sustainability of cooperation impact from four perspectives – academic, institutional, organisational and financial. They found that in the cases where cooperation has resulted in a supportive research environment, the university's academic standing has been affected positively, something that has also been noted externally. At the same time the critical mass, vital for academic sustainability, is threatened by unsatisfactory working conditions, salaries and alternative financial opportunities. Neither do research contracts or donor financing form a good basis for the maintenance of the quality of research capacity in the long term.

In addition, three of the four countries lack a research culture that could help to make the impact of cooperation institutionally sustainable. In summary the authors found that too many cooperating partners were satisfied with continued support from Sida without actively applying for other financing for their research, and felt that the various aspects of sustainability should be examined more systematically when preparing new activities.

Programme Design

The study also contains a special discussion concerning the design and implementation of SAREC's country programmes. Sida is one of the few donors who invest in the establishment of institutional research capacity. The bilateral programme has also been underway longest in the field with, generally speaking, unchanged goals but with continued alterations to methods and strategies based on experience and new knowledge. The effects of this situation include a level of consistency at policy level which produces valuable reliability of cooperation. In addition the authors noted that SAREC both applies long term cooperating strategies and is capable of long term undertakings which are essential ingredients in the building up of research capacity in weak institutions. They also appreciate the structuring of cooperation into phases mentioned above and regard joint planning and implementation as a sensible method to use.

The fact that the programme is demand-driven is stated as an additional strength. The selection of cooperating institutions is based on priorities in the cooperating countries. Swedish cooperating partners help to build up capacity identified by its partners. This, together with the gradual transfer of administrative responsibility to cooperating countries, strengthens project ownership. The authors also appreciated the variation of forms of cooperation included which further increases chances of creating sustainable research environments.

Implementation

In their summary the authors state some of the strengths of research cooperation implementation. Generally speaking it was successful in ensuring the project participation of highly qualified academics. The fact that cooperating institutions may gradually, within the SAREC programmes, look for partners in their own regions has been positive for efficiency. This stimulates multi-disciplinary research. The growing emphasis on research environments has generated policy, management and administratively-oriented inputs. Transfer of financial responsibility has strengthened institutional capacity and enabled adaptation to local regulations and conditions. Applying for funding in a competitive situation has been a valuable learning process. In addition, efforts to link this research to curriculum development have resulted in improved feedback of knowledge from research into teaching.

Certain weaknesses have also been identified in programme implementation. Previously lack of coordination between research cooperation and the Swedish embassies and other Sida programmes in each country have been mentioned, as well as lack of cooperation between different projects financed by SAREC within the same cooperation environment. In addition it was indicated in the report that the selection of research projects within several institutions must become more transparent and less vulnerable to interference from non-qualified individuals. They also point out that it is not easy to develop the different parts of research environments to the same degree and at the same time.

On the management side, strengths such as commitment and competence are noted in SAREC staff and the fact that cooperation includes a joint, open learning process. The gradually increasing involvement of the Swedish embassies in this cooperation, which has also contributed to the stimulation of project ownership as mentioned previously, is also welcomed. At the same time the authors do state that Sida occasionally shows indulgence as concerns delays and ambiguities in management of funds. In addition, the programme still has weak follow up and evaluation systems. Sida could also disseminate the results of research projects to a greater degree.

Recommendations

The reports identify some challenges to the design of research cooperation, areas where important improvements could be made. One of these is that the Swedish development goal of contributing to poverty reduction is not always easy to apply together with the specific goals of research cooperation, for example as concerns choice of cooperating countries. Finding the correct balance between social research relevance and development of research capacity forms a second challenge. The third is the tension between the different approaches to implementation and administration that are applied within Sida's country programme and SAREC's bilateral research cooperation programmes in which the latter has retained some of its independence and methodology from before it was merged with Sida in 1995. A fourth challenge concerns weighing up the different demands that arise from i) the development inputs being demand-driven and ii) cooperation with the Swedish university world. The authors also assert the risk that never-ending donor support may create permanent aid dependence.

In their overall recommendations, they forcefully reiterate that the programme should continue as well as advising further development of cooperation between university and society, synergies with other activities financed by Sida, focussed capacity development and links between research training and educational programmes. As concerns the design of cooperation programmes it is recommended that links with academic education programmes should also be included, that cooperation between different researchers fi-

nanced by SAREC should be stimulated, that sustainability aspects be considered more and that current policy concerning the participation of Swedish universities should be clarified and discussed with all stakeholders.

As concerns implantation of bilateral research cooperation, the authors recommend that higher priority be given to research that directly or indirectly contributes to the reduction of poverty and to economic growth, that the capacity development programme be broadened to include the development of policies, management, communication and transparent systems for assessment and selection of research proposals, opportunities to finance activities and the work situation of newly graduated doctors.

In addition, improved cooperation with users of research results and between the public and private sectors is recommended as concerns the development of joint research and innovation policies. Active coordination of research support with other donors is also proposed at the level close to implementation level, as well as phased and completed time schedules. Finally it is also suggested that a full-time coordinator be posted in a cooperating country during the initiation of bilateral cooperation.

On the management side the authors recommend that a full coverage system for reporting, follow up and evaluation be developed including indicators and impact analysis, that SAREC supports universities in the development of their own financial controls and in defining their own goals, that SAREC follows individual researchers and research projects and reacts quickly to initiate a dialogue with universities as concerns delays and suspicious utilisation of funding and that SAREC emphasise to its cooperating partners the importance of planning for a future without extensive support.

2.3 Study of IT Support

Since 1998, Sida has designed and provided specialist support for universities in cooperating countries and their researchers as concerns access to Internet and consequently to a much more extensive exchange of scientific information. Its aim has been to develop the IT infrastructure at the institutions that maintain cooperation agreements with Sida. Inputs have been initiated with all twelve countries in which SAREC currently runs programmes and has been concluded in half of them. These inputs have been adapted to needs in each case and have included areas such as IT planning, computers, networks, Internet, e-mail, infrastructure, technical training, user training, video conferences, administrative systems, library systems and electronic journals. Higher education within IT has also been included.

During this eight year period a total of around MSEK 300 has been invested in this programme. The authors of the study found that the majority of the projects within this programme have achieved their goals and also achieved results well in excess of expectations. This was due to the fact that this sup-

port created IT competence which has greatly contributed to improved research and teaching, and even to the beginnings of improved administrative functions. Effects of this support include the fact that researchers now have access to literature, databases and other sources, are able to cooperate with colleagues all over the world, can write and comment on articles and other scientific texts and are able to develop course material and other teaching inputs as well as supervise and grade students electronically. For the students this support has provided access to course material and other resources as complements to lectures, opportunities for virtual participation in education and electronic communication with the various functions of the university. Within administrative functions, old fashioned, paper-based routines have been pensioned off at the same time as the ability and competence of administrators to respond to modern demands have improved. Society has also been able to benefit from this IT competence due to well educated staff and through IT based teaching.

Some of the most interesting effects of this support were unplanned, for example that the universities' IT specialists would become leading IT personalities in their countries, that the IT policies and planning developed in these projects were used as a model for the equivalent investments in the public sector; and that the infrastructure financed by Sida has enabled other projects to be designed and obtain financing.

Of the twelve projects, four have experienced more extensive problems. The primary causes of problems have been identified in project design (short term, incomplete or out of date design), lack of individual or institutional capacity on the part of the recipients, unreliable purchasing and financial routines, weak inventory checks, low levels of sustainability of effects achieved, insufficient supervision and implementation delays.

The author feels that lessons learned should include the fact that the introduction of IT into a situation where there previously was none may have large-scale, unanticipated effects, even outside the universities, and that the selection of local IT officer and of the Swedish partner, may be absolutely decisive for the results of cooperation. Against the background of the results and his analysis he recommends several continued and expanded projects within the IT area, including outside the research world.

3. Supporting Development Research – Internationally and Regionally

3.1 The Programme

Via international and regional research institutes and networks, Sida supports research that may lead to new knowledge, processes or products of interest to poverty reduction and for the promotion of sustainable development. These international and regional research programmes create linkages to national research in poorer countries and at the same time pull relevant research up to global level. Swedish researchers participate in these efforts both in their regular cooperation within the global research community and in different initiatives and cooperation projects financed by Sida.

Regional research networks contribute to the development of national research through exchange and collaboration. They are also able to undertake comparative analyses, joint projects and other multi-party activities. The strength and value of the regional networks are dependent on their ability to collaborate with national researchers and to articulate “Southern” perspectives in international research and debate. At the same time, duplication within regional and international research networks may lead to fragmentation of research and research resources and to competition between researchers. In its actions, Sida starts from the desire for pluralism in research and from the need to avoid unnecessary duplication and externally fuelled research agendas.

The primary aim of these international research programmes is to identify areas of research that should be developed and to promote relevant research in these areas. Its task is also to promote the utilisation of these research results in the third world. Underlying Sida’s efforts to support such knowledge development is their intention to support research connected to UN line agencies in order to strengthen their ability to work normatively with advisory services. In addition, Sida also supports the integration of researchers from weaker research environments into the international research context, primarily through institutional involvement. In its support to international research programmes, Sida makes efforts to provide focus and continuity. In order to be able to maintain long term, efficient support Sida intends to continue to provide primarily basic support to core functions instead of specific research projects.

Thematic research support from Sida is aimed at four main areas – health and medical care, environment and natural resources, natural sciences and technology, social sciences and the humanities. Support to health research is focused on the connection between health and poverty, and between good health and welfare. It is primarily channelled through larger scale, international research programmes that often have several other financiers primarily through WHO. Current research themes include tropical and other infectious diseases, vaccine research, HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health, health systems plus the organisation of health research itself. Support to research on the environment and natural resources is aimed at such problematical ecological conditions and environmental degradation as are linked to poverty. This theme also includes marine ecosystems, forestry research, sustainable methods for drylands agriculture and integrated production systems. Extensive support is provided for the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

Within natural sciences and technology SAREC attempts to build up research capacity within the engineering and natural science areas. Support is provided within basic sciences such as maths, physics, chemistry and biology as well as to research on subjects such as technical policy, urban environmental problems, prevention of natural disasters, biotechnology plus energy technology and policies. Support is aimed at international and regional research networks and institutions. Research support within social sciences and humanities is focussed on attempting to understand the social processes that lead to long term, sustainable development.

Support is primarily channelled via regional cooperation institutions that cover a broad spectrum of social sciences and humanities and promote the growth of larger-scale, regional research networks. Prominent themes include democracy and human rights, peace and conflict research, social development, gender equality, economics and poverty, environmental economics, archaeology plus social aspects of HIV/AIDS.

Thematic research support from Sida to international and regional research programmes amounted to almost MSEK 460 in 2005 or 54 percent of total SAREC disbursements during the year. As part of the review of SAREC, this support has been examined by a group of international researchers. Their task has been to specially scrutinise whether SAREC's selection procedure for channels of support is suitable, if the composition of the current project portfolio is efficient, to which degree SAREC's preparation procedures ensure that support is relevant and whether SAREC's follow-up mechanisms ensure that contributions have the desired impact.

3.2 The Study

The authors state several reservations in principle as concerns measuring such aspects as effectiveness, cost efficiency and sustainability of SAREC support. One is that the effects desired and achieved by the support occur as

a result of several factors, of which the SAREC support is only one among many. Another is that the various research themes and channels complement each other and consequently affect each others' results. Thirdly in many cases inputs aim to achieve several different goals. With these reservations in mind they present their more summarised observations.

Relevance

They find that SAREC support in its broadest sense is relevant to both the Swedish development cooperation goals, to the Millennium Development Goals and the needs of developing countries. They are especially positive to the fact that Sida does not only support applied research but also basic research within the basic sciences such as maths, physics, chemistry and biology and thereby contributes to capacity development from a holistic perspective. Also support within social sciences, not least within economics, confirms the relevance of the SAREC support. Swedish strategic thinking and financial support has, for example, contributed to the African economic research consortium AERC being able to retain its dynamics and its sensitivity to ongoing social change, as well as ensuring that the African social scientific research council CODESRIA has been able to resume its position as the leading, independent social scientific research institution in Africa. The authors also feel that most of SAREC's assessments and research directives maintain high levels of development relevance, for example prioritising subjects such as HIV/AIDS, gender equality, democratic governance and peace and conflict resolution research. They also point out that the emphasis of support on such areas as national health research systems in low income countries results in high levels of relevance to poverty reduction.

The authors also attempt to assess, although not in as much detail as would be desirable, whether the selection of channels and themes for SAREC support is suitable. Current choices, in their opinion, emanate from a historical wish to participate in larger scale, international research efforts which may contribute to global knowledge production and affect research and development at country level. They consider this logical, especially as these larger institutions are often well run and generally enjoy relatively good access to different resources, which taken together contributes to the production of good research results. Neither do these institutions need extensive supervision from SAREC. For cooperation at regional level, the authors noted great potential to decrease the differences between research capacity in different countries, to participate in more efficient utilisation of resources in poor countries, to increase the value of research results through increased breadth and to help poor countries' researchers to participate in global networks. At the same time they note that regional research networks work best when there is also a basis of national capacity and resources in place, something which is generally especially problematic in the low income countries belonging to the Swedish development cooperation target group. In summary, the

authors feel that SAREC's selection of channels and themes is generally suitable even if certain individual improvements can be made, however any changes should be introduced gradually.

They also feel that SAREC has not managed to adopt new, challenging issues and subjects in a proper fashion. The background is lack of staff so that policy and strategy development have been forced onto the back burner. Greater attention is recommended for research areas such as democracy and participation, conflict and violence, environment and energy plus health systems.

In addition the authors observe that SAREC has made continuous efforts to test the research capacity they have built up on issues such as solving identified problems and improving living conditions, something that has been very clearly shown within medical and social scientific research. At the same time they point out the difficulties inherent in combining demand-driven operations with priorities that affect their range of activities.

Goal Fulfilment

The team states its clearest reservations concerning the effectiveness of SAREC support, i.e. the degree to which activities have achieved their goals and consequently contributed to development impact. The argument tends towards the general. International and larger scale regional organisations, such as CGIAR, AERC and CODESRIA, generally speaking possess good mechanisms for disseminating their research results, some of them aimed at national authorities. The majority of these organisations exert a beneficial effect on their closest cooperating partners who are often researchers from low income countries. They also function well as concerns scientific assessments, project management and collaboration with national researchers and decision makers. One way, according to the authors, to demonstrate effectiveness is to utilise the cooperation model created via the FORMAS programme in the CGIAR system, a model that provides Swedish researchers with the opportunity to work for a period at the CGIAR Institute.

In summary the team state that the majority of the programmes are highly effective as they have contributed to the creation of research capacity and knowledge of relevance to specific development problems. Many research results are also used for the purpose they were intended.

Cost Efficiency

The answer to whether thematic support is cost efficient is answered as generally yes, even if the lack of basic data concerning costs, results and other parameters for the different channels make it difficult to carry out a really useful comparison between different channels and between different research themes. The authors do, however, point out that SAREC can increase cost efficiency, for example, by slightly decreasing support to international health

institutions and strengthening commitments on the regional level instead. SAREC would also be able to decrease their costs by supporting national capacity development in tripartite cooperation with regional institutions such as the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) instead of using Swedish or international institutions.

Operative Issues

The authors have provided more specific comments on the more practical, operative issues within their mandate. For example they feel that SAREC's long term policy to primarily provide basic support to the operations of organisations and networks, rather than using more short term, project financing, is of considerable value. This value will also continue to grow as various international organisations and private foundations increase their grants for project financing and their willingness to fund anything other than well-defined projects decreases. Even in cases where the SAREC support forms only a minor part of the institutions' resources, its flexibility and ability to attract financing of new research projects is of great value.

On the other hand the team find that SAREC's own strategies, procedures and criteria for assessment are not familiar to their cooperating partners, which may decrease their opportunities of choosing their own path. SAREC may have, for example, phased out financing for good reasons however the partner has not been informed of them. Contacts between different research programmes within the same sphere financed by SAREC are also judged to be too few. Collaboration between international and regional thematic research programmes must be better articulated.

The team note that SAREC's follow up and evaluation activities need strengthening. A considerable number of project evaluations have been implemented; however only a limited amount of attention has been paid to their results and effects, and also to strategic issues. Sharing experience with staff members, further development of policies and approaches and a more strategic approach within programming is also felt to be necessary. Proper strategy development presupposes continued studies in combination with systematic consultations with all stakeholders as a part of a further, strategic planning process. In addition the authors were able to identify only weak links between activities financed by SAREC at international and regional levels and those at country level, which may lead to certain urgent needs falling into the cracks.

Recommendations

The authors recommend that Sida, together with various ministries/government agencies and research foundations, strengthens the development research sector in Sweden and in developing countries as concerns common development issues. In bilateral cooperation, research should be defined as a

cross sector operational area that will not be affected by the principle of sector concentration. Strategic frameworks should be further developed with the assistance of analysis, formulation of regional and thematic strategies, comparison of the various channels, additional studies on the efficiency of alternative contribution portfolios plus criteria for initiating and concluding research cooperation.

The authors also propose that cooperation with regional thematic research networks should be further developed with the aim of strengthening cooperation and learning between networks, stakeholder analysis and participation in their control, management and administration, one aim of this being that more institutions could be allocated basic support. In addition, cooperation with them should be practically facilitated by increasing contract duration with selected cooperating partners from three to five years and by decreasing the time necessary and simplifying routines as concerns transfer of funds. Sida should also utilise the experience possessed by cooperating organisations by procuring knowledge services from them for functions such as programme identification, follow-up and control, and by arranging staff exchanges between them and SAREC.

In addition they advise Sida to, together with other donors, develop and harmonise approaches and criteria for measurement of capacity development, basic data and indicators for cooperation, plus standards of financial and operational reporting. Follow up and evaluation functions should be strengthened, preferably as concerns all resources and all donors, and access to archival material using ICT should be improved. More active feedback of experience is also recommended, as are increased inputs within communications and dissemination.

In-house operations need improvement through revising the governance and management structure of SAREC programmes, ensuring space for developing country representatives in the decision-making process and defining the division of labour between SAREC and other parts of Sida more clearly. The authors propose that the staffing situation at SAREC be improved by increasing staff numbers to a level comparable with similar research financiers in Sweden, by stationing staff regionally (for example in East Africa, Southeast Asia and Central America) and by extending human resources development to also include, for example, direct cooperation with other Sida departments, part-time research and new institutional contact routes.

4. Supporting Swedish Development Research

4.1 The Programme

Sida provides extensive support to Swedish research on development and development cooperation. Direct support is channelled via Sida's Development Research Council and via Swedish Research Links. Sida's Development Research Council (U-FORSK) advertises both open grants and grants within special invitation areas with the aim of building up and maintaining a knowledge base of relevance to development cooperation and development issues plus development research capacity in Sweden. U-FORSK is responsible for approximately 10 percent of support via SAREC, or close to MSEK 100 in 2005. Swedish Research Links is a special programme for research cooperation med South Africa, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa that is administered by the Swedish research Council (VR). Total costs for Swedish Research Links amounted to MSEK 35 in 2005. Furthermore, Swedish researchers participate as supervisors of foreign doctoral students and as partners in institutional development included in bilateral research cooperation, as well as in international research networks and special inputs within for example HIV/AIDS, all supported by SAREC. All in all Sida calculates that support via bilateral and multilateral activities with Swedish universities and research institutes in Sweden is in total greater than U-FORSK. In addition there is also support from other departments at Sida and from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to research and monitoring. Sida regards Swedish development research as an important contribution to both the understanding of poverty and development problems in the third world and to Swedish development cooperation. At the same time, ongoing globalisation means that the Swedish society is increasingly dependant on developments in poor countries.

Analysis and debate in Sweden on the bases and preconditions for development cooperation, and on conditions and forms for its success are essential and continuous. Basic research is necessary in order to understand how different poor countries function in terms of government type, policies, economics and social dynamics, as well as how external forces affect developments through, for example, trade, development cooperation and military intervention. In several areas, research is also able to contribute directly to development such as within agricultural production, health and medical care and production of goods and services. Basic research has, in certain cases,

been able to make decisive contributions e.g. to the eradication of smallpox and the establishment of new, high yield, crops.

Sida's support to Swedish development research has now been examined in two, independent studies. One study covers all SAREC support to Swedish development research while the other, procured by Sida's Research Board, deals with U-FORSK. In the following section both reports are described – the figures on which they are based vary somewhat, however their analyses and conclusions are very close.

4.2 The Studies

Research Cooperation and Global Development Policy (PGU)

The two studies observe that the Government Bill of 2003 concerning Sweden's Policy for Global Development takes up the role of research in global development activities and states that Sweden should support the development of research and application of research results in developing countries. Support must, according to this policy, also continue to be provided for Swedish development research and for the establishment of a resource base in Sweden for development cooperation. As international development cooperation, according to PGU, is no longer a matter for Swedish development cooperation administration alone but also includes all policy areas, the government directives and goal descriptions of other research financiers are also examined in one of the studies. No other research financier that refers to PGU or that states financing of Swedish development research as part of its operational area is described. In addition it is noted that in the research bill proposed in 2004 "Research for a better life" under the heading "Development research" maintains that PGU should be guided by renewed, cross-border knowledge on the driving forces and processes of development which requires coordination and a gathering of forces. The Bill states that the financing of development research in Sweden is generally managed by Sida, however issues concerning the Swedish resource base for development research are greater than Sida alone can take responsibility for. However the bill does not go into detail concerning the other organisations that are supposed to take responsibility for this field.

Goals and Goal Achievement

All the authors found that the operative goals for support to Swedish development research are not fully suited to their purpose. They have not been clearly operationalised, neither are appropriations and spending related to the sub-goals of the programme.

The authors do not actually discuss the substance of the goals but find that they are not measurable in neither qualitative nor quantitative terms, not suf-

ficiently accepted nor properly followed up, not updated and consequently not related to PGU, the UN MDGs or the Paris Declaration. They assess that lack of quantitative and qualitative goals is probably a reason why SAREC has not carried out much qualitative follow up of allocations for Swedish development research, and that vague goal descriptions are difficult to operationalise and consequently cannot govern operations in reality. They feel, with references to the MDGs among others, that it is possible to formulate and follow up measurable qualitative and quantitative goals for development operations and that SAREC's management is now facing the challenge of reformulating their operational visions and goals into practical, measurable goals. Even if the goals of Sida's Development Research Council are not considered to conflict with what is expressed in, for example, PGU they need to be revised and brought up-to-date so that the mutual relationship between overall policies, Sida's overarching goals, the goals for SAREC's operations as a whole as well as the goals for support to Swedish development research is clearly stated. This assumes that SAREC becomes involved in the current discussion within Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on how Sweden's future participation in international development cooperation is to be designed.

In addition, the authors point out that SAREC plays on two different playing fields whose goals are positioned slightly differently – one for international development cooperation and one for the Swedish and international research community. In the case of the former it is the relevance of research and research cooperation to Sweden's international development cooperation that is the decisive issue. In the latter it is the interest and joint financing of other research financiers in cooperation concerning development research that holds the key. On the latter pitch SAREC has involuntarily landed in a monopoly situation. Other research financiers are controlled by the goals and strategies stated in the Research Bill, which are not aimed at development research and do not encroach on SAREC's monopoly but are, according to the authors, still interested in a dialogue concerning development research.

The effects on the Swedish research community as a whole are assessed as practically negligible – as SAREC support forms such a minor part of the whole, any serious changes in the Swedish research system cannot be expected. Where SAREC support does exert a clear impact is on some small-scale institutions and on a number of research groups. The indirect effects of the support, laying the basis for other financing in the research area, are unambiguous and are assessed as perhaps one of its most important functions. U-FORSK support to Sida's other activities is assessed as limited in both scope and content. The method of working with invitation areas is perceived as a good try at strengthening this contribution.

In addition they feel that Sida needs to develop an approach to PGU focus goals which state that in the future, development cooperation is to be concentrated to fewer cooperating countries and sectors, that cooperating country ownership must increase and that donor cooperation and field orientation are to increase.

Research Financing and Participation

The two studies agree that total financing of Swedish development research is too limited and propose that it should be increased; partly because there is an interest in development issues at universities which, if it could be harnessed, could lead to larger-scale, better quality development research; partly because bilateral research cooperation does not offer any opportunities for Swedish cooperating universities to finance their own doctoral students and junior researchers. At the same time the authors of one study feel that, in light of the prevailing distribution of roles in the research community and the importance of Swedish development research to SAREC's other operations, the scope of SAREC support to Swedish development research is reasonable. The other study judges that SAREC support to Swedish development research is far too limited in scope both as concerns its share of total research at universities (0.4 percent) and its share of total development cooperation (0.037 percent).

In answer to the question of how SAREC's direct and indirect support affects other research councils' financing of Swedish development research, the authors note that these have decreased their direct financing of Swedish development research to an almost negligible level, possibly as other research councils consider that support to development research is SAREC's business. However there are synergies between SAREC support and support from other research councils. One of the two studies reports that a large proportion of U-FORSK participants also receive grants from other Swedish and foreign research councils or research financing agencies which are extensively coordinated with the work of their development research projects. Among Swedish research councils are primarily the scientific councils FORMAS and VINNOVA. Foreign financiers – the European Commission is the most prominent and in many cases allocates sizeable grants. Existing or previous Sida grants appear to have enabled recipients to obtain extensive foreign grants.

In addition to Sida, only two research councils give grants for development research. The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (FORMAS) supports, together with Sida, the programme entitled "Swedish research support for sustainable development in poor countries" – each partner contributing MSEK 5 annually 2005–2006. In addition, the International Science Foundation (IFS) of the Foundation Strategic Environmental Research for environmental strategic research (MISTRA) has provided a total of MSEK 6 over three years.

The authors also note that Swedish universities' participation in development research varies considerably. Five universities, of Sweden's total of 39, received more than 60 percent of all grants allocated via SAREC in 2005 of MSEK 400 – including U-FORSK, Swedish Research Links, bilateral programmes, regional and international programmes and HIV/AIDS. These are the universities of Uppsala, Lund and Stockholm plus Karolinska Insti-

tutet and the Royal Institute of Technology. The question of whether parts of Swedish development research are under or over financed can be studied in light of the level of agreement between support applied for and granted within U-FORSK and LINKS. Within U-FORSK the universities of Lund, Uppsala, Stockholm and Göteborg are responsible for 57 percent of applications and 63 percent of disbursements in 2005. The degree of success varies considerably between them – while Stockholm University received a positive response to 46 percent of its applications the figure for Göteborg University is a mere 14 percent. The authors assess that under-financing probably occurs more often than over or non-financing.

They have not been able to find any logical explanation to these varying success rates within SAREC cooperation, which they consider to be driven by both demand and what is on offer, is concentrated to a small number of the country's almost 40 universities, preferably the older and most well-established universities, of which the majority are in close proximity to Stockholm. To a considerable degree it is also the same university departments that participate in U-FORSK and in bilateral and multilateral activities. The authors feel that this concentration to a few of Sweden's universities is not in line with the third of research cooperation' goals, nor with SAREC's own operational goals. One explanation for these differences could be found in their geographical proximity.

The proportion of grants achieved within different subject areas however, varies much less. The average for 2005 was 31 percent – lowest 30 percent for natural sciences and technology (NT) and development issues and social sciences (US) and highest 35 percent for health research (HF). US, NT and HF with respectively 156, 134 and 105 applications are also the largest research areas measured in number of applications, while natural resources and environment (NM) and humanities, education and culture (HUK) received 91 and 55 applications the same year.

Implementation

The authors point out that the development relevance requirement is what primarily separates SAREC from other research financiers. Development relevance and scientific quality are the Research Committee's two necessary, but individually insufficient, criteria in the assessment process. They feel that the relevance of development cooperation can be increased, for example with the help of problem-oriented or thematic limitations. Advertisement and examination of research grants should be increasingly carried out against a background of what Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs perceive to be important issues, and where Swedish research possesses high levels of international competence.

Assessments of applications should be clearly linked to bilateral research support and to other development cooperation activities. One example of ac-

tivities urgently needed from a development cooperation perspective is area studies – to systematically, using research methods, follow developments within important regions and countries.

The authors have examined SAREC's routines for processing and decision making as concerns grants. Even if they did find examples of exaggerated bureaucracy and can identify room for improvement and simplification of the system, they assess the grant process as administratively reasonable, well managed and transparent. Central concepts such as development relevance are managed in connection with advertisement and assessment in a proper fashion. Applicants also receive clearly stated information. The results of the assessment process are published on SAREC's website.

The same assessment applies to the Science Council's management of Links. However decision making concerning bilateral research cooperation and the thematic programmes appears to be less transparent. In bilateral cooperation, no open invitations or advertisements on Sida's or SAREC's websites occur. Instead SAREC contacts the universities and departments that are considered to possess suitable competence. The authors indicate a lack of clearly stated criteria as concerns selection of cooperating institutions in Sweden, a lack they have also identified in the international research programmes.

For example, a decision was taken in the International Science Programme, ISP, case in which a foreign university and a Swedish cooperating university were selected to participate in the programme by the ISP Board on the recommendation of an individual administrator, without any advertisement or application procedure. Much could be done to strengthen interaction with universities and with research institutes vital to development cooperation. A limited amount of tasks that are now carried out by the SAREC Secretariat could be transferred to special units or university departments.

Recommendations

New operative goals should be formulated for long-term, continued support to Swedish development research. These new goals should be based on clearly stated descriptions of what is to be done. They must express intentions in terms of measurable quantitative and qualitative results. They must have gained full acceptance among both employees and stakeholders as well as from leading actors within the Swedish research community, Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. One concrete recommendation is to merge the current six U-FORSK sub-goals into three and to divide the programme into three corresponding parts.

The proposed increase of support to Swedish development research should primarily be financed by other research councils. Increased dialogue between SAREC and other research councils is recommended. It should be possible to achieve such an intensified dialogue with the help of measures ranging from individual conversations between colleagues to major conferences in

which the emphases, scope and financing of future Swedish development research is discussed by representatives of research councils, the research community and Sida. SAREC is encouraged to prepare a plan of new cooperation forms desirable within the framework of Swedish development research, and how this broader collaboration is to be achieved. For management of cooperation it is recommended that SAREC ensures that the proposed goal review also results in a new follow-up system with both administrative and financial coverage of qualitative and quantitative reporting of scientific results and development relevance. SAREC's current documentation and reporting system should be reviewed.

The authors recommend a more open and transparent selection process as concerns the participation of Swedish universities and research institutes in bilateral research cooperation. For example advertisement on SAREC's website every time a cooperation project is to be initiated or renegotiated or inviting all universities and university colleges to express their interest and present their profile areas and leading edge competence. For a small number of the best research institutes within U-FORSK, more long-term support could be discussed.

5. SAREC's Organisation

5.1 Organisation

Sida's Department of Research Cooperation, SAREC, is currently organised into three units and a staff function working with the Head of Department plus into subject groups. Sida's Research Board is also organisationally linked to the department. As a part of the review of SAREC ordered by the Government, an independent organisational study has been carried out. The main issues in this study have concerned SAREC's goals and tasks, SAREC's organisation and SAREC's capacity. The conclusions of this study are provided below.

5.2 The Study

Mandate and Goals

As the studies described above commented on goals issues for their particular areas, this organisational study takes up goals for research cooperation as a whole from a control and reporting perspective. Overall goals must be clearly defined and made measurable. The fact that research cooperation answers to a double set of goals contributes to lack of clarity in control mechanisms. The goal and result dialogue with the Government Offices must, according to this study, be intensified on the basis of experience and an analysis of results actually achieved by cooperation. Further development of results follow up presupposes, however, that goals have been clarified. The study notes the lack of systematic result follow up, something that applies to the entire organisational chain from Government Directives to the results expected of individual employees.

According to this organisational study, SAREC's mandate within Sida is perceived as relatively clear, even if it may be necessary to alter or amend it in relationship to PGU and to Swedish research policies. Within Sida there is also a desire that SAREC should work with applied research. A joint policy development process together with other Sida units concerning the role of research in development cooperation, and as concerns innovation systems, is recommended. The authors feel that there is good reason for Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to bring research cooperation to the fore as a vital area in development cooperation. They feel that research cooperation is not paid sufficient attention as a means of poverty reduction. Sweden possesses comparative advantages within this field through long experience

of building up research capacity and consequently is able to take responsibility for donor coordination, if necessary.

The authors would like a more lively debate on the responsibilities of other research actors within the framework of PGU. They point out that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is responsible for this but also that Sida/SAREC has an important role to play in transferring its experience and concepts on how this responsibility can be realised in practical terms. The fact that research currently does not have its own allocation is motivated, according to the study, by the need to protect research support requirements for long term commitment. The process between input and results is longer within research than in many other cooperation areas. However, according to the authors, research cooperation could also become an area in which Sida could become “lead agency” among several cooperating countries and international agencies and would be able to, from such a perspective, lay claim to a growing share of resources.

Collaboration

In certain areas cooperation between SAREC and other departments within Sida, as well as between SAREC and the overseas embassies, could become more active for example during their work with cooperation strategies. Even if a clear improvement of collaboration levels between SAREC and other parts of Sida has occurred during the last two year period, there is still potential for further integration, for example as concerns joint positions, organisational development and learning. Synergy effects can be won, for example, in the interfaces between education and research or where major infrastructure and industrial development inputs are financed by both INEC and SAREC. Other Sida units could also identify research areas for possible SAREC financing.

According to this study, SAREC currently possesses no specifically expressed role in joint knowledge development within Sida. Collaboration with the units within Sida that work with organisational development, learning and policy and methods development could be further developed. One example is the POM/SAREC cooperation concerning new issues to be developed at policy level, plus further development of networks and contact networks concerning research and policy creation. In addition, Sida’s other units could generate descriptions of urgent research areas which could be entry points for SAREC’s relevance assessment, also research results could be more usefully employed in the preparation and assessment of development cooperation outside research support.

Currently other Sida departments bear no responsibility for following up results of applied research financed by SAREC by implementing suitable projects even if there are examples of Sida financing tests of vaccines that have resulted from research. The necessity of support in the step from re-

search to production is also present as concerns such research results as new agricultural products adapted to conditions in the South.

Collaboration with the Swedish Research Council, FORMAS and VINNOVA has developed during the last few years. LINKS decisions are prepared by the Swedish Research Council but are taken by the Research Board. In this manner SAREC is able to benefit from other Swedish research structures. Cooperation with VINNOVA has been successful, even if it is not really clear where the responsibility for support to development of innovation systems is located within Sida. Sida has concluded framework agreements with a number of other government agencies (FÖLJSAM). The authors consider that there is good reason to consider similar framework agreements with agencies in the research field such as the Science Council, VINNOVA and FORMAS.

Organisation and Capacity

The organisational form of SAREC is regarded in the study as a combination of government agency, with a classical line organisation, and research council. The primary advantages of such an organisational form is said to be the assurance of scientific quality, long term commitment and resource levels, plus that interest in research relevant to development cooperation is promoted among Swedish researchers.

According to the authors, the help of the Research Board assures that peer review processes and other quality inputs fulfil requirements according to praxis in the scientific community. Scientific criteria for research are maintained through scrutiny by, for example, reference groups which also decreases the risk of short sighted priorities. Scientific quality is an absolute requirement that, if not fulfilled, may not be compensated for by development relevance. The composition of the Research Board creates status in the Swedish research community and increases interest in research of importance to Swedish development cooperation, and consequently forms a contribution to the improvement of the resource base for development cooperation research and for development cooperation in general. In addition it is assessed that the current decision making procedure is suitable for its purpose.

Special decision making procedures for research cooperation does, however, also bring risks – for example that knowledge about other parts of Sida, their working procedures and activities and development cooperation methodologies may be limited within the Research Board. For the department's inner organisation, the authors feel that a more flexible, task-based organisational model could be considered in which employees work in teams. The work of these teams may either governed by goals or they may have an appointed coordinator with decision-making powers – depending on the task of the team. Each employee should be able to be a member of one or more teams. Teams can be formed for both long term tasks and for time-limited commis-

sions. Thanks to the delegation of decision-making powers to the Coordinators of the teams, the decision-making process can be simplified which could decrease the current need for managers. In such an organisational model it should be possible for three managers to lead a group of employees of SAREC's current size (40+).

Finally the authors assess that SAREC, using its current working methods and division of tasks and responsibilities is undersized in relationship to its assigned role. However, future drastic personnel expansion cannot be expected, consequently the challenge for SAREC is to develop working methods and create the necessary flexibility to implement research cooperation according to goals and strategic priorities.

Recommendations

SAREC should, together with all the other relevant actors including those outside Sida, intensify experience and result-based policy development concerning the role of research in development cooperation where there are clear links to its importance for poverty issues. These activities should also encompass a common line on research into innovation systems within the development field, plans for how this operational area could be used to connect research and politics within the development field and criteria for selection of cooperating countries and cooperating institutions. Sida/SAREC should establish a clearly-stated strategy for the mobilisation of other donors and for Sida as “lead agency” for research support. Another matter for consideration is whether research should be assigned a profile area in any future concentration of activities.

In addition, dialogue with the Government Offices should be intensified on the basis of experience and with the support of a coherent results follow-up system, based on clear and measurable indicators and accepted methods of assessing and measuring goal fulfilment. Sida/SAREC should also establish further collaboration with other agencies within Swedish research financing, including those outside the current cooperation circle of the Swedish Science Council, FORMAS and VINNOVA.

Cooperation between SAREC and other Sida departments and with embassies should be further developed and clarified, especially as concerns cooperation strategies, connections between the education sector and research cooperation, innovation systems within the development area plus joint knowledge development. In cooperation strategies, research cooperation should be allocated more space. For continued development of cooperation with embassies, the current cooperation with the Swedish embassy in Tanzania should be followed up.

SAREC's internal organisational structure should be further developed in order to increase flexibility and efficiency and decrease vulnerability, as should cooperation with embassies. In addition, role distribution between

SAREC and Swedish cooperating partners should be clarified and cooperation agreements concluded with government agencies within the research field such as the Science Council, FORMAS and VINNOVA. Working in goal-oriented teams should be considered as well as agreements concerning each employee's undertakings, including planning of career paths and competence development. The Sida Research Board should, using its own role as a point of departure, initiate regular discussions on the working forms most suitable to these activities

6. Some Recurring Themes

A couple of themes recur in the comments of several report authors. Some are taken up in the concluding section. These are the growing importance of development research, the relevance of research cooperation to development and poverty issues, policy, goals, indicators and reporting, the requirements of PGU and the Paris Agenda, its own budget allocation plus continued productivity development.

The review has afforded Sida and SAREC access to a series of observations and proposals as to future change activities which are worth consideration, many of which can probably be utilised. Several of them form, in practice, both a challenge and an opportunity for development for Sida and SAREC. In this manner the review appears to offer SAREC and Sida relevant material to contribute to the further development of their actual development cooperation activities. Several authors indicate that two external, large-scale changes currently underway are altering the preconditions for SAREC's work. These are ongoing globalisation and the implementation of the Paris Agenda.

As a common theme throughout the process runs their agreement on the growing importance of development research, not least due to globalisation which makes much of the research relevant to developing countries into development research also relevant in Sweden. Third World development problems will also become Sweden's. This may concern climate issues, infectious diseases, democracy and human rights. The border between what is entitled development research and research on developing countries becomes increasingly blurred and the question of what development really is even becomes relevant.

However the authors are generally in agreement that this development creates a greater need for research, preferably carried out together by researchers in Sweden, in developing countries and in international and regional organisations in various combinations. The authors recommends that increased resources be allocated to Swedish research, some propose more from Sida while others prioritise other financiers. Both the reports and the discussions concerning the review have indicated that the way forward is through strategic tasks and openings for SAREC with interesting opportunities to act within the framework of a context of relevance for development both at home and in the third world. Several also recommend that Sweden promotes the importance of research cooperation internationally.

The selection of research themes, that is a relevant issue within all three of SAREC's main areas, is commented on explicitly in the thematic report. At

the same time as the authors assess the current selection of research themes in international and regional cooperation as generally suitable, they also feel that SAREC has not managed to take up new, challenging issues and subjects in a suitable and systematic manner. They propose, for example, that greater attention should be paid to areas such as democracy and participation, conflict and violence, environment and energy plus health systems, and strategy development based on continued studies. The report does not really help this issue very far along, which could have been hoped, but an attempt to move forward from this could perhaps land on something interesting – which probably must begin with policy and strategy development, preferably on the basis of PGU's poverty and rights perspectives – and in a definition of criteria for thematic priorities.

The review and its component studies have been structured according to SAREC's three main areas. The authors take up a position – generally positive – to their own areas of study. However if there is one area that awakens interest and generates positive comments from authors other than those directly involved, it is SAREC's bilateral programmes. Good results have been illustrated by the team involved and endorsed by others – Sida possesses good preconditions to become lead agency within this field. However at the same time bilateral cooperation is facing the challenge of meeting the Government's demand for concentration of country cooperation to fewer sectors. Here the authors divide into two groups. One regards bilateral research cooperation as so successful that it should be able to succeed in competition with the other sectors and proposes that Sida make research cooperation into one of the concentration sectors. The other group fears that research cooperation may experience difficulties in competing with sectors that show results in a much shorter period of time and propose that it be defined as a cross-sector issue and continue to receive its own allocations outside the country financial frameworks.

At the same time a series of proposals are made aimed at, in line with the Paris Agenda, issues such as stronger recipient ownership and harmonisation with other donors and increasing the return on SAREC programmes through strengthened links to various points, processes and actors with interests in research and innovation, both in the countries themselves and outside their borders.

Several of the authors take up the development and poverty relevance of research cooperation. They do this from different points of departure but end up with similar conclusions. The level of development relevance is often high; however effects on poverty tend, for various reasons, to be more indirect and long term. Proposals of various kinds are offered with the common intention that SAREC should analyse its own operations from a poverty perspective with the aim of increasing direct poverty relevance, developing in-house methods and strategies in accordance with results or intensifying dialogue with Government concerning conclusions and proposals

One closely allied area which excited the interest of the authors is policy and goal issues. This theme has recurred in more or less all the reports and in the seminar. Strategy development is essential. The fact that current goals are not measurable is observed by several authors who mean that development and research cooperation results can also be measured. Goals and result management must be developed. SAREC should initiate intensive activities on goals and indicators for operations, not least in order to be able to provide better reports for government, for the research community and for the general public, and consequently also recruit sufficient support for its continued operations.

One general theme in these studies and in the discussions based on them, is links. That SAREC's operations need to be better linked to various points, processes and actors has been stated on several occasions in the review. Bilateral activities should be linked to other projects financed by Sida and SAREC, to other donors' research projects, to other research and to users of research results. Thematic cooperation at international and regional levels should be better linked to cooperation at country level.

In Swedish development research, links to Sida's other operations need to be strengthened, and within Sida SAREC needs to strengthen its links to other departments and vice versa. The list of proposed link developments is long; however any prioritisation as to what should be done first cannot be distinguished from this material.

In addition several authors refer both explicitly and implicitly to SAREC's role within Sida. SAREC could be a knowledge broker to the rest of Sida, and Sida's other departments could deliver research proposals to SAREC. In the discussion concerning this review it has become clear that there are several different proposals as to definitions of roles and relationships – SAREC was supposed to be everything from a knowledge bank to one department among all the others. Much vagueness that prevails as to SAREC's role within Sida can apparently be traced to the fuzzy policy situation, to the differences in perspective and methods that remains between SAREC and the rest of Sida. A goal-oriented policy and strategy effort should be able to help create clarity here and consequently also a greater total impact of SAREC's entire operations.

One issue that might have been expected to be more closely examined is that of the role of Sida's Research Board. The authors assess the current decision-making procedures as generally fit for purpose, but recommend a more clearly defined programme construction of operations in order to facilitate a holistic approach in the decisions of the Board. They feel that the Research Board could take the initiative to discuss the major issues as well, but do realise on the other hand that the task of establishing the areas to be supported is a matter for Sida's line organisation and Director General. The question appears to remain unanswered. The answer, in its turn, must be based on a general position concerning support to Swedish development research. This

issue has primarily appeared in the discussion on the review with various different proposals from that SAREC activities should be substantially increased to that Sida should hand over responsibility for support to Swedish development research in order to concentrate its efforts on bilateral activities. This question also remains unanswered.

A recurring theme on the operative level is that SAREC has enjoyed success with their focused activities within capacity development on the bilateral plane and with basic support to international and regional research networks and organisations with the aim of contributing to their development into independent, competent actors in the global research community. Several authors appreciate this “nichemanship” and recommend continued focus on such activities where SAREC makes a difference and on attempting to achieve increased understanding internationally of the importance of this type of support for continued development of research cooperation.

Finally a series of observations and recommendations touch on SAREC’s working methods. Common to all the authors is the fact that they see opportunities for SAREC to realise improved impact. This can be achieved by operations being better connected to others – to other actors in cooperating countries, to other Sida departments and to other research actors in Sweden etc. It may also occur with the help of continued productivity development. Some thoughts were put forward concerning, for example, competence development and field posting for staff, productivity increases via collaboration, concentrating resources into fewer, but larger, country programmes, continued integration within Sida, improved follow up and evaluation. A relatively extensive list of measures that may be included in the continued change process and consequently are presented here.

Annex 1 Terms of Reference

1 Background

Sida provides support to the research sector. According to Government Directives Sida must contribute to the strengthening of developing countries' research capacity and promote research that contributes to the poverty reduction and fair, sustainable global development. In addition Sida will work to strengthen development research in Sweden. Support will be provided for:

- poor developing countries in order to build up good quality research environments, to train researchers and to develop methods for planning, prioritisation and financing of research.
- in the form of financial and scientific resources with the aim of supporting production of new knowledge and promoting the utilisation of research results of importance to developing countries.
- the promotion of scientific cooperation between researchers in Sweden and in developing countries plus the participation of Swedish researchers in development research and research cooperation.

Organisationally, support to research within Sida is managed by the Department for Research Cooperation (SAREC).

Sida is currently implementing a review of research activities as tasked by the Government of Sweden. This report is to be presented by 31st December 2006. Within Sida, the Secretariat for Evaluation and Internal Audit (UTV) is responsible for this review.

UTV has initiated the following five studies in order to describe different parts of this operational area and to form background information for an overall report of the review.

Study 1. Experience of bilateral support to universities

Study 2. Evaluation of Sida support to information and communication technology at universities

Study 3. Assessment of Sida's support to international and regional thematic research

Study 4. Review of Swedish development research

Study 5. Organisation study of SAREC

Sida's Research Board will also carry out its own evaluation of Sida's Development Research Council during the spring of 2006.

Sida has consulted with the Government Offices as concerns both the design of the review and the Terms of Reference for the studies. The first study will be delivered to Sida in mid-June. The analysis of these background studies will be initiated in the middle of August. The synthesis phase of the project will be carried out in the following fashion.

With the support of an external consultancy input, a working group including representatives of SAREC and UTV will examine the documentation, define its strengths and weaknesses and the areas for improvement of research development activities. In addition the group will establish a structure for the report to be delivered to the Government and prioritise the issues to be covered. The report will also contain a brief description of SAREC's operations and organisation plus the environment it operates within. The analytical sections will draw conclusions and make recommendations for continued operational and organisational development. The perspectives of SAREC and other departments within Sida will be considered in order to produce a balanced analysis.

A reference group to which all departments will be invited will also be established. The first meeting to be held around 20th September. The Research Board will examine the first draft of the report on 19th October 2006. Sida's Executive will discuss this matter on 31st October 2006. The Secretariat for Evaluation and Internal Audit (UTV) intends to contract an external consultant to establish the synthesis report.

2 Aim

The aim of this task is to contribute to the synthesis phase of the current review of Sida Operational Area – Research in different ways and to compile a report giving the results of the review.

3 Tasks

- 1) Read and comment on the draft study reports.
- 2) Participate in the analysis activities, independently and within the framework of the work of the Analysis Group.
- 3) Establish a draft synthesis report.
- 4) Establish presentation material for various groups that are to provide their comments on the review.
- 5) Participate in and take notes in Reference Group meetings and in other groups that are to provide their comments on the review.
- 6) Assist UTV in other ways with the synthesis report.

4 Reporting

The consultant reports to UTV. The consultant will produce continuous written comments on draft reports, a draft synthesis report, presentation material and notes from meetings. The consultant will also submit a brief final report with reflections on how the synthesis report process has been implemented and submit recommendations on how Sida may improve similar processes in future.

5 Schedule

The task will be carried out between 12th June and 15th December 2006.

6 Qualifications

The task is to be carried out by a consultant possessing broad experience of Swedish development cooperation management and of research issues. The consultant must possess good analytical and stylistic abilities and long experience of work with Government Directives.

- 06/46 To Good to be True, UNRISD 1996–2005**
Deepal Nayyar, Sten Johansson, Tapio Salonen, Signe Arnfred
Department for Research Cooperation
- 06/47 Fundación Gaia Amazonas en Colombia, 2003–2006**
Anders Rudqvist, Kaj Århem
Department for Latin America
- 06/48 JobsNet An Employment Sourcing and Delivery System in Sri Lanka**
Michael Wheelahan, Lennart Königson
Asia Department
- 06/49 Svenska Handikapporganisationers Internationella Biståndsförenings (SHIA) verksamhet och samarbetsrelationer**
Cecilia Karlstedt, Håkan Jarskog, Anders Ingelstam, Lennart Peck
Avdelningen för samverkan med enskilda organisationer, humanitärt bistånd och konflikthantering
- 06/50 Promoting Media Professionalism, Independence and Accountability in Sri Lanka**
Madeleine Elmqvist, Sunil Bastian
Asia Department
- 06/51 Comparative Evaluation of the Personnel Management Project at Central Level and the Pilot PAR Project in Quang Tri Province**
Yeow Poon, Vo Kim Son
Asia Department
- 06/52 Sida's Independent Guarantee Scheme**
Claes Lindahl
Department for Infrastructure
- 06/53 The Auas High-voltage Transmission Line in Namibia Supported by a Swedish Concessionary Credit**
Karlis Gopperes
Department for Infrastructure and Economic Cooperation
- 06/54 First Cadastre Project in Moldova. Training Technical Assistance Project**
Ulf Kihlbom, Mike Cheremshynsky
Department for Europe
- 06/55 Reaching Poor People with Services in Sexual and Reproductive Health: An Evaluation of the IPPF. Volume 1: Synthesis Report**
Kim Forss, Marilyn Lauglo, Anna Nilsson
Department for Democracy and Social Development
- 06/55:1 Reaching Poor People with Services in Sexual and Reproductive Health: An Evaluation of the IPPF. Volume 2: Country Reports from Bangladesh, Uganda and Ethiopia**
Kim Forss, Marilyn Lauglo, Anna Nilsson
Department for Democracy and Social Development
- 06/56 Sida's Support to Agricultural Development in Nicaragua, FondoAgro Programme**
Tania Ammour, Raúl Fajardo, Róger Cruz
Department for Latin America

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Fax: +46 (0) 8 698 56 10
Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>

Review of Sida's Research Cooperation

Synthesis Report

Sweden has provided support for research in developing countries and research cooperation with developing countries since 1975. Research cooperation has developed from projects involving a national research council and individual researchers to more institutional support aimed at building up sustainable research capacity.

Research support is administered by Sida's Department for Research Cooperation, SAREC, and forms approximately 6% of Sida's allocations for development cooperation. This report is the final product of a review of the Sida's research cooperation. Six studies have been implemented focused on three operational components; bilateral university cooperation, support to international and regional organisations and networks and support to Swedish research on developing countries. SAREC's organisation has also been reviewed. The studies were implemented using limited timeframes; consequently they are not standard evaluations. Issues covered include the relevance of research cooperation to overall development goals. Should the utilisation of research results be further promoted? Can SAREC work more with the dissemination of research results? The review also discusses the financing of Swedish development research and the roles and responsibilities of SAREC and other research financiers.

In addition, issues concerning research cooperation in Sida's portfolio, coordination between research projects and Sida's other activities, plus the role of research cooperation in cooperation strategies are taken up.



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