

Strategy for Sweden's regional
development cooperation in

Sub-Saharan Africa

2016–2021



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**Government Offices
of Sweden**

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1. Direction

Within the framework of this strategy, Swedish development cooperation with sub-Saharan Africa is to contribute to increased regional integration and strengthened capacity to face cross-border challenges and opportunities at regional level. The strategy will apply for the period 2016–2021 and comprises a total of SEK 2 700 million, of which SEK 2 670 million is intended for activities implemented by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and SEK 30 million is intended for activities implemented by the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA).¹

Within the framework of the strategy, Sida is expected to contribute to:

A better environment, sustainable use of natural resources, reduced climate impact and strengthened resilience to environmental impact, climate change and natural disasters

- Strengthened capacity of regional actors to work towards sustainable management and use of common ecosystem services and natural resources
- Strengthened capacity of regional actors to work towards increased resilience against climate change and natural disasters, including capacity for food security
- Increased production of, and access to, renewable energy

¹ Contributions within the framework of this strategy are financed in accordance with the terms for appropriation items in appropriation directions concerning the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and appropriation item 1:1.4 Aid activities in appropriation directions concerning the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) for each financial year.

Strengthened democracy and gender equality and greater respect for human rights

- Enhanced capacity of regional actors to work towards strengthened democracy and the rule of law, gender equality and increased respect for human rights, with a focus on the rights of women and children
- Enhanced capacity of civil society and media to work towards accountability and respect for human rights at regional level

Better opportunities and tools to enable poor and vulnerable people to improve their living conditions

- Strengthened opportunities for increased economic integration and trade
- Improved conditions, especially for women and young people, for productive employment with decent working conditions
- Strengthened capacity of regional actors to work towards sustainable solutions concerning refugee situations and migration flows, and embrace the positive effects of migration

Human security and freedom from violence

- Strengthened capacity of regional actors for peace and reconciliation
- Strengthened capacity of regional actors to combat violent extremism
- Increased influence and participation by women and young people in processes for peace and reconciliation

Within the framework of the strategy, the FBA is expected to contribute to:

- Strengthened capacity for regional actors to prevent, resolve and deal with the effects of armed conflict
- Strengthened capacity for regional actors to implement the UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security

2. Regional context

The motivation behind conducting Swedish development cooperation with sub-Saharan Africa is that there are substantial cross-border development challenges where regional collaboration provides better effects than measures carried out by individual countries. Regional economic integration is also essential for creating better conditions for inclusive, economically sustainable development on the continent. There is a strong desire on the African continent for increased regional collaboration in many policy areas. In addition, regional collaboration can contribute to African ownership and responsibility for the region's development. Swedish added value consists of long-standing collaboration at regional level as well as broad presence in the region. Sweden has a strategic role to push for reform processes, contribute experiences and coordination, as well as safeguard the perspective of poor people on development.

Sub-Saharan Africa is a heterogeneous region characterised by varied circumstances and conditions for sustainable development. Economic poverty on the African continent has decreased since 1990 as a proportion of the population. Today, it is estimated that 43 per cent of the population lives in poverty, i.e. on less than USD 1.90 a day, the majority of which lives in 'fragile states'. The number of people who suffer from hunger has increased since 1990–1992 and today, 23 per cent of the population is deemed to be undernourished. Economic growth remains at a higher level than in previous decades, although it has slowed in recent years, including due to reasons such as falling commodity prices. However, the number of people who live in poverty has increased, as a result of high population growth and increased life expectancy, among other reasons. Children and young people account for more than half of the population of sub-Saharan Africa. There are large disparities between town and country, and between one region and another.

Agriculture and forestry are of central importance for growth, employment and food security in sub-Saharan Africa. In most countries, more than two thirds of the population live in rural areas and is mainly employed in seasonal agriculture and forestry, or in small-scale fisheries. Employment

consists to a large part of informal, uncertain jobs, with insufficient wages and without labour rights or access to social security. The lack of clear land rights creates uncertainty. Women are overrepresented in the informal sector and in unpaid work, and in some countries they lack the right to cultivate, own and inherit forests and land. There is a need for an estimated 12 to 15 million new formal jobs per year. Enhanced regional integration leads to increased economic growth and the creation of job opportunities. However, regional economic integration is held back by a low degree of implementation of and a lack of information about existing regional agreements, inadequate legal frameworks, weak institutional capacity, underdeveloped markets and limited production of goods and services with export potential, unwieldy trade procedures and deficient infrastructures. Inadequate regulation and institutions also mean that it has not been possible to use the full potential of digitalisation. Intraregional trade amounts to 17 per cent, compared to 60 per cent in the EU. The absence of an efficient regional market with freedom for goods, services, capital and people undermines increased growth and investments, further development of sectors such as agriculture, forestry and industry. Trade barriers affect both consumers and producers, and especially people living in poverty.

Depleted natural resources and climate change, environmentally hazardous emissions and exposure to chemicals and waste puts a strain on ecosystems, on land and oceans, exacerbates livelihood opportunities and resilience, and risks creating tensions and conflicts. Reduced biodiversity and illegal trade with natural resources are regional problems. Extraction of 'conflict minerals' contributes to the depletion of natural resources and finances violence against girls, women, boys and men in conflict situations. Shifts in, and amplified periods of, rain and drought hit people who earn a living from agriculture and forestry hard. According to the World Bank, climate change with rising temperatures can make 40 per cent of Africa's arable corn land unusable by 2050, and increase the undernourished proportion of the population, from the current 25 per cent, by an additional 25-50 per cent. In the same way, worsened conditions in the oceans and illegal and unregulated fishing impacts small-scale fisheries. Food security, public health, employment and poverty reduction are threatened. More than 600 million people –

around two thirds of the region's population – lack access to electrical energy at home. Just under one fourth of the electrical energy produced in the region originates from renewable energy sources.

After a period of general democratic development on the continent, with general elections, strengthened parliaments and more ratified regional conventions, the development of a democratic culture and democratic institutions and the rule of law remain a challenge for the majority of countries in Africa. In many countries, current heads of State hold on to power, which is manifested through power struggles, abuse of power and corruption. A lack of political will, especially at national level, and an inadequate ability to deliver basic services leads to dissatisfaction, fuels conflicts and counteracts social and economic development. Violent extremism is spreading. In the same way, the shrinking scope for civil society and media to operate freely, for instance on the internet, is a growing problem. Employees, employers and the business community also have limited opportunities to organise.

The situation with regard to women's rights has improved in the last decade, for instance with regard to the proportion of women elected to national parliaments, as well the African Union's (AU) focus on the situation of women. At the same time, women's opportunities to enjoy human rights continue to be limited by inadequate access to legal rights, education and health, land and financial capital as well as a political voice, in particular in conflict-affected areas.

Children account for more than half of Africa's population and are, to a greater extent than adults, exposed to the negative effects of poverty, conflict and harmful customs, such as violence against children and child labour. Girls are particularly affected. Children's rights are recognised by a vast majority of African states through ratification of the regional Convention on the Rights of the Child and other instruments. However, it is often overlooked in national application. Compliance with human rights for people with an impairment is also a neglected area.

The existence of violent conflicts at local, national and international level has increased in recent years. The conflicts have changed character in part, from intergovernmental to increasingly prolonged and complex

intra-state conflicts, often with clear cross-border features. Children's vulnerability and girls' vulnerability to sexual violence in conflict is increasing. Conflicts are exacerbated by the illegal spread and existence of small arms and light weapons. Although peace agreements have been signed, the risk level remains high due to unresolved conflicts, few initiatives concerning preventive measures, reconciliation and reconstruction, and widespread impunity. Fifteen countries in the region and two Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have action plans on the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325. There are shortcomings in their implementation. The participation of women and young people in peace processes remains low. In 2014, 3.7 million people were fleeing due to violent conflicts within the region, with serious consequences with regard to the health and life prospects of those affected. In the same year, the number of deaths caused by political violence was the highest in Africa since 1999. This high number of deaths occurs in a handful of countries. When these are excluded from the statistics, a much more peaceful Africa instead emerges. Extreme militant and religious groups attract increasing numbers of young people, mainly young men, who thereby see a way out of poverty, unemployment and social and political exclusion.

Several of the region's development challenges are cross-border by nature and require a regional approach. In early 2016, the AU launched a regional development plan, Agenda 2063, which focuses on transformative economic development and productive employment, specifically for young people, economic integration and gender equality. The AU and RECs take increasing responsibility for regional issues and there is an explicit political will for regional integration and collaboration, which can be seen in that African regional organisations and their member states take an increasingly active role in conflict management, management of cross-border natural resources and economic integration. While organisations have been strengthened in their normative role, there is a gap between commitments at regional level and implementation at national level, where implementation is slow. The AU and regional organisations continue to be challenged by weak capacity and results-based management in several parts of the organisation and by unpredictable finances. For this reason, there is a need to continue reform efforts and strengthen the capacity of organisations.

3. Activities

Sweden's development cooperation with sub-Saharan Africa is to be based on and characterised by a rights perspective and the perspective of poor people on development. The rights perspective means that human rights and democracy are regarded as fundamental to development. This approach means that individuals and groups that are discriminated against, excluded, and marginalised, are made visible prior to each contribution. This is so that all people will be able to enjoy their rights regardless of gender, age, impairment, ethnicity, religion or other belief, sexual orientation, transgender identity or expression. The perspective of poor people on development means that the situation, needs, circumstances, and priorities of poor women, men and children must be used as the basis for poverty reduction and the promotion of equitable and sustainable development.

Swedish development cooperation is to be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable, and also gender-equal. A comprehensive view of the challenges, needs and conditions of poor people and society is the foundation of development cooperation. The guiding principle is that economic, social and environmental conditions and processes are to be understood and managed in an integrated context. Gender equality, and the empowerment and rights of women and girls, are both goals in themselves and a prerequisite and a means for achieving sustainable global development. Violence and armed conflict are among the greatest obstacles to economic and social development, and development cooperation is an important part of conflict prevention. An environmental and climate perspective, a gender equality perspective, and a conflict perspective must therefore be systematically integrated into Sweden's development cooperation.

Activities within the framework of the strategy are to cover sub-Saharan Africa. A regional approach is significant for tackling common and cross-border challenges in a coordinated way through regional arenas, organisations and mechanisms. Regional cooperation can also help anchor international conventions and normative issues, and promote development in areas that can be particularly difficult to handle at national level. Development cooperation is to relate to new international agreements – primarily the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development

Goals which the international community agreed upon in 2015. Clarifying how strengthened capacity in a regional context contributes to long-term results is important. Cooperation is to contribute to strengthened collaboration between the UN and African regional organisations.

Sida is to ensure that a holistic view is taken of the total Swedish support to sub-Saharan Africa when implementing the strategy. Synergies between the different areas of the strategy are to be harnessed as far as possible. Complementarity and synergies with Sweden's development cooperation at global and national level, as well as with the regional strategy on sexual and reproductive health and rights, are to be sought. Synergies with research cooperation are to be sought to promote analysis, knowledge and innovation in all strategy areas. Development activities should be coordinated with humanitarian measures in the region so that Sweden contributes to strengthened resilience and a transition from temporary humanitarian assistance to sustainable development cooperation.

Activities are mainly to be carried out in cooperation with regional actors. The AU, its commission and the eight Regional Economic Communities are the most prominent intergovernmental actors for regional collaboration and integration. Further, the African Development Bank (AfDB), specialised intergovernmental organisations and civil society organisations comprise important agents for change. Different frameworks and their implementation can contribute to change. Sida should investigate the possibility of including, to a greater extent, cooperation with academic research institutions, cultural organisations, the private sector, including business organisations, cultural and creative industries and diaspora groups. Swedish government agencies can also help strengthen institutional capacity.

Development cooperation with sub-Saharan Africa is to have a perspective beyond aid. In implementing this strategy, Sweden will therefore work to increase resource mobilisation from partners and stimulate cooperation that, in the long term, can continue without development cooperation funding. Sweden is to contribute to innovative financing mechanisms and promote sustainable and responsible investments, such as facilitating partnerships with companies, promoting sustainable business practices and identifying new actors with the aim of mobilising the business sector's resources.

Internationally agreed principles on aid and development effectiveness are to be applied in Swedish development cooperation and adapted to the specific context. Sweden will promote coherent and effective aid coordination in the region, especially through active participation in the EU aid coordination.

Regional economic integration that takes better account of the effects on the environment, climate and gender equality will be more effective in reducing poverty. Swedish development cooperation must therefore apply an integrated approach to regional economic integration and trade, productive employment, sustainable use of common natural resources and energy sources, as well as limited climate impact. Synergies between the thematic areas are to be identified and made use of. This is, for instance, to promote food security.

Sweden is to contribute to strengthened regional capacity for sustainable use and sustainable management of common ecosystem services and natural resources, with a focus on land and forests, water and marine resources. This cooperation should include support for sustainable and transparent fisheries management and take account of support for biodiversity conservation. Regional cooperation to limit extraction of 'conflict minerals' is to be taken into account. Sweden is to contribute to strengthened resilience to climate change and natural disasters, including a capacity for food security. The link between environment and climate and other policy areas, such as security and health, should be taken into account. Furthermore, Sweden is to contribute to strengthened production of, and access to, renewable energy for households and productive sectors, which will benefit both women and men, and efficient energy use. Strengthened regional capacity for climate adaptation and emissions reductions, as well as increased access to climate financing may contribute to the implementation of African countries' national commitments under the Paris climate agreement.

Swedish development cooperation is to help strengthen conditions for regional economic integration and trade, as well as productive employment with decent working conditions. Instruments that facilitate free movement of goods, services and labour, as well as the economic empowerment and entrepreneurship of women, are central in this respect.

Development cooperation is also to contribute to strengthened prospects for establishing, negotiating and implementing bilateral, regional and global trade agreements that promote development, including economic partnership agreements. Sweden will also contribute to strengthened conditions for regional actors to work towards sustainable solutions for refugee situations and migration flows, and embrace the positive effects of migration.

Swedish development cooperation will contribute to promoting democratic governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and increased gender equality. Sweden will contribute to strengthening the capacity among regional actors, such as the AU. Key institutions in regional frameworks such as the African Governance Architecture (AGA), and their ability to follow up and influence the implementation of regional commitments, such as strengthened democracy and increased gender equality, are to be supported. Corruption, tax evasion and other illicit financial flows should be highlighted in development cooperation. Furthermore, Sweden is to contribute to strengthening the capacity of civil society and media to work towards accountability and respect for human rights at regional level. Support to civil society's opportunities to organise, operate and exchange experiences is a priority.

Swedish development cooperation is to help prevent, solve and manage the effects of conflicts. Sweden is to contribute to strengthening capacity among regional actors for peace and reconciliation, increasing women's and young people's influence and participation in processes for peace and reconciliation, and combatting violent extremism and terrorism. A gender perspective should be taken into account in preventive work. Translating regional commitments into national legislation, as well as revision of the African peace and security architecture, and the development of regional and sub-regional frameworks to combat terrorism, are a particular priority. In this respect, account should also be taken of support to combat illegal or uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons.

The Folke Bernadotte Academy is to contribute to strengthening the capacity of the AU, the RECs and the regional mechanisms to prevent solve and manage the effects of armed conflicts. Where possible, contributions should be designed to help strengthen strategic partnership

between the AU and the RECs with the UN. In addition, the FBA is to contribute to strengthening the capacity of regional actors to implement the UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, with a focus on integrating a gender equality perspective, promoting women's equal participation and the ability to meet the security needs of girls and women and boys and men.

The forms used for follow-up are described in the Government's guidelines for strategies within development cooperation and apply to the activities of both Sida and the FBA. Where possible, follow-up of implementation is to be carried out in countries with which Sweden pursues bilateral development cooperation. Sida and the FBA are to report separately to the Government Offices (Ministry for Foreign Affairs). Sida and the FBA are to continuously keep each other, as well as other relevant authorities, informed about the implementation of the strategy.