

Results strategy for Sweden's  
international development cooperation in

# Myanmar

2013 – 2017



REGERINGSKANSLIET

**Ministry for Foreign Affairs  
Sweden**

103 39 Stockholm

Telephone: +46 8 405 10 00, Web site: [www.ud.se](http://www.ud.se)

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**Government Offices  
of Sweden**

# Results strategy for Sweden's international development cooperation in Myanmar 2013–2017

## 1. Expected results

This results strategy governs the use of funds under appropriation item 'Asia' in the letter of appropriation for the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) for each fiscal year. The strategy is to apply for the period 2013–2017 and comprises a combined maximum of SEK 750 million. Target groups are mainly to be women and ethnic minorities.

The purpose of activities within the framework of the strategy is to contribute to peaceful and democratic development, as well as reducing poverty in all its dimensions in Myanmar. The activities are expected to result in the following:

### 1.1 Increased respect for human rights, freedom of expression and accountability

- Increased capacity of civil society and strengthened democracy actors.
- Increased political influence of women and ethnic minorities.
- More independent media and higher journalistic quality.

### 1.2 Broad popular participation in peace processes

- Strengthened capacity of national and regional institutions to manage and resolve conflicts in a peaceful way.
- Increased participation of women in the peace processes.
- Increased participation of ethnic minorities in the peace processes.

### 1.3 Improved health for women and children, focusing particularly on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

- Increased access to basic health services for women and children, especially in those parts of the country where access is poorest.
- Increased number of births taking place in the presence of trained staff, with the ambition that Sweden's contribution leads to at least an additional 2 800 births taking place in the presence of trained staff.

Given the inadequate access to statistics in Myanmar, results expectations cannot be quantified to the extent desired. Therefore, in future preparatory phases, Sida is to specify the expected results so as to facilitate performance monitoring in strategy reports.

## 2. Country context

Myanmar is one of the world's least developed countries, with widespread poverty and an enormous need for reforms relating to democracy and the rule of law. The country is ranked 149th of 168 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index (2013). Much of the population lives in poverty and the inequalities between different parts of the country are large (see, for example, the UNDP's *Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar 2009–2010*). There are major shortcomings with regard to access to basic social services. From a regional perspective, both infant mortality and maternal mortality are high. Two thirds of the population earn their living from agriculture (including fishing and forestry).

Myanmar is rich in natural resources and has a young, but predominantly unskilled, labour force. The country has the potential for rapid and sustainable development, but there is also a risk that rapid growth can lead to exploitation and environmental degradation. People without land rights are particularly vulnerable.

A process of political and economic reform began in 2011. Most political prisoners have been released and relatively free and fair by-elections have

been held. Censorship of the media has been softened and exile media are gradually establishing in the country. Negotiations have begun with the armed ethnic resistance groups and ten truce agreements have been entered into.

Sweden's support up to now has contributed to the development of a more robust and pluralistic civil society, improved health, increased media capacity and increased exposure of decision-makers to democratic attitudes and standards.

However, Myanmar still faces major democratic challenges. The constitution lacks popular support and guarantees the military a quarter of the seats in parliament, which gives them a veto on constitutional amendments. The capacity to implement political will in practice is low. Implemented political and economic reforms must be institutionalised. There are still political prisoners, and those who have been released have not been released unconditionally.

In addition, the protracted conflicts between the central government and various ethnic groups, which continue to cause great human suffering and violations of human rights, pose a serious obstacle to progress. The ceasefire agreements rest on shaky grounds and must be followed up with concrete action. The armed conflict in Kachin continues. There is extensive discrimination against minorities such as the Rohingya. The role of the army in the conflicts in ethnic minority areas is still key.

Broad participation and sustainable peace agreements to resolve the conflicts with the ethnic groups, as well as reconciliation work, are crucial for the development of a more democratic Myanmar.

## 3. Activities

The uncertainty regarding the political situation in Myanmar requires great flexibility in implementing the strategy. The movement towards reform and democratisation in Myanmar still rests on fragile grounds. The military has remained strong in the country, and the ethnic and religious conflicts could reignite despite the ceasefires.

A large part of Sweden's aid should continue to be provided through multi-lateral channels, joint donor funds and civil society organisations. Assuming there is continued political stabilisation, financial support to the state and its institutions should eventually be considered. Limitations remain, however, and budget support is not considered possible during the strategy period.

Sweden is to actively participate in and encourage various coordination mechanisms to reduce the risk of fragmentation. This is particularly important because many new development actors are now establishing in the country while public administration remains weak.

A conflict-sensitive perspective is to guide all of Sweden's development assistance so as to improve the chances of lasting peace. Given the conflict-ridden situation in Myanmar and its susceptibility to rapid change, great emphasis should be placed on risk management.

### **3.1 Increased respect for human rights, freedom of expression and accountability**

In its aid since 2009, Sweden has emphasised support for democratic development and human rights, especially civil and political rights, in addition to humanitarian aid. This has resulted in increased capacity of various actors in civil society. Supporting a vibrant, pluralistic and accountable civil society is to continue to be a priority. Civil society organisations are important for supporting ethnic minorities in their pursuit of rights issues and the conduct of policy dialogue. Through its support to civil society, Sweden is also to actively contribute to ensuring that legislation and other instruments include a gender equality perspective and strengthen women's and ethnic groups' political influence so that their rights are respected. Sweden is to build on and develop the contact network and confidence it has created through previous cooperation with civil society actors.

Since the 1990s, Sweden has supported the country's exile media, which has resulted in the reporting of events that otherwise may not have reached the outside world. With the removal of strict media legislation

and censorship, the establishment of several exile organisations in the country is under way. However, many journalists lack basic knowledge of democracy and human rights, as well as of gender equality and the specific situation of ethnic groups. With its established network and a tradition of openness and freedom of expression, Sweden has clear added value in this area that should be utilised. The possibilities of supporting the increased use of a free internet and its future role should be analysed further.

### **3.2 Broad popular participation in peace processes**

Sweden has a long tradition of supporting peace processes in similar environments, but not in Myanmar. The issues are sensitive and careful analyses will be required to select the right areas, cooperation partners and approaches. Possible support in the area may include initiatives that strengthen or build trust between the government and ethnic groups, and between different ethnic groups. It may also involve skills enhancement initiatives to increase the participation of discriminated groups. The active participation of women at all levels of the peace processes, in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1325, is a priority issue that Sweden is particularly well-placed to pursue.

### **3.3 Improved health for women and children, focusing particularly on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)**

Sweden has been active in the health sector since 2004 through its work on the rights perspective. The rights perspective has also been adopted in the creation of the new 3MDG Fund. The fund, which focuses on maternal and child health, and the health system in general, attempts to reach the parts of Myanmar that have the poorest access to good health and medical care.

Sweden should give high priority to SRHR and action against HIV/AIDS and to making sure that support reaches the most vulnerable groups, such as women, young people and ethnic minorities, and in doing so work to strengthen health systems. Furthermore, dialogue should be conducted

with the health ministry and other relevant decision-makers so that Myanmar can eventually assume responsibility for health and medical care in the country.

#### **4. Follow-up**

The follow-up is to be carried out in accordance with the Government's guidelines for results strategies.