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Sida Evaluation

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Sida's Regional Strategy for Cooperation with South East Asia, 2005–2009



Sida's Regional Strategy for Cooperation with South East Asia, 2005–2009

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

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Foreword

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide insights into what constitutes the added value of a regional approach to development cooperation in Asia as well as in general terms, and to inform the preparation of the new Swedish regional strategy for Asia 2010–2014. The evaluation includes an analysis of contributions within the areas of democracy and human rights, environmental and sustainable use of natural resources, health (including HIV/AIDS) and research cooperation.

The evaluation concludes that the regional approach in Asia adds value to Swedish development cooperation. It provides Sida with an opportunity to support cooperation areas requiring cross – border action; it leads to complementary development efforts, such as enhancing dialogue and coordination among participating countries; and it leverages Sweden’s comparative advantages to the region, including strengths in environmental techniques, research capacity, public administration, and financial resources.

A key lesson for the future is that partners for regional development cooperation needs to be carefully considered while at the same time ensuring that appropriate regional donor coordination platforms are in place. There are often no formal platforms for regional donor coordination established, and no obvious counterparts to coordinate with. Moreover, alignment with partner country priorities and other donors at the regional level is an area that requires further development.

The evaluation further concludes that improvements in monitoring and evaluation systems would contribute to increased effectiveness of regional development cooperation. Due to weak results frameworks, both at Sida and its partners, and the complexity of regional development cooperation, it has been difficult to identify results at the outcome and impact levels. In this respect, Sida needs to better balance the number of contributions as well as match its resources and capacity for monitoring and evaluation with the complexity of regional development cooperation. The evaluation

elaborates on some methodological approaches for assessing sustainability, effectiveness and results, including a top-down (regional institution building), bottom-up (local/national level capacity building), and holistic (top-down and bottom-up) approach.



Joakim Molander
Director of Sida's Secretariat for Evaluation

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List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AICHR	ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARRPET	Asian Regional Research Programme on Environmental Technology
AIT	Asian Institute of Technology
ASEAN	Association of East Asian Nations
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BCI	Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative
CDIA	Cities Development Initiative for Asia
CEP	Core Environmental Programme
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DAC	Development Assistance Commission
DMC	Development Member Countries
EAPRO	East Asia and Pacific Regional Office
EAS	East Asian Summit
EEPSEA	Economy and Environment Programme for South East Asia
EOC	Environment Operation Centre
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
FAO	Food Agriculture Organisation
FORUM Asia	The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-region
HR	Human Rights
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IFEX	International Freedom of Expression Exchange
IHWMTM	Industrial Hazard Waste Treatment and Management
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KEMI	Swedish Chemicals Agency

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LFA	Logical Framework Analysis
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MFF	Mangroves for the Future
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRC	Mekong River Commission
MSM	Men Sex with Men Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRI	National Resource Institution
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSI	Open Society Institute
PGD	Policy for Global Development
QAG	Quality Assurance Group
RAPIDC	Regional Air Pollution in Developing Countries
RBM	Results Based Management
RCI	Regional Cooperation and Integration Strategy
RECOFTC	Regional Community Forestry Training Centre
RWI	Raoul Wallenberg Institute
SAREC	Sida Department of Research Cooperation
SEA	South East Asia
SEAPA	South East Asian Press Alliance
SEK	Swedish Krona
SENSA	Swedish Environmental Secretariat for South East Asia
SWOT	Strengths – Weaknesses – Opportunities – Threats
SWLF	Solid Waste Landfill Management
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USD	United States Dollar
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UTV	Department for Evaluation
WSP	Water and Sanitation Programme

Executive Summary

Sida's current regional strategy for cooperation with South East Asia expires at the end of 2009. Sida required an evaluation of the current strategy as an input to the development of a new strategy for the period 2010–2014. The preparatory work for the new strategy includes an assessment of results during the previous period, and the evaluation covered by the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this assignment.

The present regional strategy for South East Asia covers the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Timor-Leste (formerly East Timor). It also includes a discussion of future support for Myanmar (Burma). The strategy additionally addresses *regional cooperation in Asia, and South East Asia in particular*. South East Asia is defined as the ASEAN countries plus Timor-Leste. Concern is focused on the poorer countries in the region. Cooperation with Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam is covered in separate country strategies.

The purpose of the evaluation is to clarify what constitutes the added value of a regional approach to development efforts and to inform preparations of the new regional strategy for Asia 2010–2014. The evaluation team considered nineteen contributions in its analysis.

The objectives of the evaluation as stated in the ToR are:

- To assess the regional approach to development efforts in South East Asia, its practical consequences and its degree of effectiveness, and to formulate generally applicable conclusions and lessons learned;
- To assess to what extent the regional strategy 2005–2009 has been implemented in accordance with this strategy, and to what extent this has contributed to the overall objectives laid down in the strategy; and
- To ascertain the planned and achieved outcomes and, when feasible, the impact of the interventions governed by the regional strategy, and to assess their relevance and effectiveness for attaining the objectives of the different interventions and their likely sustainability.

The evaluation included following questions:

- To what extent have the various interventions addressed the objectives mentioned in strategy?
- What objectives or aspects in the strategy have been omitted or where have Sida or cooperation partners failed to identify relevant actions, particularly in relation to gender equality issues?
- To what extent is the integration of a rights perspective and the perspectives of the poor visible in the implementation process and results of the interventions? Has the integration of the two perspectives been related to the mainstreaming of other cross-cutting issues?
- To what extent have Sida during the implementation of the strategy paid attention to coordination between donors on a regional level and alignment to partner country priorities and modes of work?

A considerable part of Swedish development assistance is carried out on the basis of regional cooperation strategies and as regional undertakings, e.g. through support to regional organisations, by supporting governments to jointly attack cross-border problems, and by establishing regional advisers. A number of development related challenges, that include environment and climate related issues, trafficking, and illicit drugs trade; all of which are cross-border in nature, and thus are best addressed at a regional level.

The evaluation team finds that there is significant added value of a regional development cooperation strategy due to the facts that regional cooperation provides the opportunity for Sida to support cooperation on problems requiring cross-border action; leads to a number of complementary development effects such as cooperation at the regional level enhancing dialogue and coordination among the participating countries, and leverages Sweden's comparative advantages to the region (including strengths in environmental techniques, research capacity, public administration, and financial resources).

Sweden also has the capacity and ability to assist regional cooperation on transnational problems, and the political will to mobilise support for the most vulnerable groups in the region. The range of development cooperation partners provides another advantage for Sweden to join partnerships and agreements with other actors with a stronger institutional position in the region, such as ASEAN and the ADB. This assignment has drawn a few lessons to be learned with

regard to ASEAN that deeper cooperation with a newly enhanced ASEAN may provide a means of gaining better legitimacy and effectiveness for regional cooperation contributions. At the same time, it may not be possible at present to collaborate further with ASEAN on issues such as human rights, largely due to the fact that certain SEA countries' position as veto members in the organisation.

The diversity of cooperation partners in the nineteen contributions evaluated in this report suggests that Sida has paid considerable attention to choosing satisfactory alternatives for coordination on the implementation of the strategy 2005–2009. The strategy's alignment to partner country priorities and other donors on the regional level is one area that may require further development, especially with the impact that events such as signing of the ASEAN Charter and the financial crisis have on developing countries in the region.

In contrast to coordination at the regional level, there is well-developed donor coordination at the contribution level. Several donors focus on country-by-country issues, with no regional synthesis. Many donors have predominantly bilateral rather regional strategies and programmes. Sida can find itself in a solitary situation when it needs to discuss regional issues with other donors. There is not any formal platform for regional coordination among donors. Sida does not have any obvious counterparts with whom to coordinate. An important lesson to take note of is that there is an inadequate donor forum on regional cooperation, mainly due to the lack of donor regional cooperation programs in the region, which impacts negatively on the application of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Whilst a general impression of effectiveness is given by the individual contributions, the evaluation team concludes that improvements of monitoring and evaluation systems in the majority of contributions will increase the effectiveness of regional cooperation. A further practical note for increasing effectiveness of regional development assistance is to institute a regional advisor presence that could support follow up processes on regional level objectives. A regional advisor could also assist in taking advantage of synergies between different areas of cooperation, and assist the regional team to identify cooperation partners with the best comparative advantages for a particular regional approach. A regional advisor can also help to increase regional coordination of contributions with a local and national capacity building approach. A regional advisor is more likely to take note of a lesson to be learned that regional cooperation

approaches appear to change during implementation phases as strategies develop/adapt to realities in the region.

Furthermore, a lesson to be learned is that a methodological system for approaches to regional development cooperation could best be achieved by basing it on how the individual contribution approaches its regional cooperation objectives. Another lesson to be learned is it may be useful for Sida to assess sustainability, effectiveness and results of a top-down (regional institution building) versus a bottom-up (local/national level capacity building), or a holistic (top-down and bottom-up) approach.

The evaluation team concludes that the current regional strategy and subsequent objectives have been effective with regards to development cooperation with South East Asia. A lesson to be learned is that to meet the objective of the regional development cooperation, both the regional approach of development cooperation and the cooperation partner must be carefully considered.

The evaluation team has not observed any obvious cases of where Sida or cooperation partners failed to identify relevant actions, particularly in relation to gender equality issues. A majority of the 19 contributions had taken gender equality issues into account. Only four contributions had not taken a gender perspective into account, and lacked a policy to do so. Further research and analysis would be required to better assess how Sida or cooperation partners have acted to ensure a gender perspective.

The visibility in the implementation process and results of the integration of a rights perspective and the perspectives of the poor is not obvious. Contributions within the area of human rights and democracy are often more linked with the rights perspective. While almost all of the contributions claim to be dealing with poverty, it is unclear and would require in-depth analysis to conclude how the contributions specifically address the perspectives of poor in the implementation process and in the reporting of results.

A regional approach to development cooperation for South East Asia is regarded by the evaluation team as a viable method for achieving the objectives that Sida outlines in its current strategy. Practically, the cooperation between Sida and the region has led to support for a number of relatively large contributions that have mostly reported outcomes in their thematic area. A lesson to be learned is the importance for Sida to balance the number of contributions with its ability and resources to manage a multifaceted project portfolio.

The capacity in managing, monitoring and evaluation has to match the complexity of regional development cooperation.

For the development of the future strategy, this evaluation recommends that:

- Sida's Regional Team for Asia continues to support collective action problems through a regional approach and seek solutions to regional problems by institutionalising regional cooperation.
- A regional advisor presence in the region to be considered.
- Sida build on Sweden's comparative advantages that complement present and near future concerns of the region such as human rights and environment and natural resources management, and thus continue to focus regional cooperation on the thematic areas presented in the current regional strategy.
- The development of a follow up and analysis function in the region, that provides feedback on long-term programme achievements, be undertaken by Sida and the relevant Regional Team.

In particular and based on the analysis on monitoring and evaluation, a new regional cooperation strategy with South East Asia should be supported by:

- Clear and applicable indicators of outcome and impact that are developed both by Sida's Regional Teams in cooperation with contribution partners.
- Specific gender indicators of outcomes that are desired and developed by Sida for all regional contributions.
- Regional contribution monitoring and evaluation systems possibly operated by a regional advisor or by the Sida Regional Team for Asia to assess individual contributions. These systems should include "process" indicators to assess the degree of ownership, the connection of the contribution to a greater context, and the presence of internal monitoring systems.

Acknowledgements

The draft version of this report was reviewed by a well-equipped quality assurance group. The team members provided constructive and timely comments, for which the consultants are grateful.

The bulk of data for this report was graciously supplied by Sida contribution representatives located both in South East Asia and Sweden. The consultants thank all of those interviewed for their time and candid conversations. We particularly thank those interviewees who provided follow up information via email.

The consultants are grateful for the logistical support provided by SENSEA during the field visit in Bangkok. Staff members at Stockholm Policy Group are especially acknowledged for their backstopping support, as well as analytical and content suggestions.

1 Introduction

1.1 RATIONALE, PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The current regional strategy¹ for cooperation with South East Asia expires at the end of 2009 and Sida needs an evaluation of the current strategy as an input to the work on a new strategy for the period 2010–2014. The preparatory work for the new strategy includes an assessment of results during the previous period, and the evaluation covered by the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this assignment.

The purpose of the evaluation is to clarify what constitutes the added value of a regional approach to development efforts and to inform preparations of the new regional strategy for Asia 2010–2014.

The objectives of the evaluation as laid out in the ToR are:

- 1 To assess the regional approach to development efforts in South East Asia, its practical consequences and its degree of effectiveness, and to formulate generally applicable conclusions and lessons learned;
- 2 To assess to what extent the regional strategy 2005–2009 has been implemented in accordance with this strategy, and to what extent this has contributed to the overall objectives laid down in the strategy; and
- 3 To ascertain the planned and achieved outcomes and, when feasible, the impact of the interventions governed by the regional strategy, and to assess their relevance and effectiveness for attaining the objectives of the different interventions and their likely sustainability.

1.2 THE TEAM OF CONSULTANTS

The team of consultants was comprised of Dr. Peter Winai, team leader, Dr. Fiona Rotberg, and Mr. Lam Socheat, local consultant. The team has been supported by a quality assurance group: Dr. Örjan Sjöberg, Stockholm School of Economics, Dr. Nat Colletta, New College of Florida, and Mr. Thomas Parks, The Asia Foundation, Bangkok. The role of the quality assurance group (QAG) has

¹ The strategy document is available at:
<http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/04/80/68/106c2a75.pdf>.

been to comment on methodology and to review the draft report for consistency, clarity and responsiveness to the ToR. The team was further supported by Ben Rhee, Nicklas Svensson and Jens Samuelsson Schjörlien at Stockholm Policy Group. The Stockholm Consortium, consisting of Gränsorganisationer AB and Sthlm Policy Group AB, carried out the assignment.

1.3 APPROACH

The evaluation contains four phases:

Phase 1: Initiation

- Dialogue with The Regional Team for Asia, Sida's Department for Evaluation (UTV), concerning inter alia principles for selection of contributions for further study.
- Selection of contributions and preparatory desk study of selected contributions. Please see below for further elaboration on the principles for selection of the contributions.
- Development of initial working hypotheses. The hypotheses are presented in detail below.
- Preparation and writing of the Inception Report.
(Please refer to Appendix 2, Inception Report.)

Phase 2: Data Collection

- Collection and review of relevant documentation.
- Field visits to Manila, Vientiane, and Bangkok.
- Interviews of representatives for the selected contributions.
- Interviews with representatives of other donors and regional organisations, and responsible officers at Sida and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.
(Please refer to Appendix 4 for a list of interviewees.)

Phase 3: Analysis

- Analysis of selected contributions, based on interviews and available documentation.
- Development of hypotheses investigated.
- Review and application of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation quality standards. The analysis of the contributions concentrated on the value of the contributions in relation to the Swedish strategy for regional cooperation:
 - Outcomes in relation to the goals specified in the strategy,
 - Application of monitoring and evaluation systems,

- Effectiveness, relevance and sustainability in relation to regional strategic objectives, and
- General adherence to principles expressed in the regional strategy for cooperation.
- Comparison of the individual contributions and analysis of the four regional approaches, based on self-evaluations conducted by the interviewees (the four different approaches were pre-defined, and are outlined further below).

Phase 4: Report Writing

- Write a draft report based on findings from the analysis.
- Write a final draft based on further analysis, incorporation of comments to the draft report provided by the QAG and the Sida team.

Principles for selection of Sida contributions to analyse

From a gross list of contributions, based on criteria provided by Sida, a net list was compiled. The selection criteria were the following:

- 1 Type of cooperation partner
 - a Civil society organisation
 - b United Nations
 - c Inter-regional organisation (including Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Mekong Commission)
 - d Swedish organisation: Governmental agency, Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)
 - e Academic organisation
- 2 Cooperation area
 - a Democracy and human rights (priority 1)
 - b Environment and sustainable use of natural resources (priority 1)
 - c Health (including HIV/AIDS) (priority 2)
 - d Research cooperation (priority 2)
- 3 Probable future cooperation partner
- 4 Region
 - a South East Asia (priority 1)
 - b South Asia (priority 2)
- 5 Volume

The contributions selected are listed in Appendix 3. As determined, the contribution partners range from United Nations (UN) organisations to inter-regional organisations, government organisations and non-governmental organisations. The contributions represent different cooperation areas: Health (2), Human Rights and Democratic Governance (4), Natural resources and Environment (11) and Research Cooperation (2). They also demonstrate a range of different approaches for regional cooperation.

The ToR asked the Evaluation Team (ET) to take into account four main approaches to regional cooperation: (a) classic regional approach, (b) regional cooperation, (c) regional approach to national problems, and (d) multi-country approach. Difficulties with the application of the four categories were discussed with Sida at the inception stage. It was however agreed with Sida that the categories would be used as a means of observation during the fieldwork, with the noted difficulties in mind.

The categories/the four approaches were discussed with representatives of each contribution. Representatives for all of the selected contributions were then asked to self-assess which approach(es) were applicable to their contribution. The consultants then provided their own assessment for each contribution and analysed the overall results.

Although self assessment of the contributions could be perceived as leading to biased answers from the representatives, the consultants discussed the approaches and asked for the assessment in a factual manner, leading to honest and non biased answers: The consultants were never made aware that one approach could be viewed as favourable over another. It should be pointed out, however, that the contribution representatives considered the four approaches to be unclear, in terms of emphasis and scope, and overlapping in content.

In the inception phase it was discussed whether the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) tool could be applied to summarize strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches. Both the consultants and Sida were hesitant about the feasibility of the tool. Due to the difficulties in defining the actual content and scope of the approaches and thus to help give an assembled overview of the findings, the consultants decided to abstain from applying it.

1.4 METHODOLOGICAL COMMENTS

Scope and methodological constraints of the assignment

The assignment was initiated on August 13, 2009 with an up-start meeting with Sida (the Regional Team for Asia) and representatives from the evaluation team (ET). An inception report was submitted on September 1 and discussed with Sida's regional Team for Asia and Sida's Department for Evaluation on September 3. Representatives from the ET departed for the fieldwork on September 5 and conducted fieldwork in the Philippines September 6–9, in Laos September 9–11 and in Thailand September 14–18. The ET submitted a draft report to Sida on October 14 and November 11. The ET and Sida's regional Team for Asia and Sida's Department for Evaluation met on November 17 to discuss the second draft version. The ET submitted the second draft report to Sida on December 1, 2009 and the final draft on December 22, 2009.

The evaluation of the regional strategy for cooperation with South East Asia 2005–2009 is the main focus of the evaluation. An evaluation is an extensive process and requires a significant amount of time and resources. The ET stresses therefore that the assessment of Objective 3 in the ToR is not an evaluation of each of the 19 contributions, but rather a review of these contributions. The ET has reviewed outcomes and impacts, relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of each contribution on the basis of organisational and project documents, and interview with representative(s) from the contribution partner. These are insufficient sources for an evaluation of a contribution. The ET has therefore refrained from making any strong conclusions about the individual contributions. The ET can, based on observations, make conclusions and recommendations for future assessments, which should include in-depth analysis or evaluation of individual contributions.

The thrust is on evaluation of outcomes of the “project stock” as a whole in relation to the regional strategic objectives. The purpose of the evaluation is to clarify what constitutes the added value of a regional approach. Thus the focus is on the totality of the cooperation, not on individual contributions. Furthermore, the objectives are to assess the regional approach to developments efforts, and to assess to what extent this has contributed to the overall objectives laid down in the strategy.

The report uses thematic areas instead of the regional approaches as a model for describing what and how the regional approaches have added value. The reason for this method is that the assignment focuses on the objectives of each thematic area of the regional strategy with South East Asia.

2 Context

A considerable part of Swedish development assistance to South East Asia is carried out on the basis of a regional cooperation strategy, e.g. through support to regional organisations, by supporting governments to jointly attack cross-border problems, and by establishing regional advisers. A number of development related problems, e.g. environment and climate, trafficking, and illicit drugs trade. This section presents the current economic, environmental, socio-political, and human rights contexts in South East Asia that are relevant to Sida's development of a new regional strategy. This section also provides an analysis of the relevance of the current strategy, given the current trends in the region.

2.1 THE CURRENT CONTEXT IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

South East Asia is one of the world's most diverse social and economic regions. Widely varying socio-economic development and living standards is a feature of the region, which has been further complicated by the recent global recession that has slowed the gains in growth achieved after the Asian Crisis in 1997 and 1998.

The recession has had a broad-ranging and significant impact on South East Asian poverty reduction goals, with the poorest and vulnerable suffering the most. In many parts of the region, low and middle-income earners were still recovering from the oil and food price rises of 2008 when the financial crisis occurred. The World Bank² reports that real economic growth in the region has slowed from a high of 11.4% in 2007 to just 5.3% in 2009. Many of the poorest countries in South-East Asia have similar vulnerabilities with regards to their economies and have thus been further hit by the current downturn. As of 2009, approximately 185 million people in Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) live below the \$2 a day poverty line.³

2 World Bank, World Bank East Asia and the Pacific, www.worldbank.org, 2009, accessed November 20, 2009.

3 ASEAN, *Fourth ASEAN State of the Environment Report*, Jakarta: ASEAN, 2009, p. 2.

An Asian Development Bank (ADB) study⁴ recently concluded that South East Asia is one of the most vulnerable developing regions to projected climate change impacts. Factors such as long and highly urbanised coastlines, a tropical environment, and the economic and social characteristics present in the region increase the potential impacts of climate change on local populations.⁵ Climate change will have a significant impact on the many people living by rivers and deltas in the region as the number of peak river discharges grows.⁶

The World Bank reported that the above factors combined with general environmental degradation caused by rapid industrialisation in South East Asia will continue to increase pressure on land, water, forests, and the region's ecosystems in general.⁷ This will have a direct effect on the poor in the region, many of whom are fishers or farm labourers who depend on these resources and ecosystems for their livelihood and survival. For example the Commission on Climate Change and Development⁸ noted that coral reefs provide fisheries, tourism and local shore protection to coastal communities in South East Asia. Furthermore, coral reefs have an estimated value of approximately 13 billion United States dollars to the regional economy.⁹ Air and water pollution, clearing of forests, and rapid urbanisation will directly affect the poor's resilience to adapt and mitigate environmental changes. Since 2005, significant environmental disasters have also hit South East Asia, revealing the vulnerability of some countries in the region to extreme climate events. Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar alone resulted in approximately 140,000 deaths in 2008,¹⁰ illustrating a need to strengthen the capacity of countries in the region to respond to similar disasters.

The political environment at the national level in South East Asia continues to retain a highly diverse character, though worryingly the trend towards democratisation experienced since the 1990's has faced several challenges since 2005. The lack of economic develop-

4 Asian Development Bank (ADB), *The Economics of Climate Change in South East Asia: A Regional Review*, Philippines: ADB, 2009, p. 5.

5 Ibid., p. 9.

6 Ibid.

7 Florian Kitt and Flore de Preneuf (eds.), *A Climate for Change in East Asia and the Pacific*, Washington: World Bank, 2009, p. 5.

8 Commission on Climate Change and Development, *Closing the Gaps*, Stockholm: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009, p. 52.

9 Kitt and de Preneuf, *A Climate for Change in East Asia and the Pacific*, 2009, p. 5.

10 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Myanmar: What if another Cyclone Nargis comes?' www.irinnews.org, September 17, 2009.

ment has been used by various governments in the past as an argument for authoritarian and semi-authoritarian governments in the region and could become a key factor in the midst of the global financial crisis.¹¹ Whilst some countries such as Indonesia continue to consolidate their democracy begun after Suharto's fall at the end of 1998, other countries have displayed trends towards semi-authoritarian or authoritarian political systems. Myanmar's violent dispersal of peaceful demonstrations during the 'Saffron Revolution' September 2007, the extension of the house arrest of democracy champion Aung San Suu Kyi in 2009¹² and Thailand's military coup in 2006 that forced the democratically elected President Shinawatra into exile, can all be considered as examples of this trend.

Despite these challenges, there is strong evidence to suggest that democracy is still an established part of life in the region and that opportunities exist to support democratic progress. Democracy continues to receive strong support from the public; the role of civil society has become an established part of Asian life, and there has been a renewed commitment to regional dialogue and democratic principles through key regional institutions with the successful negotiation of ASEAN's Charter in 2007.¹³

Both internal and border conflicts have also been a destabilising influence to security in the region since 2006. Security situations such as the breakdown in peace talks on Mindanao in early 2009, the continuing conflict in Southern Thailand, and the recent Thai-Cambodian border dispute affect the overall stability in the region. The security architecture in the region has however experienced some positive news, such as the proposal for the Political-Security Community Blueprint in March 2009 by the ASEAN, which envisages cooperation by ASEAN members in establishing comprehensive security in the region.

Corruption is an issue that has not been removed from South East Asia despite more acceptance and coordination among donors and countries in the region regarding policy and laws to alleviate its damaging effects. The Freedom House¹⁴ had for example downgraded the Philippines from 'free' to 'partly free' status after high-

11 R. Sukma, *Democracy in Development: Global Consultations on the EU's Role in Democracy Building*, Stockholm: International IDEA, 2009, p.107.

12 Amnesty International, *Harsh Sentences for Myanmar Dissidents*, www.amnesty.org, November, 13, 2008.

13 Sukma, *Democracy in Development: Global Consultations on the EU's Role in Democracy Building*, 2009, pps. 107–108.

14 Freedom House, *Freedom in the World*, www.freedomhouse.org, 2008.

level corruption allegations in 2005. Thailand's ex-Prime Minister Shinawatra was accused of corruption and abuse of power before his exile in 2006.

The fight against the spread of HIV and AIDS in South East Asia has also been uneven. In some countries, such as Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar, there have been positive trends in reversing the epidemic. In both Indonesia's Papua province and Vietnam, the number of those living with AIDS has grown. As well as heterosexual sex, the main modes of transmission include most-at-risk groups such as commercial sex workers, male-male sex users, and injecting drug users.¹⁵

Addressing the gender gap in South East Asia has been one of the major successes since 2006. In primary, secondary, and tertiary education, females are now evenly represented.¹⁶ There has also been a rise in women sitting in South East Asian parliaments and local parties, from 10% in 2000 to 17% in 2009.¹⁷ The gender gap continues however to be an issue with regard to non-agricultural labour where women represent just 37% of the work force, the same level as in 2000. Women are also over represented in vulnerable sectors that may be affected in the current global economic crisis.¹⁸

Trafficking of human beings is a major social issue in the region according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). An estimated 200,000 to 450,000 people annually are trafficked illegally from and within South East Asia, a large majority of which comes from or to the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS).¹⁹ A lack of specific human rights-based legislation on both human trafficking and exploitation of women and children has contributed to the problem.²⁰

ASEAN's new Charter has the potential to aid the establishment of a regional human rights mechanism. Asia is the only continent not to have such a regional mechanism in place. The Office of the High

15 UNAIDS, *2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic*, Switzerland: UNAIDS, 2008, pps. 48–51.

16 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*, New York: UNDESA 2009, pps. 18–23.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 IOM, *Migration in South East Asia*, www.iom-seasia.org, 2009, accessed November 18, 2009.

20 Office of High Commissioner in Human Rights (OHCHR), *South East Asia Regional Office (2008–2009): Human Rights Context*, Bangkok: OHCHR, www.ohshr.org, 2009, accessed November 17, 2009.

Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has indicated that along with education and capacity building in human rights issues, one of the main priorities for South East Asia in 2008 and 2009 will be to lobby the governments in the region for the regional human rights body.²¹ In addition to trafficking, regional issues such as impunity, protection of minority and indigenous rights, and internally displaced people and refugees are also human rights issues that continue to be problematic.²²

Regional cooperation in general has increased with the signing of ASEAN's Charter in November 2007. Despite the continued significance of the principle of non-intervention and state sovereignty that is an obstacle to strengthened integration²³, agreements such as the Political and Security Community Blueprint and the Concord II show that there are some positive trends taking place. ASEAN, regional cooperation bodies such as the Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC) and the East Asian Summit (EAS) can all be considered as key institutional elements of South East Asia's regional architecture.

2.2 THE STRATEGY FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

The present regional strategy for South East Asia²⁴ covers the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Timor-Leste (formerly East Timor). It also includes a discussion of future support for Myanmar (Burma). The strategy additionally addresses *regional cooperation in Asia, and South East Asia in particular*. South East Asia is defined as the ASEAN countries plus Timor-Leste. Concern is focused on the poorer countries in the region. Cooperation with Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam is covered in separate country strategies.

The current strategy states that regional cooperation should either initiate interventions or form part of initiatives pursued by the countries of the region, regional organisations or donors, with a view to enhancing regional integration and collaboration. Furthermore, the strategy clearly acknowledges that development cooperation

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Sukma, *Democracy in Development: Global Consultations on the EU's Role in Democracy Building*, 2009, p. 107.

24 Sida, *Strategy for development Cooperation with Parts of South East Asia, January 2005–December 2009*, Stockholm: Sida, 2005.

shall be based on a rights perspective and the perspective of the poor on development. The following are the objectives and description of areas that were given priority under the 2005–2009 strategy for regional cooperation in South East Asia, as presented in the strategy.

Environment and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

Objective: to help promote sustainable development and better management of existing natural resources.

Cooperation in the environmental sphere should involve a number of carefully selected strategic interventions designed to supplement bilateral cooperation. Environmental cooperation in South-East Asia should have three aims: Strengthen institutional capacity to deal with environmental issues, strengthen capacity of urban development to deal with environmental issues, strengthen implementation and enforcement of environmental protection in the Mekong River region.

Democracy and Human Rights

Objective: to promote the development of a democratic culture and increased respect for human rights.

As well as encouraging cooperation and exchanges of experience by supplementing or supporting national level initiatives, the following areas were identified as being particularly relevant to a regional approach: Promotion of democratic culture and development based on human rights, women and children's rights, the rights of ethnic minorities, trafficking in human beings, and promotion of cultural diversity and dialogue between cultures.

HIV/AIDS

Objective: to help reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS in South East Asia and mitigate the effects of the epidemic.

Sweden will extend coordinated support for a limited number of strategic regional programmes implemented by multilateral organisations, international NGOs and regional networks in civil society. The primary focus of activity in South East Asia is on the Mekong region. Greater priority will be given to coordinated dialogue on HIV/AIDS problems in the region, and potential synergies between bilateral and regional programmes will be sought.

Activities pursued within the programmes should be aimed primarily at preventing the spread of the epidemic. HIV/AIDS interventions should take drug-related and intravenous drug abuse problems into account.

Research Cooperation

Objective: to help strengthen research capacity, particularly in the poorer countries of the region, and generate new knowledge and expertise of considerable relevance to poverty reduction.

The sustainable use of natural resources and the environment will continue to receive priority in the context of regional research cooperation in Asia. Here, where research efforts and other forms of development assistance can interact, the prospects for a broad-based initiative on the environmental front are encouraging. The possibility of extending research cooperation to areas such as climate change, energy scenarios, sustainable urban development, etc. should be carefully examined, in collaboration with institutes such as the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT). Sweden should also be open to proposals from established institutions regarding regional research cooperation between the Mekong countries. The purpose of supporting regional research networks is to promote ownership and/or coordinating capacity in the region.

Swedish Research Links has achieved promising results *inter alia* in connection with research cooperation with Vietnam and Laos. There should be scope for widening its area of operations and so help strengthen Sweden's relations with the countries of the region. A condition of increased support is a base in established, functioning institutions in the region and continued interest in cooperation on the part of Swedish research councils.

Other Areas of Cooperation

A total of five further areas for cooperation are also outlined in the current Strategy. The first involves increasing support for the ADB's Greater Mekong Subregion Programme in two of its technical areas: Environment and Infrastructure. The second area is conflict and humanitarian crisis prevention, where funds have been set aside for United Nations (UN) organisations and cooperation partners to assist in both conflict prevention measures and humanitarian operations support when an 'appeal' is received from the UN.

The other three areas involve supporting international trade development through both the European Union and specific capacity development in the poorest of the region's countries, to assist in epidemic prevention where a Swedish intervention would have a comparative advantage, and to support regional initiatives on anti-corruption measures and policy.

2.3 ANALYSIS OF THE STRATEGY'S RELEVANCE

As stated in the regional strategy, it should:

‘...initiate interventions or form part of initiatives pursued by all the countries of the region, regional organisations or donors, with a view to enhancing regional integration and collaboration.’

This cooperation method would appear to be a logical way of gaining legitimacy, driving regional integration and enhancing cross-learning possibilities. The history of South East Asian regionalism in the post-colonial period has been one of striving for consensus rather than allowing one state or actor to lead regional initiatives.

Identifying and contributing to interventions that are pursued by all countries continues to be a good strategy for a small actor such as Sweden in the region.

However, a number of reservations should also be made regarding the strategy's relevance. Firstly, it is not always possible to gain support from all countries regarding initiatives that are needed in the region. Myanmar's position on democracy and human rights provides a case in point. The military junta has so far proved itself able to completely ignore both the international and regional community with regards to ensuring basic levels of human security, with the most extreme example being the refusal to accept international aid in the immediate weeks following the devastation of Cyclone Nargis in 2008.

Thus though an initiative may not be pursued strictly by ‘all’ countries in the region, it may be relevant to a clear majority. Myanmar's recalcitrance in allowing international aid to flow to the most vulnerable people following Nargis' humanitarian crisis did provide an opportunity for the other states in the region, through the regional mechanism of ASEAN, to rally together in order to place peer pressure on Myanmar into accepting aid; providing a clear case of ‘enhancing’ regional collaboration.

Secondly, it is uncertain that an intervention solely initiated by donors would succeed if not supported by the countries of the region. Looking at the current context in South East Asia, it is necessary to reflect on whether the current global economic crisis has significantly changed the priorities of countries in the region. Fair and equitable economic development is one of the cornerstones of creating regional trust and legitimacy for cooperation between countries and

donors in the region. With a fall in economic growth that affects the most vulnerable, the poorest of the region's countries, such as Cambodia and Laos', priorities may well shift. If donors are not in place to be aware of the dynamic situation in the region and consequently neglect the region's main priority, it may lead to a lack of trust and legitimacy in both the donor relationship and regional cooperation in general.

It is in these circumstances that closer relations to the various regional institutions and bodies where South East Asian nations are represented provide one way of maintaining relevance in regional development cooperation. A regional body such as ASEAN that makes decisions on the basis of absolute consensus ensures that the provision of 'all countries in the region' can truly be fulfilled. To ensure the relevance of Sweden's strategy for the coming years given the current context in South East Asia, the emphasis for entering regional cooperation initiatives may be best served by acknowledging and building upon those initiatives pursued by regional organisations such as the ADB, ASEAN, APEC and the EAS.

As to the relevance of the objective areas themselves, it is clear that environmental sustainability remains highly relevant regarding the present state of the environment in the region and will only become more so with expected increases in climate related stresses in the coming years. As a majority of the people in South East Asia live in or near the region's coasts, and deltas (approximately 80%)²⁵, particularly within the Mekong River Sub-region, environment and climate change initiatives are essential to the well-being of the population and environment in the region. Dealing with natural resources that are being threatened by change and development, strengthening the capacity to cope with the continuing rapid urbanisation, and addressing complex issues related to resources and environmental protection in the GMS, especially with regards to development for rural poor are areas where Sweden has displayed it has a comparative advantage: political will, availability of funding, technical knowledge, research and development capacity to name a few. To retain its relevance on this objective, Sweden as a donor in the region will need to ensure that climate change adaptation can be supported where assistance is needed, and that decision-makers are provided with the resources to follow-through with mitigation strate-

25 ADB, *The Economics of Climate Change in South East Asia: A Regional Review*, 2009, p. 9.

gies. Sweden should also continue to build capacity in local, national and regional institutions to manage ecosystems and natural resources such as forests and coral reefs that span national boundaries, and provide livelihoods for the region's poor.

Encouragingly, it should be noted that all of the current areas of cooperation under this thematic area were covered in a list of ten priorities for the region given in the Fourth ASEAN State of the Environment Report²⁶ published this year.

Focus on democracy and human rights issues as part of Sida's strategy for the region also continues to be of relevance. With the current context of the global financial crisis, it is necessary to consider whether the democratic trends in the region achieved over the past decade may be reversed by a perceived need for greater economic development rather than securing political freedoms. With only Indonesia in the region currently given 'free' status by the latest Freedom House report²⁷ there are many highly relevant issues on the political, social and cultural agenda that need to be addressed by Sida's strategy towards the region. The proper forum for this in a regional sense needs to be further outlined and discussed, as the current objective could fall into national contribution approaches. Supporting and supplementing regional networks has so far been used to strengthen and coordinate civil society and public support on the regional level, generally with the aim to increasing capacity in national level organisations.

Though regional cooperation on human rights following the ASEAN Charter has been boosted by the recently established ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), it is unlikely to wield any form of power whilst authoritarian countries like Myanmar hold a veto power in the Commission. Efforts to strengthen its institutional position and effectiveness may help to promote a strong regional mechanism to promote human rights, but the relevance of civil society organisations and national level Human Rights Commissions will likely continue to be an effective way of achieving the objective of promoting democratic culture and respect for human rights in the next few years.

26 ASEAN, *Fourth ASEAN State of the Environment Report*, 2009, p. 23.

27 Freedom House, *Freedom in the World*, 2008.

Helping to reduce the spread, as well as to mitigate against the effects, of the HIV/AIDS epidemic as an objective of interventions is also relevant to the current context in South East Asia. UNAIDS has identified the most-at-risk groups in the region: male-male sex, sex workers and injecting drug-users²⁸. Mother to child transmission is also still highly relevant. The current Sida strategy on HIV/AIDS focuses on support to strategic regional programmes, primarily in the GMS and priority given to coordinated dialogue on problems and synergies between regional programmes. The only dissonance between the current Sida strategy and the current trends in HIV/AIDS in the region can be found in the priority focus on drug abuse and drug-related problems. Whilst this group is one of the three most-at-risk groups, Sweden's comparative advantage with this specific group is not clear. It would be more relevant to mainstream all three of the most-at-risk groups into HIV/AIDS interventions.

A final note to be made is that the global recession may affect international and domestic funding for HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention. Maintaining adequate funding in the region is vital to help stop further spread of the epidemic in both the region and globally. Dialogue with regional partners, other donors and developing countries on their needs should be kept up to date in order to follow developments on this objective.

As long as the management of natural resources and climate change remain an objective of Sida initiatives in South East Asia, supporting research cooperation in environmental sustainability will be of relevance as an indirect but complementary method of achieving the first objective. In this area in particular, Sweden has a good comparative advantage as one of the world's leading environmental technology researchers. Furthermore, the relevance of these strategic priorities is reflected at the regional level in the EU's 'Strategic Framework for International Science and Communication' with ASEAN.²⁹ ASEAN noted in a meeting with the European Union (EU), in May 2009, that the priority thematic areas for addressing key global challenges with bi-regional cooperation in research are the following: tackling climate change, ensuring energy, food and water security and combating infectious diseases.³⁰

28 UNAIDS 2008, p. 30.

29 European Commission, *Strategic Framework for International Science and Communication: Communication from the Commission to the Council and the Parliament*, Brussels: European Commission, 2009.

30 Ibid.

Strengthening the research capacity amongst the poorer countries and generating new knowledge and expertise for poverty reduction remains relevant to both the Millennium Development Goals and a desire in the region for stronger capacity in this area.

3 The Added Value of Regional Development Cooperation

3.1 A FUNCTION OF EFFECTIVENESS

Regional development cooperation adds value to achieving the objectives identified in the current in a number of ways. Firstly, the objectives relate to cross-boundary, transnational and regional problems, requiring collective action rather than simply dealing with problems by individual country strategies. Collective action is needed, as the problems are not defined by the physical boundaries of states. The added value of collective action is that it creates a space for dialogue and facilitation between stakeholders in the cooperation process and provides incentives to abide by the agreements that are made.

Secondly, regional cooperation in one objective area can add value by contributing to complementary positive effects in other objective areas. For example, strengthening research capacity to aid poverty reduction can lead to discoveries in how to control communicable diseases, protect regional natural resources and help stabilise regional economies. Just so, improving environmental management can contribute to better regional health, provide economic opportunities such as tourism, and increase overall security.

Benefits and incentives from regional cooperation can also be extrapolated to the global level. Consider the objective of environment and natural resource management: By supporting interventions that will lead to reductions in carbon dioxide emissions in the region, global carbon dioxide levels can be reduced. Consider the effect of reducing the spread of AIDS in the region, which would not only create better security, health and economic conditions for the people of South East Asia, but also achieve a global reduction in the risk of HIV/AIDS spreading to other continents.

Some actors, such as the World Bank, have avoided regional development cooperation, instead preferring to deal with a 'more efficient' donor-to-country actor programme. The so-called 'coordination problem' is invoked, where an increase in stakeholders is said to increase the complexity, costs and risks of negotiations on regional interventions. The other main issue often cited by those who favour bilateral approaches is the 'free-rider' principle, where distrust for a

regional initiative is created by that regional cooperation will subsidise another state's development.

Whilst an awareness of these issues is important, significant benefits remain to both the individual and regional levels with regional development cooperation. Fostering cross-learning of best-practices and innovation at a local level, and the overall benefit of a strengthened regional cooperation of key sectors of regional public goods provision, are important factors in assessing the added value of Sida's strategy in the South East Asian region.

Sweden and other actors' comparative advantage

What are the comparative advantages of both Sweden and the regional partners that add value to regional development cooperation? Looking at the objectives that Sida has outlined in the current strategy, Sweden appears to have a comparative advantage in the environment and natural resources arena. Sweden has a wealth of knowledge, experience, human resources, manufacturing expertise, funding and political will to support an objective that is based on improving environmental and natural resources management and climate change impacts. These same advantages support Sweden's objective on enhancing Research Cooperation in environmental management. In terms of focusing on HIV/AIDS, Sweden has an ability to fund the primary regional actors working in the region. Other comparative advantages in this area include a sophisticated and well-developed medical research capacity and several well-known global pharmaceutical companies.

Sweden has a well-respected and competent capacity in the areas of human rights (HR) and democracy. Comparative advantages include a functioning public administration, a number of democratic institutions and organisations, a capacity to assist in the education and building of human rights and democratic institutions, organisations, networks and individuals, and the political will to see that these principles are supported globally.

It is important to realise, however, that Sweden as a relatively small donor in the region needs to seek cooperation with regional partners who are better placed to achieve objectives in regional development cooperation: Cooperation would lead to increased donor effectiveness. Other actors that have comparative advantages in supplying development cooperation at the regional level include: Regional development banks such as ADB; regional trade pacts (ASEAN in January 2010); Multilaterals such as UNAIDS; Net-

works (ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network); Partnerships (Global Water Partnerships South East Asia); charitable foundations (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation); nongovernmental organisations (Red Cross); and nation-based organisations (National Human Rights Commissions). One last category includes the other national and regional donors, such as United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the EU, working in the region.

In the context of Sweden's comparative advantages, it is important to understand the dynamic of donor coordination. As the ToR raised the question "... to what extent has Sida during the implementation of the strategy paid attention to coordination between donors on a regional level and alignment to partner country priorities and modes of work", the ET understands that many donors think the donor coordination in the region can be improved. In interviews with ADB, Asia Foundation, AusAID, USAID and the World Bank, the ET noted that there is a sense of inadequate regional forums for donors to coordinate and collaborate within their regional programmes. Many donors have predominantly bilateral rather than regional strategies and programmes. Sida can find itself in a solitary situation when it needs to discuss regional issues with other donors. One interviewee said that "Sida would not know who to talk to, there is no forum to do so. There are forums at the country level. Generally, donor harmonisation under the Paris Principles is terrible."

The donors that do have regional programmes often have added presence in the countries of the region. USAID, for example, has a 'regional hub', but does not focus on regional issues. It focuses instead on country-by-country issues, with no regional synthesis. AusAID has bilateral, sub-regional and regional programmes in South East Asia. As such, AusAID has country and sub-regional strategies. AusAID finds it difficult to coordinate with the large number of stakeholders and many diverse thematic areas.³¹ The World Bank does not use a traditional 'strategy' for cooperation. It uses instead a 'hub' in, for example, the area of good governance to analyse developments, and to inform the national offices about important and strategic changes.³²

31 Including bilateral oversight, management of investments with banks, transport, energy sector development, water resources management, and HIV harm reduction.

32 The hub is an internal advisory body.

Thus, due to the lack of a platform for coordination among donors at a regional level it seems that Sida has not had any counterparts with whom to coordinate. Furthermore, it is a challenge for a donor to align a regional development cooperation strategy and development efforts to partner country's priorities, since a country's priorities are often set nationally and developed in a national strategy; a regional development strategy needs to align with many different national development strategies simultaneously. In contrast to coordination at the regional level, the ET notes that there is well-developed donor coordination at the contribution level.

In the same context of Sweden's comparative advantages, it is also important to mention actor driven cooperation as a new form of Swedish development cooperation. This mode of co-operation has not yet been registered and reflected in the 19 contributions.

Actor driven cooperation could in the future be devised around contributions that address shared environmental and climate change related issues. The International Union for Conservation of Nature Mangroves for the Future IUCN MFF contribution appears to be a likely partner as it coordinates regional and national actors to address ecosystem management issues, issues that will become increasingly important to development efforts in the region in the near future. International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and the Wetlands Alliance are also actors that address cross-boundary and natural resource management issues and could be considered as future actor driven cooperation partners.

Phase of an intervention

The consecutive phases of a project/programme cycle often lead to differing levels of effectiveness of interventions. At the same time, different regional development approaches can be applied to different phases of a project to add value to the overall result and effectiveness of an intervention. Whether an intervention is in the planning or implementation phases can have consequences for both the donor and the cooperation partner in the region. Regional cooperation interventions may have various goals or outcomes to be achieved, through different mechanisms, such as the establishment of a network or creating institutional frameworks for the region.

For example, environmental interventions that focus on coastal and marine ecosystem management may find that their goals shift when natural disasters such as Cyclone Nargis or the Tsunami in 2004 shift priorities of a project towards humanitarian relief, poverty

alleviation or spreading epidemics. The ADB HIV/AIDS fund is currently mainstreaming an HIV/AIDS perspective into the programmatic actions of the organisation. Once successfully completed and monitoring and evaluation systems are set in place in order to assess compliance with the mainstreaming, the target of that particular intervention will change.

It is also important to consider what phase the cooperation partner is in. Consider for example the newly instituted ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). This intergovernmental mechanism for addressing human rights issues would appear to be a natural cooperation partner for a Sida intervention or contribution, but may be less suitable than other possible partners. The AICHR has a mandate that promotes regional consultations and cooperation on issues that pertain to Sida's objective of developing democratic culture and respect for human rights. However, closer identification of the characteristics of the mechanism reveal that national level advisors from countries such as Myanmar sit in a veto position on the consultative body and make it unlikely to pressure states on human rights issues in the region. Thus it may be more advisable to support satellite civil society organisations pressuring AICHR for a more effective mechanism, or alternatively to support the national level working groups that are driving greater coordination and support for a strengthened Commission.

3.2 REGIONAL APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The development of a methodology for categorising regional development cooperation approaches would be beneficial for Sida. It would likely increase the efficiency and effectiveness of both the selection, monitoring and evaluation of the individual interventions, and provide a tool to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the contributions in the region. The ET's assessment of the 19 contributions in South East Asia, however, made it clear that there are several challenges to achieving a coherent and simplified method for assessment.

Assessments carried out by the review team, self-assessments made by the contribution representatives that were interviewed, and assessments made by Sida's representatives revealed that categorisation of contributions to simplify assessments based on the current categories was not an easy task.

The confusion over the current methodology is primarily a result of three different methods being used to understand an intervention's approach: by the problem, by the type of cooperation partner, or by how the intervention goes about achieving the objective. It should be evident that all of the objectives in the current Sida strategy are based on addressing regional level problems, that is all of the objectives relate to regional public good provision sectors, and that any further objectives that may be added in a future regional development cooperation strategy should also be of a regional nature.³³ The diversity of cooperation partners with Sida also leads to a problem of defining the regional cooperation 'approach'. While it is not impossible to use this method of defining approaches, a methodological discussion is suggested to further clarify this concept.

Based on the above reasoning, the ET made a decision to simplify the data by defining the 'approach' of an intervention based on *how* the intervention goes about achieving their objectives. With the intention of simplifying the type of approach an intervention has then, the ET has focused on the approach used by the actor supported by Sida's contribution. The precedent for this sort of categorisation can be seen in the ADB's Regional Cooperation and Integration Strategy (RCI) of 2006, which states that the Bank will act in four distinct ways to promote the RCI; act as a 'money bank' with funding for technical assistance, financial resources and/or mobilise funding for Developing Member Countries (DMC); act as a 'knowledge bank' by creating, consolidating and disseminating knowledge and information on the RCI for DMCs; be a 'capacity builder' by building institutional capacity in the region; be a 'honest broker' by being both catalyst and coordinator of the RCI for DMCs.

One problem remains, however, that is how to define those interventions with multiple objectives that seek to approach regional development cooperation by different means. Several interventions among those reviewed appear to be using different approaches to achieve their objectives. How to categorise these interventions remains a problem that will require further development and planning for future strategic considerations.

³³ For example, two other key sectors of regional cooperation are trade and infrastructure.

What Types of Approaches Were Used in the Four Thematic Areas?

The evaluation team has identified a number of approaches that are used by the 19 contributions in order to achieve their regional development cooperation objectives. For example, the most commonly used approaches were the following:

a) Regional institution building

The contribution works to discuss, initiate, strengthen or enhance a regional institution. Regional institutions range from an organisation, law, framework or other official set of rules that regulates the regional stakeholders involved.

b) Networks

The contribution works to discuss, initiate, strengthen or enhance a decentralised regional network. This network may be linking national and/or local level actors, or it may be forming linkages between civil society organisations in the region through a central ‘hub’ (a function that may be supplied by the cooperation partner).

c) Cross-learning

The contribution approaches its objectives by taking lessons learned through programmes or projects in one country and applying it to a similar context in the region, also referred to as economies of scope.

d) Capacity-building

The contribution identifies target groups in the region who would benefit from training, policy advice, or other resources (funding, human resources, knowledge transfer) to increase the capacity of the region to achieve the contribution’s objective.

e) Mainstreaming

The contribution approaches its objectives by integrating and promoting policies, learning or awareness of the thematic area into its own or other actors’ organisation.

In the 19 contributions that were reviewed, a variety of ‘approaches’ were applied in order to achieve the objectives. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter four below. With the project documents made available and the interviews with the contribution representatives, it is possible to conclude that several contributions either used a combination of approaches to meet their objective, or had gradually changed their approach over time to match the con-

text in South East Asia. An example of the former is the FORUM-ASIA contribution whose support for human rights in the region had led it to assist in the development of a regional institution (AICHR), build and enhance a network of civil society organisations, and help build capacity amongst human rights defenders and other interested organisations. As to the latter approach, both the Wetlands Alliance and the Water and Sanitation Programme (Sanitet Mekong) are examples of contributions that began with one approach (local capacity-building) to projects in the region, but are now linking the lessons learned in these projects to similar contexts in other countries in the region (cross-learning). Though deeper analysis of the individual contributions could not be conducted with the resources made available in this study, the ET suggests that a more in-depth study be made of contributions that adapt their approach according to the context in the region.

A simplified generalisation at this stage of the review is that there appears to be two typical approaches to regional development cooperation: A top-down approach (hierarchical, beginning at the regional level such as regional institution building), and bottom-up (local/national level capacity building). The implications of these approaches to overall regional development cooperation could be useful for further strategy and planning of contribution approaches. For example, it may be useful to assess the sustainability, effectiveness, and results of both these types of approaches and an approach that uses both top-down and bottom-up methods (holistic).

3.3 REGIONAL ADVISORS

As pointed out in earlier sections, the South East Asian context is complex and multifaceted. Progress in the areas of human rights and democracy has been met by a number of challenges. The political and social environment at the national level retains a highly diverse character. South East Asia is also challenged by great environmental threats; it is one of the most vulnerable of the world's developing regions to climate change.

Presence in the region by donors requires close and competent observation and analysis as a basis for development cooperation. Many donors with regional programmes are present in the individual countries. Some of them tend to focus more on country-by-country issues and even refrain from coordination at higher levels.

Present and previous functions of Sida's regional advisors cover the fields of human rights and governance, and the environment. A previous regional advisor who was located in Bangkok worked bilaterally, but with a regional perspective. At the time, even though many Swedish embassies had human rights and governance expertise, they lacked time to engage beyond individual contributions, to follow regional developments and coordinate with regional actors.

The Swedish Environment Secretariat for Asia (SENSA) was established in 2002 as a pilot programme. Based on the experiences of the pilot phase, certain amendments were made in 2006. The main role of SENSA should henceforth be to support implementation of the new Swedish regional strategy for parts of SEA and assist embassies with technical competence for enhanced quality of bilateral activities within the environment and natural resources sector. The revised role should include administrating Sida-supported regional programmes.

SENSA is presently subject to an external evaluation, separate from this assignment. The results of that evaluation were not available at the time of writing this report. However, based on observations from the field studies, a main impression is that those contributions that interacted with SENSA (approximately one third of the 13 environmental and research cooperation contributions), appreciated the availability of SENSA as an intellectual dialogue partner, and also as an actor in confidence-building and knowledge dissemination.

In addition to the obvious needs of a function for follow-up of the developments in SEA above the national level, there are specific reasons for an enforced function with such analytical capacity. There are strong reasons to closely follow the regional development in which context supported contributions operate to respond rapidly and flexibly to changes and needs. Furthermore, achievements in one thematic area may have complimentary effects in other areas, and a combination of approaches may result in synergy effects. A local and regional function to closely follow-up regional development is useful to better take advantage of Sweden's comparative advantages, e.g. environmental management ecosystems, climate change conditions, health, human rights and democracy.

It should be noted that activity based programmes – such as the local and national level capacity-building programmes amongst the 19 contributions reviewed in this report – could give physical connectivity to the region as they build trust, give tangible results, and

engage stakeholders in the programme. They also provide momentum for the mobilisation of new programmes. However, these programmes often have a problem of fragmentation and coordination, which would in turn affect their overall effectiveness in the region.³⁴ Though an in-depth analysis of individual contributions could not be undertaken with the time and resources available for this review, this could be seen as a general argument for greater coordination in the region by regional advisors.

Thus, a preliminary conclusion is that a function for follow-up and analysis should accompany a regional strategy for development cooperation with the region. The function should be to follow up and analyse regional developments, and not monitor individual contributions. The function should encompass interaction, dialogue and networking with stakeholders and regional development actors to provide swift, knowledgeable and flexible responses that ensure greatest possible effectiveness of implementation of Sida's regional development strategy.

44 34 ADB, *Regional Cooperation and Integration Strategy*, 2006, p. 7.

4 Result Analysis

The ToR of the evaluation stated that one of three objectives of the assignment should aim “to ascertain the planned and achieved outcomes and, when feasible, the impact of the interventions governed by the regional strategy, and to assess their relevance and effectiveness for attaining the objectives of the different interventions and their likely sustainability.”

It is not possible to credibly evaluate and make reliable conclusions about 19 individual interventions (contributions) representing different cooperation areas: Health (2), Human Rights and Democratic Governance (4), Natural resources and Environment (11) and Research Cooperation (2). It was a methodological constraint to conduct in-depth analyses of 19 interventions within the allocated time frame. The methodology provided the opportunity to review project documents and interview representatives from the 19 contribution partners and to make observations to analyse, conclude, and recommend further in-depth analysis of individual contributions. Interviews were conducted in three countries with representatives during two weeks in September 2009.

This section of the evaluation provides an aggregated analysis of the 19 contributions. This chapter aims to analyse the contributions within each thematic area with regard to the DAC-criteria: outcome/impact, relevance, effectiveness and sustainability.

4.1 MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS

Measuring outcome and impact requires monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. There are formal and informal systems to follow-up and report on whether a programme or a project has progressed over time. The ET has identified some of the challenges of assessing outcomes among the 19 contributions: The actual time span of a project or programme to result in measurable outcomes is too short, which in turn makes the assessments and conclusions of outcomes uncertain. Some of the representatives from the 19 contribution partners explained that their M&E programmes were in the imple-

mentation phase, such as IUCN MFF and Fiskeriverket (FiV). For instance, FiV referred to the need for financial support to expand their process for monitoring. IUCN MFF began the establishment of M&E systems in 2006 for several countries and it is presently monitoring its projects through project M&E guidelines.

Another issue in assessing outcome and/or impact is the matter of attribution of an intervention to an objective or goal. The outcomes and/or impact of the 19 contributions are to different extent attributed by regional cooperation mechanisms such as networks and other initiatives at a higher systematic level.

Assessing an organisation or a programme's results depends on reliable and functioning monitoring and evaluation systems. Several of the 19 contribution partners have embryonic monitoring and evaluation systems; the contribution representatives interviewed stated that they are in the process of developing monitoring systems and relevant indicators.

A well-functioning monitoring and evaluation system requires that the following conditions are fulfilled:

- Outputs and outcomes are defined in terms of what should be achieved;
- Targets are expressed in terms that can be monitored and evaluated, with indicators that are applicable;
- A system is in place by which targets are appropriately and systematically monitored; and
- A reporting mechanism is in operation through which it can be assessed whether targets are met.

At least nine contributions of 19 have not developed comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems with the above conditions in place. Some contributions, e.g. Regional Community Forestry Training Centre (RECOFTC) and Wetlands Alliance, reported that they are planning to hire an external consultant to carry out monitoring and evaluation of the contribution. The ADB HIV/AIDS Fund reported that they had agreed with AusAID to develop an M&E system. UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) is introducing monitoring and reporting systems at the national level.³⁵ The Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI) regional project has recently developed methods for measuring their outcomes, and a M&E system is now in operation. At the time of com-

pleting this report, the RWI was in the process of delivering outcome reports. The Strategic Plan 2006–2010 for the Mekong River Commission includes an improved M&E system.³⁶

Although monitoring and evaluation exists at the contribution level, it may not be possible to scale up to the regional level, nor link monitoring and evaluation to regional strategy goals. OECD ADB Anti Corruption and MRC are examples of where linking bottom-up monitoring and evaluation methods with the regional level requires further development, primarily due to a need for more systematic monitoring and evaluation at the local level. The Asian Regional Research Programme on Environmental Technology (ARRPET) is monitoring its achievements due to a comprehensive Logical Framework Analysis (LFA), though it was unclear in the documentation observed and during the interview as to what extent it is applied.³⁷

ICIMOD serves as an example of a project that evaluates from the bottom-up, and then uses these findings for broader regional linkages to take place. ICIMOD's targets are also linked to the regional strategy goals (to help reduce damage to the environment, and to help improve the region's ability to manage trans-boundary problems).

A consequence of embryonic and informal M&E systems is a methodological constraint to evaluate effectiveness and outcome/impact of programmes and projects. Seven of 19 contribution partners had yet not reported on their outcomes or expected outcomes.³⁸

On the basis of the review of documentation and interviews, the ET finds that the objectives of the 19 contributions are consistent with the objectives of the Swedish regional strategy with South East Asia. Thus, the contributions are relevant. However, there appears to be a need for further progress among the 19 contributions in order to achieve and ensure fulfilment of expected outcomes of the Swedish regional strategy.

³⁶ MRC, *Strategic Plan 2006–2010*, 2006.

³⁷ ARRPET was subject to an external evaluation in 2008. Results were not directly related to the LFA matrix, nor were LFA indicators applied in the evaluation. Please refer to P. Sundin, et al., *The Asian Regional Research Programme on Environmental Technologies, Final Draft Evaluation*, Stockholm: Sida, 2009.

³⁸ UNICEF AdolescPrimaryPrev, FORUM ASIA, RWI, CDIA, Samarb. Avtal FiV, IUCN Tsunami MFF, and ARRPET.

4.2 RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE POOR

It is a complex undertaking to assess whether or not the integration of a rights perspective and the perspectives of the poor is visible in the implementation process and results of the 19 interventions, and whether or not the integration of the two perspectives have been related to the mainstreaming of other cross-cutting issues. The methodology to assess the 19 contributions is constrained by similar reasons as for assessing effectiveness and outcomes/impact. Whether or not the rights perspective is visible depends on a range of factors such as the organisation's ambition to involve target groups and make them key actors and owners of their own development strategy; ability to identify and define the causes of development problems; ability to set measurable goals and targets; ambition to ensure analysis and participation of and accountability to all stakeholders; develop and sustain strategic partnerships through both top-down and bottom-up approaches; and to monitor and evaluate both outcomes and processes.³⁹

Verification of the rights perspective and perspectives of the poor requires a review of the different phases of planning, implementation and the follow-up of the 19 contributions. Given the limitation to verify the 19 contributions, the ET notes that the visibility in the implementation process and results of the integration of a rights perspective and the perspectives of the poor of the 19 contributions is not obvious. Contributions within the area of human rights and democracy are often more linked with the rights perspective. Raoul Wallenberg Institute Regional Asia Programme (RWI) is an example of a contribution that directly relates to the rights perspective. RWI deals with human rights partly through activities with high specificity, i.e. working with concrete issues of human rights in organisations, and partly through training. The Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA) project works indirectly with the rights perspective, by strengthening and giving proper recognition to the national organisations that are monitoring and improving the state of press freedom in South East Asia. These contributions fall squarely within the UN's 'A Common Understanding of a Human Rights Based Approach to Programming', as stated in a 2003 report:

³⁹United Nations Development Group (UNDG), *The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation Towards a Common Understanding of the UN*, New York: UNDG, 2003, p. 3.

- “Assessment and analysis in order to identify the human rights claims of rights-holders and the corresponding human rights obligations of duty-bearers as well as the immediate, underlying, and structural causes of the non-realization of rights.
- Programmes assess the capacity of rights-holders to claim their rights, and of duty-bearers to fulfil their obligations. They then develop strategies to build these capacities.
- Programmes monitor and evaluate both outcomes and processes guided by human rights standards and principles. Programming is informed by the recommendations of international human rights bodies and mechanisms.”⁴⁰

While almost all of the contributions claim to be dealing with poverty, how the contribution specifically addresses the perspectives of poor in the implementation process and in the reporting of results is unclear and would require in-depth analysis. One example is the Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative (BCI) of the Core Environment Programme (CEP) that works to restore and protect ecological integrity and reduce poverty within priority conservation landscapes. Largely the pressure on poverty issues is indirect, by pointing at negative environmental externalities in planning processes. As one interviewee expressed: “Without addressing local communities and local problems, including poverty, it is not possible to succeed – you have to go to the ground.”

All contribution partners assert that they either explicitly or implicitly integrate the rights perspective into their programmes. As much as it is a challenge, it is also an opportunity for Sida to ensure that contribution partners integrate a rights perspective as well as the perspectives of poor from the initiation to the closing of a programme or a project. This assignment has not been able to verify and conclude the role of all stakeholders in the 19 contributions, but their role and input in the planning and implementation process are vital to achieve any visible results.

Vulnerable Groups

The ToR raises the question, “What objectives or aspects in the strategy have been omitted or where have Sida or cooperation partners failed to identify relevant actions, particularly in relation to gender equality issues?” How have the activities contributed to promot-

⁴⁰Ibid, p. 3.

ing vulnerable groups and gender equality both in qualitative and quantitative terms?

Four contributions do not relate to gender: OECD anti-corruption, Water and Sanitation Programme (WSP) Sanitet Mekong, ARRPET and EEPSEA. Project representatives for these contributions stated that gender equality issues were dealt with indirectly such as through obtaining a gender balance in project coordinators, but with no active policy in place. For example, the EEPSEA representative stated that there is no active policy to address gender issues, and whilst the number of female and male researchers in the Philippines was roughly equal, other countries such as Laos were almost totally dominated by male researchers. According to the evaluation of ARRPET⁴¹, a similar situation exists in this project. To assess whether Sida or cooperation partners have “failed to identify relevant actions in relation to gender equality issues” would require more research and the ET did not observe any obvious cases.

HIV/AIDS is a prioritized thematic area of Sweden’s regional strategy but it is rarely reflected among the 19 contributions, except from two contributions that directly link with this issue: ADB HIV/AIDS Trust Fund and the UNICEF Adolescence Primary Prevention.

The ET has not identified other objectives or aspects in the strategy that have been omitted or where partners failed to identify relevant actions.

4.3 INITIATION AND OWNERSHIP

The ToR queried whether “the interventions were initiated by the donor or by the partner countries or the regional organisations.” There are varying ways that the contributions studied were initiated.

Initiation of project or programmes ranges from a donor takes the lead to address certain problems, to historical relations with the region and different regional organisations. Regional Air Pollution in Developing Countries (RAPIDC) grew out of a number of Sida funded projects between 1992 and 1996 to make an impact at policy level. Sida’s cooperation with the inter-governmental body MRC since 1995 is another example of long cooperation that Sida has supported and funded.

⁴¹ Sundin, et al., The Asian Regional Research Programme on Environmental Technologies, Final Draft Evaluation, Stockholm: Sida, 2008, p. 41.

ARRPET, through AIT, is one example of cooperation that Sida's Department of Research Cooperation (SAREC) developed a programme. Sweden had few contacts with AIT before 1990. The initial contacts concerned the possibility to provide scholarships for students from Vietnam and Laos. SAREC then initiated discussions with AIT in the early 1990's to find out whether AIT could take on the role to coordinate two regional programmes on environmental technologies. These discussions led to the creation of two regional programmes, which are now closed.

Towards the end of the operation of these two regional programmes it was natural to continue with a new regional research programme on environmental technology in line with the new Asian strategy – 'Asiatiska Vägval' – that the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs had just released. At that time, few countries in Asia had any capacity to undertake research on environmental technology. The programme was intended as a research programme and not a capacity building programme. A search was made for the appropriate National Research Institutions (NRIs) to take part.

Another case where Sida clearly was present to reinforce and even initiate a project was the case of ADB HIV/AIDS initiative. One of the project coordinators remembers that in 2004,

“... somebody from Sida came. They wanted to do something in Mekong on HIV... I said: Don't limit the initiative to Mekong ... Sweden accepted our approach. We could have spent our money faster – there was some criticism in the early evaluations of the project – but careful preparations and linking HIV to core activities has been much more effective.”

Thus there was clearly a push from Sida to initiate the project, and it can be said to be donor driven. But the initiative was broadened – despite the outspoken focus on Mekong in the regional cooperation strategy.

Often programmes are initiated because they fit into an agenda of urgent issues. One such contribution, which could be labelled as 'circumstance initiated' is IUCN MFF. This contribution came out as a response to the Tsunami catastrophe in 2004. Former President Bill Clinton 'founded' the initiative, which was then followed up by international pressure and real cooperation and funding between the affected countries.

Another type of initiation can be found within the Wetlands Alliance that presents itself as “a true partnership that leverages the

partners strengths and provides mutual support without the need to establish many new and external frameworks and processes. Ownership is at the local level by creating a platform for local partners to identify the most relevant poverty related issues and develop activities to address these.” The Coordinator of the Wetlands Alliance Programme explains why it was established:

“Sida had supported AIT before, in the Wetland Biodiversity Programme under the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The Wetlands Alliance Programme was started to fill some gaps with the regional organisations that were already working in the area. We were asked by Sida to fill these gaps.”

Fiskeriverket is an example of a contribution that Sida ‘received in ready made form’ but Sida ensured it was “reshaped to address the climate perspective and to address climate change and adaptation.”

Sida has positively engaged and responded to the 19 contributions. Sida is considered and appreciated for being ‘relaxed and flexible’, and for not micro-managing programmes. Many of the contribution partners stressed the importance of a donor that understands the local context.

4.4 AGGREGATED RESULT ANALYSIS

4.4.1 Natural Resources and Environment

“Cooperation in the environmental sphere is to involve a number of strategic measures designed to complement bilateral cooperation. The three main areas of concern are: the environment and institutional capacity, urban development and the environment, and natural resources and environmental protection for the Mekong countries.”⁴²

Eleven contributions have been assessed in the environmental sphere. They cover a span from institutional capacity and urban development to environmental protection, some of which specifically focus on the Mekong River sub-region.

a) Approach

The cooperation partners include various actors, from NGOs, regional organisations to Swedish governmental agencies. They represent a mix of approaches towards their partners, but by far the most com-

⁴² Sida, *Regional Development Cooperation Strategy with South East Asia, 2005–2009*, Stockholm: Sida, 2005.

mon approach in the 19 contributions evaluated by the ET was capacity-building at the national level. Many of the natural resource and climate change contributions work to assist national actors concentrating on capacity-building at the local or national level, with varying degrees of linkage between the national and regional actors. Two other approaches were used less frequently, establishing or supporting regional networks, and building or strengthening regional institutions pertaining to the environmental objective.

The Cities Development Initiative for Asia (CDIA) is a clear-cut example of a contribution working specifically with national actors. CDIA's mission is to link the demand of its client cities with the capital supply of its investment partners (inter alia ADB) and complementing these with other public and private investment resources wherever possible. CDIA's measure of success will be to "work itself out of its job" in the very long-term.⁴³ CDIA's capacity-building approach could be characterised as consultation and intermediating services.

An example of an organisation with a slightly different approach to capacity building is the Mekong River Commission that supports national actors to adopt a networking approach as it builds links between countries. Apart from strengthening the capacity at the national level, the MRC has developed itself as a regional actor.

Several other actors concentrate their work to strengthen capacity at national level, but function as a link between the national actors. RECOFTC is an example working with common capacity-building programme/training in community forestry practices, and building on international conventions for country specific programmes.

b) Outcome

The type of outcomes reported can typically be referred to as "middle range", that is, capacity building is taking place through activities such as advocacy and training, but the knowledge and values may not have led to actual change or impact in terms of institutionalisation of the contribution objectives in regional planning or decision-making.

The Wetlands Alliance exemplifies a contribution whose outcomes are manifested at the local level. The objective of the Wetlands Alliance has been to increase sustainable management of wetlands

⁴³ CDIA, Mid Term Review, 2009.

through local capacity-building. The leading partner of the alliance is AIT. Overall support to the contribution during 2006–2009 was SEK 44.75 million. The outcomes that have been reported by the contribution partner are related to this objective: Farms are able to apply new management techniques that makes an impact on poverty alleviation, hydropower was built to support better management practice and policy, and regulatory frameworks were designed for local industries to improve equitability.⁴⁴ However, evaluating how the outcomes influence policy or improve local governmental procedures is difficult to verify without a more in-depth analysis for this individual contribution.⁴⁵

By promoting good governance in coastal ecosystems management, IUCN MFF seeks to achieve demonstrable results in influencing regional cooperation, national programme support, private sector engagement and community action. Although difficult to assess demonstrable results so far, the initiative appears to institutionalise practices and mechanisms for good governance.

The MRC is a good example of how a contribution can adopt new approaches to achieve the strategy and objectives depending on the current regional context. Similar to the Wetlands Alliance, the MRC achievements can be classified as “middle range” – in other words they have achieved a number of outputs, which should not be confused with outcomes, a point that the MRC is aware of. As outcomes cannot be articulated, effectiveness (as outcome in relation to set targets) cannot be readily assessed. The different phases of the MRC have led to a number of different approaches being used. For example, the MRC began its work on a regional institutional level, adopting a ‘top-down’ approach according to the representatives. The current phase shifted to national level capacity building and forming networks between the government ministries with the MRC functioning as a network hub. The next phase will shift back towards a regional institution-building approach with objectives such as developing a basin wide development plan and strategy to be adopted by the sub-region, and to make the decision-making processes of the region more transparent to public scrutiny.

44 Wetlands Alliance, Annual Report, 2008.

45 Objective from ToR p.2.

c) Effectiveness

Several of the contributions reviewed reported that outcomes would be forthcoming and thus could be assessed at a later phase. Furthermore, in some of the contributions related to the environmental objective in Sweden's strategy for regional development cooperation in South East Asia, the contribution programme had changed character during the initial phases leading to a new strategy and corresponding objectives being adopted. This change in strategy and objectives will likely have an impact on the overall effectiveness of the contribution programme. For example, the Mekong River Commission states that it will provide objective decision-making support to the government's sharing the Mekong River on topics such as sustainable social, economic and environmental development of the Mekong River Basin. The MRC representatives stressed that they have only had two years to implement the new strategy and that this affected the ability to collect and collate concrete and verifiable outcomes. Nonetheless, achievements have been recorded through the use of a 'work programme approach', such as linking line ministries together on related topics.

d) Relevance

The contributions are assessed as highly relevant in their scope as they correspond to the regional cooperation objective in the environmental sphere. All of the contributions relate to the Swedish regional strategy in several ways: They contribute to alleviating poverty; they focus on cooperation in the environmental sphere; and they assist in the development of institutional capacity. The added value as discussed in Chapter 3 of this evaluation can be seen in several of the other objectives. For example, the achievements of these contributions relate to democracy as they address the development of good governance practices and they assist in stopping the spread of communicable diseases by promoting healthier environments. More generally, sustainable management of environmental resources in South East Asia will provide more equitable economic growth and sustainability, particularly with regards to better management of natural resources such as forests and marine environments.

e) Sustainability

In the case of CDIA, sustainability issues are addressed through a proposed legal incorporation of CDIA, aimed at allowing CDIA to broaden its support base, especially with regional funding partners.

The establishment of nodal offices is meant to facilitate increased and decentralised dialogue with the national governments and cities to enhance local commitment and facilitate extended outreach of CDIA to other cities in need of support. It will be important for CDIA to continue focusing on building firm linkages to investment partners through the international agencies, commercial banks and the private sector.⁴⁶

CEP BCI works with five components to be implemented from strengthening ecological infrastructure to influencing policy and strategic levels of governments in the sub-region. In one of the components, the contribution focuses on institutional strengthening and sustainability. Options and opportunities are outlined for the participating countries for transitioning and transforming the Environment Operation Centre (EOC) into a sub-regionally anchored, owned and sustainable institution beyond the 10-year life of the current CEP-BCI programme.

4.4.2 Human Rights and Democratic Governance

A number of sub-areas have been identified as particularly relevant from a regional democracy and human rights perspective. Support should be made available to a restricted number of regional organisations and for cooperation between cultural institutions in Sweden and South East Asia.

Four contributions have been assessed in the Human Rights (HR) and Democratic Governance sphere, three of which use regional networks as an approach to meet their objective of promoting democratic culture and respect for human rights in the region.

a) Approach

The contributions in this thematic area use a mix of approaches to achieve their objectives. All of the contributions work within networks, but from very different platforms.

The OECD ADB Anticorruption Initiative uses the authority of the member organisations to help create strengthened national institutions and reform policies. Thus their approach is to apply cross-learning from different states in the region (and in the OECD).

Corruption is a problem that the initiative has successfully approached with collective action by mobilising approaches at the national level. The RWI programme typical of a network approach,

and is guided by a Swedish university institution. It has instituted networks with other institutions such as the Mahidol University in Bangkok and a number of other regional human rights institutions. RWI also approaches its objectives by building capacity at national level through linking activities in the programme's regional network. Capacity building focuses on both human rights training and conferences on current human rights issues. The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) also approaches its objectives through collaborating and cooperating with a network of human rights organisations in the region.

b) Outcome

There appears to be a gap between the realised or reported outcomes relating to Sida's Regional Cooperation Strategy in those contribution documents and interviews for the four contributions that were evaluated by the ET.

FORUM-ASIA is a self-described 'umbrella organisation' that works regionally to promote and protect all human rights in Asia. There are currently 46 member human rights organisations in the Forum. The main objective outlined for FORUM-ASIA between 2008–2010 was to strengthen the coordination function of the network by linking it to national levels and other relevant stakeholders in Asia.

Thus, the contribution's aim directly relates to the Swedish regional strategy. The organisation writes that it is the best alternative to coordinate Asian NGOs in developments in human rights and democracy on local, national and international levels. One of the main outcomes that are highlighted by an Outcome Assessment completed by Sida in 2008 was the capacity to effectively promote and apply international HR mechanisms in Asian states.⁴⁷ However, the reported outcomes, such as contributing to 'the restoration of democracy in Nepal' and the restoration of peace in Aceh could be somewhat overstated.⁴⁸ There were difficulties in establishing from the project documents given to the ET whether an assessment of outcomes had been made. According to a representative for FORUM-ASIA interviewed by the ET, improvements were being made in establishing measurable indicators, sponsored by CIDA.

⁴⁷ Sida, Results Assessment of FORUM-ASIA, 2005–2008, Stockholm: Sida, 2008.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

c) *Effectiveness*

Generally measuring effectiveness has been difficult due to the methodological constraints in applying in-depth analysis of the contributions that were evaluated.

d) *Relevance*

As discussed in both Chapters 2 and 3 of this report, the food and oil price rises of 2008, and the financial crisis in 2008 and 2009, may have altered priorities in the region somewhat, especially regarding political freedoms and further democratisation of South East Asia. Sida may find that developing countries in the region will be more receptive and open to contributions that target aiding vulnerable groups to achieve better equity and economic circumstances. Of course, fighting corruption remains highly relevant to achieve this objective and better governance will have an impact on economic development as well. Though human rights and democracy will remain part of Sweden's priority objectives in development cooperation, there should be further study into the focus of this area in regional development cooperation given the current context and political will amongst developing South East Asian states.

e) *Sustainability*

In the OECD ADB Anti-corruption Initiative, the members themselves, and donors who are members of the advisory group, appreciate the value of the members' ownership of the initiative as a basis for reducing corruption in the region. Because this is not a donor driven initiative, members are considered more encouraged than they otherwise might be to commit to taking the actions needed to improve performance against corruption.⁴⁹

A related aspect of sustainability is emphasised in a result assessment of FORUM-ASIA, where networks convened and consolidated by FORUM-ASIA have been established in close partnership with other Asian NGOs to foster ownership among members and support the continuity of its work.⁵⁰

4.4.3 HIV/AIDS

“Support will be provided to a limited number of regional programmes implemented by multilateral organisations, international

49 ADB/OECD, Review of the ADB/OECD Anticorruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific, Draft Report, 2009.

50 Sida, Results Assessment of FORUM-ASIA, 2005–2008, Stockholm: Sida, 2008.

NGOs and regional networks in civil society. Given the extent of the epidemic, efforts should be concentrated on the Mekong region and preventive measures.”⁵¹

The ET assessed two contributions in the HIV/AIDS or health sphere, both using a combination of advocacy and capacity building at the national level. Efforts are concentrated on preventive measures.

a) Approach

UNICEF EAPRO emphasises integration of the HIV/AIDS agenda in National Strategic Planning and National Action Plans. The contribution also works to integrate life skills into the school curricula and include prevention messages in training and education activities.⁵² The focus of the approach then is on national level capacity building, but representatives from the contribution also mentioned that regional networks were being used in order to transfer and disseminate UNICEF’s message.

The ADB HIV/AIDS Fund has recognised the need to move from a ‘project mode to a more systematic and strategic programmatic approach where more sustainable and integrated approaches are being considered’.⁵³

b) Outcome

As indicator-based monitoring has not been fully established in the contributions as yet, assessing the outcomes of the two contributions is somewhat difficult.

The contribution representatives themselves emphasise an outcome orientation, shifting from education and broad advocacy towards measurable results. ADB mainstreams (a function of capacity-building) the HIV/AIDS problem in institutions, through national and region wide programmes. The mind-set of senior government officials and ADB leaders has changed considerably according to the contribution representatives. Among the successful outcomes reported by the fund are the following: comprehensive integration and awareness of HIV/AIDS in ADB programming; most countries have proceeded with planned UNICEF projects; collaboration and dialogue with other relevant stakeholders such as governments and multinationals; a team of ministers was established to deal with

51 Sida, *Regional Strategy with South East Asia, 2005–2009*, Stockholm: Sida, 2005.

52 UNICEF EAPRO, *Regional Approach Framework*, 2009.0

53 Sida, *Result Assessment ADB HIV/AIDS Fund*, Stockholm: Sida, 2008.

policy responses to the epidemic; expanded to non-ADB led projects, both pre- and post-construction phases.

An important outcome according to the ADB is that governments have internalised and institutionalised HIV/AIDS into the organisation, procedures and policy at the national level.

c) Effectiveness

The ADB Fund reported initial problems such as delays to programming and project spending, which have now both been corrected.

One problem remained however according to the ADB representatives interviewed by the ET, which was that no clear action plan existed for HIV/AIDS in the ADB strategy 2020. This will have an impact on the effectiveness of continued operation of this project as none of the trends relating to the epidemic in South East Asia point towards its eradication by 2020. HIV/AIDS will continue to be a problem (as seen in Chapter 2 where the rate of AIDS has doubled in Vietnam in the past four years) for the region, and strategic planning is needed in order to focus resources where at-risk groups can benefit the most.

d) Relevance

The support to contributions addressing HIV/AIDS is highly relevant. The HIV/AIDS epidemic does not show the same aggressive pattern as in other regions as in sub-Saharan Africa, but is nevertheless cruel. Both contributions have strategic entry points at political level.

e) Sustainability

The project documentation that was provided to the ET and the interviews with contribution representatives in September did point towards an institutionalisation of the projects' objectives in schools (UNESCO), in infrastructure projects (ADB) and also in the ADB organisation itself. These measures are thus promising in terms of sustainability.

4.4.4 Research Cooperation

Priority in this sphere is given to areas where prospects for collaboration between research activities and other forms of assistance are good. Primary concerns are the environment and sustainable use of natural resources. Two contributions have been assessed in the research cooperation sphere. ARRPET focuses on developing

environmental technologies, and EEPSEA focuses on capacity for the economic analysis of environmental problems. Both employ a network approach.

a) Approach

ARRPET funds research focused on 'hard science' that relates to controlling urban and environmental pollution. It works to strengthen capacity in National Research Institutions and to disseminate research findings to achieve policy impact.

EEPSEA uses a network approach to provide financial support for research projects as well as training, meetings, resource persons, access to literature, publication outlets and opportunities for comparative research across its ten member countries.

b) Outcome

ARRPET has shown good progress in terms of technical outcome. The network has been considered successful in mobilising and strengthening scientific competence and capacity at partner institutions, and initiation of systematic environmental research. It was recommended that ARRPET involve policy-makers more when identifying research areas.⁵⁴

EEPSEA has experienced a period of lower achievements in terms of reports published. It has now launched a new research programme. An evaluation is planned but not yet carried out.

c) Effectiveness

EEPSEA supports bi-annual regional forums where researchers discuss national environmental problems as well as cross boundary problems such as pollution and climate change. EEPSEA also works to develop regional research projects to address common pool (for example shared water resources and migration of endangered species) resource issues, and to propose how these regional issues can be addressed more effectively.

d) Relevance

Both research cooperation contributions are assessed as highly relevant: ARRPET supports trans-national research cooperation to address Asian trans-boundary environmental challenges and

⁵⁴Sundin, et al., The Asian Regional Research Programme on Environmental Technologies, Final Draft Evaluation, Stockholm: Sida, 2008.

EEPSEA supports research that focuses on the economics of adaptation to extreme climate events, such as sea level rise.

e) Sustainability

Both contributions appear to be sustainable over the long term. Both ARRPEP and EEPSEA encompass elements of regional and national dialogue, with multiple stakeholders addressing (including national planners and natural resource managers) shared environmental concerns that will become increasingly important in the short and long term.

4.5 OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The ET finds that the 19 contributions have addressed the objectives in the regional strategy. Several contributions have reported that they are still in the implementation phase. The ET considers that these contributions have a fair or good probability to achieve a positive outcome.

There are uncertainties in individual cases, due to a lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation in relation to set objectives. The ET cannot make an in-depth assessment of effectiveness for each of the 19 contributions. Any striking lack of effectiveness has however not been noted.

The ET finds that objectives as well as output and outcome of the 19 contributions are relevant. Contributions address the strategic objectives and are relevant to the regional context.

The relevance from a regional perspective can be further analysed with regard to that some contributions operate at a national level. However, the ET does not consider any contributions irrelevant due to their national linkages.

Sustainability is difficult to assess, but the ET has noted that several contributions try to institutionalize procedures and methods in their organisations.

The ET finds it necessary to clearly state the constraint in assessing individual contributions. It is important to keep in mind that the assessment is solely based on limited organisational and project documents and in most cases one interview with a representative from the cooperation organisation. These are not sufficient sources for the evaluators to make a strong conclusion about individual contributions.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The purpose of this evaluation was to answer the question ‘What is the added value of a regional development cooperation approach?’ The report has answered this question by both looking at the broader implications of regional development cooperation and Sida’s current strategic objectives in the region given the current context, and by conducting an evaluation of 19 contributions with the respective project documents and contribution representative interviews.

The evaluation team finds that there is significant added value of a regional development cooperation strategy. Regional cooperation provides the opportunity for Sida to address the needs for cooperation on problems requiring collective action; problems that exist in a number of South East Asian states without defined physical boundaries, which can be solved more readily by incorporating the entire region or parts there of into the solution.

Regional development cooperation can lead to complementary development effects such as regional level dialogue and coordination among the participating countries, and institutionalising cooperation in the region through binding agreements. Regional support also works to solve transnational problems that can be beneficial globally.

Sweden has significant comparative advantages to offer regional development cooperation in South East Asia. With strengths ranging from environmental techniques, strong research capacity and public administration, to significant financial resources, Sweden has the capacity and ability to assist regional cooperation on transnational problems, and the political will to mobilise support for the most vulnerable groups in the region. The range of development cooperation partners provides another advantage for Sweden to join in partnerships and agreements with other actors with a stronger institutional position in the region, such as ASEAN and the ADB. A lesson to be learned is that deeper cooperation with a newly enhanced ASEAN may provide a means of gaining better legitimacy and effectiveness for regional cooperation contributions. At the same time, another lesson to be learned is it may not be possible at

present to collaborate further with ASEAN on issues such as human rights, largely due to the fact that certain SEA countries' position as veto members in the organisation.

The diversity of cooperation partners in the 19 contributions evaluated in this report suggests that Sida has paid considerable attention to choosing satisfactory alternatives for coordination to implement the strategy of 2005–2009. The strategy's alignment to partner country priorities and other donors on the regional level is one area that may require further development, especially with the impact that events such as signing of the ASEAN Charter and the financial crisis have on developing countries in the region.

There is not any formal platform for regional coordination among donors. Sida does not have any obvious counterparts with whom to coordinate. It is a challenge for Sida to align a regional development cooperation strategy and development efforts to a partner country's priorities, as a country's priorities are often set nationally and developed in a national strategy, leading to the fact that a regional development strategy needs to align with many different national development strategies simultaneously. In contrast to coordination at the regional level, there is well-developed donor coordination at the contribution level. Several donors focus on country-by-country issues, with no regional synthesis. Many donors have predominantly bilateral rather than regional strategies and programmes. A lesson to be learned is that there is an inadequate donor forum on regional cooperation, mainly due to the lack of donor regional cooperation programs in the region, which impacts negatively on the application of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

A regional approach to development cooperation for South East Asia is regarded by the evaluation team as a viable and coherent strategy for achieving the objectives that Sida outlines in its current strategy, and it is further bolstered by Sweden's comparative advantages. The cooperation between Sida and the region has led to support for a number of relatively large contributions that have mostly reported outcomes in their thematic area. Whilst a general impression of effectiveness is given by the individual contributions, the evaluators conclude that improvements are needed in the area of monitoring and evaluation systems in the majority of contributions; improvements will further increase the effectiveness of regional cooperation.

To increase effectiveness of regional development assistance further, it is suggested that a regional advisor presence be established. A regional advisor could also support follow up processes on regional level objectives, assist in taking advantage of synergies between different areas of cooperation, and assist the regional team to identify cooperation partners with the best comparative advantages for a particular regional approach. A regional advisor can also help to increase regional coordination of contributions with a local and national capacity building approach.

As outlined in Chapter 2.3 of this report, the evaluation team found that overall the objectives of the 19 contributions evaluated were relevant to the regional strategy 2005–2009. Furthermore it was concluded that overall effectiveness of the 19 contributions is satisfactory, albeit with some reservations for under developed monitoring and evaluation systems.

Given that the 19 contributions have been judged to be both relevant and effective according to Sida's regional strategy objectives, the evaluation team concludes that the current regional strategy and subsequent objectives have been effective with regards to development cooperation with South East Asia. Internal factors such as reorganisation of strategic goals in a contribution's operation in a country, or factors relating to the current regional context such as a dynamic shifting in regional priorities will also continue to impact the effectiveness of a regional strategy. To some extent, this must be a recognised factor in strategic planning due to the nature of the multiple stakeholders involved in regional development cooperation. A lesson to be learned is that to meet the objective of the regional development cooperation, both the regional approach of development cooperation and the cooperation partner must be carefully considered.

Sida has adhered to the original objectives of the regional strategy. The evaluation team has not observed any obvious cases of where Sida or cooperation partners failed to identify relevant actions, particularly in relation to gender equality issues. A majority of the 19 contributions have taken gender equality issues into account. Only four contributions have not taken a gender perspective into account, and lacked a policy to do so. Further research and analysis would be required to better assess how Sida or cooperation partners have acted to ensure a gender perspective.

A review of the different phases of planning, implementation and the follow-up of the 19 contributions would be required to verify the integration of a rights perspective and perspectives of the poor. The visibility in the implementation process and results of the integration of a rights perspective and the perspectives of the poor is not obvious. Contributions within the area of human rights and democracy are often more linked with the rights perspective. While almost all of the contributions claim to be dealing with poverty, it is unclear and would require in-depth analysis to conclude how the contributions specifically address the perspectives of poor in the implementation process and in the reporting of results. A lesson to be learned is that regional cooperation approaches appear to change during implementation phases as strategies develop/adapt to realities in the region.

The evaluators conclude that the 19 contributions have addressed their planned outcomes, which in turn have already been found to be of relevance to the overall regional Sida strategy 2005–2009. There are of course reservations to this statement, due to the fact that several of the contributions were in the process of reorganisation or implementation and thus positive outcomes could only be assessed as probable. The evaluators also conclude that the outcomes reported by the 19 contributions evaluated were relevant to their regional objectives, including those contributions that used a local or national approach. As noted above, it is likely that this approach could require greater coordination by a regional advisor, but in general the outcomes reported by contributions using this approach matched their objectives. Finally, the evaluation team observed that outcomes focusing on institutionalising regional procedures and methods appeared to be more sustainable to regional cooperation than other approaches. Although further in-depth research is suggested to develop a clearer picture of sustainability, it is suggested here that both a top-down and bottom-up approaches may prove more sustainable in the long-term, rather than regional contributions that focus solely on local or even national capacity building. A lesson to be learned is that a new categorisation system for approaches to regional development cooperation would be beneficial to Sida, though the methodological development of a system could best be achieved by basing the system on how the individual contribution approaches regional cooperation objectives. Another lesson to be learned is that it may be useful for Sida to assess sustainability, effectiveness and results of a top-down (regional institution building) versus a bottom-

up (local/national level capacity building), or a holistic (top-down and bottom-up) approach.

Fundamentals for tackling multifaceted trans-boundary problems vary greatly among countries in South East Asia, due to the great differences in capacity and governance among the countries. A final lesson to be learned is that Sida needs to be able to balance the number of contributions with its ability and resources to manage a multifaceted project portfolio. The capacity in managing, monitoring and evaluation has to match the complexity of regional development cooperation.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- As per the analysis in section 3.1, the added value of regional cooperation (namely a function of effectiveness) displays the need for Sida's Regional Team for Asia to continue to support collective action problems through a regional approach and seek solutions to regional problems by institutionalising regional cooperation.
- Based on the shifting context in the region and the awareness that combinations of approaches at regional level, e.g. support to networks and support to regional actors, could have positive synergy effects, it is recommended that the Sida Regional Team for Asia consider using a regional advisor presence in SEA to better understand changing partner country priorities and take advantage of these positive effects.
- Due to Sweden's comparative advantages that complement present and near future concerns of the region such as human rights and environment and natural resources management, it is recommended that Sida and the Regional Team for Asia continue to focus regional cooperation on the thematic areas presented in the current regional strategy.
- As the evaluation of the 19 contributions revealed a gap in follow up and analysis on long-term programme achievements (see section 4.1), it is recommended that development of a function for follow up and analysis in the region that provides feedback on long-term programme achievements be undertaken by Sida and the relevant Regional Team.

In particular and based on the results of Section 4.1 on monitoring and evaluation, a new regional cooperation strategy with South East Asia should be supported by:

- Clear and applicable indicators of outcome and impact that are developed both by Sida's Regional Teams in cooperation with contribution partners.
- Specific gender indicators of outcomes that are desired and developed by Sida for all regional contributions.
- Regional contribution monitoring and evaluation systems possibly operated by a regional advisor or by the Sida Regional Team for Asia to assess individual contributions. These systems should include "process" indicators to assess the degree of ownership, the connection of the contribution to a greater context, and the presence of internal monitoring systems.

Appendix 1 Terms of Reference

0 GENERAL

Sida's operations are handled by country or regional teams. The Regional Team for Asia is responsible for Swedish support to regional projects in southeast and south Asia as well as support to certain countries in the region. Sida's Department for Evaluation (UTV) manages Sida's larger, strategic evaluations. The present evaluation is carried jointly between Regional Team for Asia and UTV. Contracting partner is the Regional Team Asia.

1 RATIONALE, PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

1.1 The rationale of the evaluation

The current regional strategy⁵⁵ for cooperation with South East Asia expires at the end of 2009 and Sida needs an evaluation of the current strategy as an input to the work on a new strategy for the period 2010–2014. The preparatory work for the new strategy includes an assessment of results during the previous period and the evaluation covered by these ToR are intended to provide part of the necessary information for that assessment.

A considerable part of Swedish development assistance is carried out on the basis of regional cooperation strategies and as regional undertakings, e.g. through support to regional organisations, by supporting governments to jointly attack cross-border problems, and by establishing regional advisers. A number of development related problems, e.g. environment and climate, trafficking, and illicit drugs trade, are genuine cross-border issues and are probably more effectively attacked on a regional level compared to individual, national efforts. Sida therefore wants to learn more about the regional approach as a mode for development cooperation.

⁵⁵ The strategy document is available on:
<http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/04/80/68/106c2a75.pdf>

This evaluation, together with two other planned strategic Sida evaluations and one on-going review during 2009, which touch on regional issues⁵⁶, will provide systematic information on the regional approach as a mode for development cooperation.

Sida has from time to time established posts for field-based regional advisers or regional resource centres but the views about the benefits from these are mixed. This evaluation together with the other regionally related evaluations will offer an opportunity to discuss experiences from such solutions.

1.2 The purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to clarify what constitutes the added value of a regional approach to developments efforts and to inform preparations of the new regional strategy for Asia 2010–2014.

1.3 The objectives of the evaluation

The objectives of the evaluation are

- (1) to assess the regional approach to developments efforts in South East Asia, its practical consequences and its degree of effectiveness, and formulate generally applicable conclusions and lessons learned from this;
- (2) to assess and to what extent the regional strategy 2005–2009 has been implemented in accordance with this strategy and to what extent this has contributed to the overall objectives laid down in the strategy; and
- (3) to ascertain the planned and achieved outcomes and, when feasible, the impact of the interventions governed by the regional strategy, and to assess their relevance and effectiveness for attaining the objectives of the different interventions and their likely sustainability.

2 EVALUATION SCOPE

2.1 Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation shall cover the whole current strategy period, i.e. 2004 to 2009. It shall not include interventions that have been part of bilateral cooperation with Burma (Myanmar), East Timor, Indonesia, Philippines or Thailand, unless they are deemed to have regional implications.

⁵⁶ Evaluation of the Sida/Norad regional HIV/AIDS-team in Lusaka, Evaluation of support to the African Union, and Review of SENSEA in Bangkok.

The consultant shall make a selection of interventions for closer scrutiny, taking into account size or strategic importance, relevance for assessing the regional approach compared to a bilateral or multi-country approach, existence of previous evaluations, and mode of implementation.

When selecting interventions and in the analysis the consultants shall take into account these four main approaches to regional cooperation:

(a) Classic regional approach

The support is provided to a regional actor that attempts to tackle genuine regional development related problems or cross-border issues that are more effectively addressed on a regional level than by individual, national efforts.

(b) Regional cooperation

The support is provided to regional forums and initiatives in order to strengthen the regional cooperation, integration and dialogue so as to coordinate common resources and to address similar national problems of a number of countries.

(c) Regional approach to national problems

The support is provided to a regional actor that assists national actors to solve similar national development problems shared by a number of countries in the region with a well developed regional value added and linkages between the countries.

(d) Multi-country approach

The support is channelled through a regional actor to national actors that attempts to address similar national development problems shared by a number of countries in the region, but with a weak linkage to the regional level and between the countries.

In the analysis the evaluation shall consider views from implementation and recipients agencies and organisations, and, when applicable and feasible, views from beneficiaries and target groups.

The evaluation shall find out if the interventions were initiated by the donor or by the partner countries or the regional organisations and discuss possible consequences of either case.

The evaluation shall assess the experiences from Sida sponsored regional advisers or similar arrangements.

The evaluation shall when possible collect experiences and assess conditions for actor driven cooperation⁵⁷ with the regional partners/ on a regional basis.

The evaluation shall also consider the following questions:

To what extent have the various interventions addressed the objectives mentioned in strategy?

What objectives or aspects in the strategy have been omitted or where have Sida or cooperation partners failed to identify relevant actions, particularly in relation to gender equality issues?

To what extent is the integration of a rights perspective and the perspectives of the poor visible in the implementation process and results of the interventions? Has the integration of the two perspectives been related to the mainstreaming of other cross-cutting issues?

To what extent have Sida during the implementation of the strategy paid attention to coordination between donors on a regional level and alignment to partner country priorities and modes of work?

2.2 Intervention logic and objectives

Regarding the selected cases the evaluation shall describe and assess the relevance and effectiveness of the intervention logic in relation to the stated objectives, taking into account the policy, institutional and social context as well as the implementation arrangements.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation shall be based on written sources and interviews.

The written sources will be documents at Sida (relevant documents will be provided by Sida) and documentation available with the partner countries and organisations (such documentation shall be identified and obtained by the consultants).

Interviews shall be carried out with key informants at Sida and other donors, at government agencies and regional organisations in South East Asia, and with beneficiaries when applicable. Interviews with beneficiaries may be carried out in the form of surveys or focus group discussions.

The principles for selection of interviewees shall be clarified in advance, e.g. in the Inception Report.

⁵⁷Information about partner driven cooperation (“aktörssamverkan” in Swedish) is available on www.sida.se. Click on “Cooperate with Sida – Partners in progress”.

The consultants shall take care to establish the reliability and consistency of the information by so-called triangulation, i.e. comparing and checking similar information from various sources.

The evaluation and the reporting *must* follow DAC's evaluation quality standards⁵⁸, or equivalent.

3.1 Relevant stakeholders consulted

Sida will inform relevant stakeholders about the forthcoming evaluation. It is, however, the responsibility of the consultant to make all practical arrangements for visits and interviews.

The team leader shall during the course of the evaluation propose to Sida suitable and effective ways for feed back of the evaluation findings and conclusions to stakeholders, taking into account e.g. the geographical locations of stakeholders. The ways for feed back and dissemination shall be agreed with Sida before the draft report is submitted.

4 EVALUATION TEAM

The evaluation shall be carried out by a team of consultants.

The team leader *must* have extensive evaluation experience, good knowledge about the region and relevant experience from South East Asia. Each of the team members *must* have evaluation experience and good knowledge about one or several of the regional issues relevant for the evaluation. At least one of the team members should be recruited from the region. The *must* requirements and evaluation criterias are further specified in Invitation to Tender.

5 TIME SCHEDULE, REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION

The evaluation shall be completed and the final version of the report submitted on November 2, 2009 for approval by Sida. It is estimated to need around 15–18 person weeks by the evaluation team, and will include visits by team members to Sweden, to countries in the region and to headquarters for regional organisations.

Ten days after the agreed starting date for the evaluation the consultants *must* submit an inception report stating general approach, updated time plan and work schedule, principles for selection of

⁵⁸ Available at DAC's website:

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/12/56/41612905.pdf>

people to interview, and selection of interventions for closer scrutiny. The team leader shall be prepared to visit Stockholm to discuss the inception report.

A draft report *must* be submitted to Sida by September 30, 2009. The draft report *must* include chapters on conclusions, recommendations lessons learned and an executive summary of maximum four pages.

Sida will submit comments within ten days after receiving the first draft report.

The final report shall have maximum 35 pages, excluding executive summary and appendices. The report shall be in a format to be specified later by Sida and be complete with relevant appendices (ToR, list of references and sources etc) as well as thoroughly checked for language errors.

The consultant shall set aside two working days for presentation and discussion of the final report at Sida, Stockholm.

6 ORGANISATION OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation will be commissioned by Sida's Regional Team Asia and managed by a joint steering group with members from the Regional Team and Sida's Department for Evaluation.

An informal reference group will be established representing relevant teams at Sida and comprising members based both at Sida headquarters and at embassies in the region.

Appendix 2 List of Contributions and Contacts

Health

Project ID and Title	Project Manager	Project Contact	Location
A7230280 UNICEF AdolescPrimaryPrev	Thomas Lundström	Editha Venus-Maslang; Shirley Prahbu	Bangkok
A7230191 HIV/AIDS Fond	Thomas Lundström	Rikard Elfving; Jaques Jeugmans	Manila

Human Rights and Democratic Governance

Project ID and Title	Project Manager	Project Contact	Location
A7261059 OECD ADB Anti Corruption2	Thomas Lundström	William Loo	Manila
A7260753 FORUM-ASIA	Margareta Koltai	Johan Hallenborg	Stockholm
A7200955 RWIRegAsien	Margareta Koltai	Johan Hallenborg	Lund, Stockholm
A7250194 SEAPA	David Holmertz	Johan Hallenborg; Roby Alampay	Bangkok, Stockholm

Natural Resources and Environment

Project ID and Title	Project Manager	Project Contact	Location
A0000252 CDIA	Nayoka Martinez-Bäckström	John-Olof Vinterhav; Lars Jämten; Hannes Cassens	Manila
A7300895 WSP Sanitet Mekong	Nayoka Martinez-Bäckström	Almud Weitz; Isabel Blackett; Guy Hutton; Ikabul Arianto	Jakarta
A7300916 MRC	Alexandra Wachtmeister	Jeremy Bird; Chongchith Chantharanonh; Bérengère Prince; Pham Tanh Hang; Hanne Bach; Xaypladetyh Choulamany	Vientiane
A7300900 CEPBCI	Alexandra Wachtmeister	Javed Hussain Mir	Bangkok
A7300746 RECOFTC	Renee Ankarfjärd	Susan MacKay	Bangkok
A7101603 RAPIDC	Jörgen Eriksson	Katarina Axelsson	Stockholm
A7300955 ICIMOD	Jörgen Eriksson	Mats Eriksson	Kathmandu
A7300847 Wetlands Alliance	Jörgen Eriksson	Hans Guttman	Bangkok
A7300640 Samarb.avtalFiV	Gunilla Eitrem	Lars Johansson; Magnus Thorell	Bangkok
A7300883 Kemikalieprog- sydostasien	Gunilla Eitrem	Ule Johansson	Göteborg
A7300891 IUCN Tsunami Mangroves FF	Gunilla Eitrem	Kent Jingfors; Don Macintosh; Aban Marker Kabraji	Bangkok

Research Cooperation

Project ID and Title	Project Manager	Project Contact	Location
A7500394 ARRPET	Renee Ankarfjärd	Ajit Annachhatre	Bangkok
A7500552 EEPSEA	Renee Ankarfjärd	Herminia Francisco	Singapore

Appendix 3 List of People Met

Health

Project ID and Title	Interviewed	Organisation	Date	Location
A7230280 UNICEF Adolesc- PrimaryPrev	Editha Venus- Maslang, Shirley Prahbu	UNICEF	14/09/2009	Bangkok
A7230191 HIV/AIDS Fond	Rikard Elfving, Jaques Jeugmans, Emiko Masaki	ADB RSDP & South East Dep.	07/09/2009	Manila

Human Rights and Democratic Governance

Project ID and Title	Interviewed	Organisation	Date	Location
A7261059 OECD ADB Anti Corruption2	William Loo, Surya P. Shrestha, Christine Urianrte	OECD/ADB	08/09/2009	Manila
A7260753 FORUM-ASIA	Johan Hallenborg	Utrikes- departementet	23/09/2009	Stockholm
A7200955 RWI RegAsien	Andreas Ljungholm	Raoul Wallenberg Institute	06/10/2009	Stockholm, Lund
A7250194 SEAPA	David Holmertz, Roby Alampay	Sida, SEAPA	01/09/2009 23/09/2009	Stockholm, Bangkok

Natural Resources and Environment

Project ID and Title	Interviewed	Organisation	Date	Location
A0000252 CDIA	John-Olof Vinterhav, Lars Jämten, Hannes Cassens	CDIA	08/09/2009 04/09/2009	Manila, Stockholm
A7300895 WSP Sanitet Mekong	Almud Weitz, Isabel Blackett, Guy Hutton, Ikabul Arianto	WSP ESA	15/09/2009	Jakarta
A7300916 MRC	Jeremy Bird, Chongchith Chantharanonh, Bérengère Prince, Pham Tanh Hang, Hanne Bach, Xaypladetyh Choulamany,	MRC	10/09/2009	Vientiane, Phnom Penh
A7300900 CEPBCI	Javed Hussain Mir	CEPBCI	24/09/2009	Bangkok
A7300746 RECOFTC	Susan MacKay	RECOFTC	16/09/2009	Bangkok
A7101603 RAPIDC	Katarina Axelsson	RAPIDC	11/09/2009	Stockholm
A7300955 ICIMOD	Mats Eriksson	ICIMOD	08/09/2009	Kathmandu
A7300847 Wetlands Alliance	Hans Guttman	Wetlands Alliance Programme	18/09/2009	Bangkok
A7300640 Samarb.avtalFiV	Lars Johansson, Magnus Thorell	Fiskeriverket, SEAFDEC	15/09/2009	Bangkok
A7300883 Kemikalieprog. sydostasien	Ule Johansson	KEMI	03/09/2009	Stockholm
A7300891 IUCN Tsunami Mangroves FF	Kent Jingfors, Don Macintosh, Aban Marker Kabraji	IUCN	17/09/2009	Bangkok

Research Cooperation

Project ID and Title	Interviewed	Organisation	Date	Location
A7500394 ARRPET	Ajit Annachhatre	AIT	16/09/2009	Bangkok
A7500552 EEPSEA	Herminia Francisco	EEPSEA	08/09/2009	Singapore

Donors, Regional Advisors & Others

Interviewed	Organisation	Date	Location
Joel Turkewitz	World Bank	14/09/2009	Bangkok
Sam Beaver	AusAID	15/09/2009	Bangkok
Johanna Joerges	GTZ Div. State & Democracy	08/09/2009	Manila
Sar Sambath	Anti Corruption Unit, Govt. of Cambodia	08/09/2009	Manila
Thomas Parks	Asia Foundation	16/09/2009	Bangkok
Tomas Lundström	Sida	25/08/2009	Stockholm
Renee Ankarfjärd	Sida	01/09/2009	Stockholm
Gunilla Eitrem	Sida	26/08/2009	Stockholm
David Holmertz	Sida	01/09/2009	Stockholm
Nayoka Martinez- Bäckström	Sida	01/09/2009	Stockholm
Johan Schaar	Sida	05/10/2009	Stockholm
Anders Granlund	SENSA	16/09/2009 25/08/2009	Bangkok, Stockholm
Åke Nilsson, Va Dany, Bo Tengnäs, Henrik Alffram	Geoscope AB, external consultants, SENSA evaluation	18/09/2009	Bangkok

Appendix 4 General Interview Question Guide

Tell about your project:

Content _____

Size _____

Objectives _____

What has been working well?

What successes have you had?

What has not been working so well?

What challenges have you faced?

How does this project address gender equality issues?

In what ways does this project directly address poverty and development?

Do you feel that this project is regional in scope?

What is it about this project that you feel adds value to the regional approach?

In what ways is your project effective? How does it add value to addressing regional issues?

Do you think it is replicable in other countries/or regionally?

How so?

Who was this intervention initiated by?

Does it have multiple donors?

By partner country or regional organisations?

What impact do you feel the initiation of this project has had on its added value?

How are targets set?

Are there measurable objectives, and are objectives possible to monitor?

Are targets monitored?

Are there monitoring and evaluation procedures, and what do they look like?

Are targets met?

Are results achieved?

If so, how?

If not, what do you need to be able to meet the targets?

What do you feel you need to make your project more effective?
To achieve your objectives more fully?

Do you think Sida has a good/effective regional approach in SE Asia?

Where do you feel your project falls in terms of the four Sida regional approaches?
In what ways?

Is there regional donor coordination?
What is the forum for this coordination?
What are other donors focusing on in terms of regional issues?

What are the critical regional issues now?
What is the most effective method for donors to address these issues?

Do you interact with SENSEA?
In what ways?
Is this helpful or not?
How so?

Is there something you expected us to ask that we have not?

Is there anything else you want to share with us?

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Sida's Regional Strategy for Cooperation with South East Asia, 2005–2009

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide insights into what constitutes the added value of a regional approach to development cooperation in Asia as well as in general terms, and to inform the preparation of the new Swedish regional strategy for Asia 2010–2014. The evaluation includes an analysis of contributions within the areas of democracy and human rights, environmental and sustainable use of natural resources, health (including HIV/AIDS) and research cooperation.

The evaluation concludes that the regional approach in Asia adds value to Swedish development cooperation. It provides Sida with an opportunity to support cooperation areas requiring cross – border action; it leads to complementary development efforts, such as enhancing dialogue and coordination among participating countries; and it leverages Sweden's comparative advantages to the region, including strengths in environmental techniques, research capacity, public administration, and financial resources.

Key lesson for the future is that partners for regional development cooperation needs to be carefully considered while at the same time ensuring that appropriate regional donor coordination platforms are in place. Sida also needs to better balance the number of contributions as well as match its resources and capacity for monitoring and evaluation with the complexity of regional development cooperation.

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