

Results strategy for Bangladesh 2014–2020

1. Expected results

This results strategy governs the use of funds under appropriation item 6 'Asia' in the letter of appropriation for the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) for each budget year. The strategy covers the period 2014–2020 and comprises a total of SEK 1.6 billion.

The aim is to contribute to improving the conditions for people to raise themselves out of poverty, strengthening democracy, respect for human rights and gender equality, and to contribute to sustainable development.

Actions under the strategy are expected to contribute to the achievement of sub-objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the Government's aid policy framework (Government Communication 2013/14:131). The activities are expected to produce the following results:

Strengthened democracy and gender equality, greater respect for human rights and freedom from oppression (sub-objective 1)

- Enhanced capacity to practise democratic governance, with a focus on transparency and combating corruption.
- Enhanced capacity of public institutions to combat violence against women.
- Enhanced capacity of civil society to work towards greater accountability and contribute to knowledge about democracy, gender equality (including violence against women), and human rights.

Better opportunities for people living in poverty to contribute to and benefit from economic growth and obtain a good education (sub-objective 2)

- Greater opportunities for women to participate on the labour market.
- Improved dialogue between social partners on the labour market.

A better environment, limited climate impact and greater resilience to environmental impact, climate change and natural disasters (sub-objective 3)

- Greater resilience and flexibility to deal with climate change, environmental impacts and natural disasters in vulnerable areas, including improved disaster management systems.
- Strengthened institutional capacity among authorities and other actors to better manage water resources in particularly neglected

and vulnerable areas.

Improved basic health, focusing particularly on women and children, sexual and reproductive health and rights (sub-objective 4)

- Reduced mortality in children under the age of 5.
- More women with access to good maternal health care.
- More people with access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Better access to sustainable and resilient community water, sanitation and hygiene services.

2. Country context

Bangladesh has experienced significant development over recent decades. Between 2000 and 2010, the share of the population living in poverty fell from 49 to 32 per cent. Several social indicators have shown considerable improvements. For many years, growth has been stable at around six per cent, and both employment and disposable income have grown. The export industry, not least the textiles sector, and remittances from Bangladeshis abroad are two important factors for the economy.

However, some 50 million people in Bangladesh still live below the poverty line of USD 1.25 per person per day. The country's democracy is underdeveloped, and the political climate is polarised. The public institutions are weak, and respect for human rights is patchy. Bangladesh's civil society, while extensive, has limited capacity to carry out advocacy work. The situation for women has improved in recent years, but from a weak starting point. Violence against women is still commonplace. Many of the two million young people entering the labour market each year lack relevant skills or other conditions for participation in the labour market. Women face particular challenges in this regard. Substandard working conditions and lack of dialogue between the social partners are also significant problems. Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated countries, with a vulnerable geographical situation. It is considered one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change. It is often hit by natural disasters, which is likely to get worse as a result of climate change. Maternal and child mortality have fallen, but the health system is inadequate, and there are significant regional inequalities.

Sweden has provided development assistance to Bangladesh since the country became independent in 1971. As a result of its long-standing cooperation, Sweden is seen as a reliable partner and is in a good position to work in difficult and controversial areas such as sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

3. Activities

International aid constitutes just a small share of the Bangladeshi economy. The choice of result areas for Swedish aid has therefore been made on the basis of where contributions can have a strategic impact on Bangladesh's development challenges. Account has also been taken of the country's positive economic and social development and its ambition to become a middle-income country, as well as the potential for synergies between result areas. This applies not least from a gender equality perspective where, for example, greater respect for human rights and better access to health care give women more opportunities to contribute to and participate in economic development which, in turn, enhances their capacity to assert their rights.

Sida can use the cooperation partners and structures which most effectively contribute to the attainment of results which are sustainable in the long term. Sida is encouraged to develop and apply innovative forms of cooperation and financing, including results-based aid. Widespread corruption and related risks should be given particular attention and be addressed in the design of the aid. Bangladesh suffers from recurring conflicts associated with political polarisation, religion, natural resources and climate/environmental issues. It is therefore important for an ongoing conflict analysis to be undertaken and a conflict-sensitive approach to be used in the development cooperation. Sweden is to work for a coherent and effective EU policy within the field of aid, above all by taking an active part in aid coordination and joint EU programming.

Given that deficiencies in the rule of law and weak public institutions are an overriding obstacle to development in Bangladesh, Swedish aid is to support contributions to strengthen democratic governance. Support to enhance the capacity to exercise democratic governance can also include contributions to increase respect for human rights. Enhanced democracy, gender equality and respect for human rights should also be mainstreamed in all result areas.

Inclusive, sustainable growth is an important condition for Bangladesh to make progress in its quest to become a middle-income country. Bangladesh's five-year development plan states that increased growth is dependent on more jobs in manufacturing, which requires both that more jobs be created and that workers become more employable. Women are still markedly under-represented in the labour market. Swedish aid is therefore to contribute to improve the conditions for women's participation in the labour market, for example by supporting vocational education and training. In this regard, efforts geared towards environmentally sustainable activities should be pursued, so as to contribute to the shift towards a greener economy. Better dialogue

between the social partners in order to improve working conditions is also important for increased productivity and a safer environment for workers. Dialogue with the social partners to raise awareness of human rights, the right to join a union and corporate social responsibility is also very important. There is good potential for cooperation with the private sector, not least in the textiles sector.

Both individuals and institutions need support to increase their resilience to climate change and environmental risks. People living in poverty are at risk of being hit particularly hard by climate and environmental change, and the focus of Swedish aid should therefore be on particularly neglected and vulnerable areas and groups in society. Contributions in this area are important, as strengthened disaster management systems and resilience lower the risk of existing investments being lost to natural disasters. Sweden, with its experience in Bangladesh, can contribute to ensuring that work to strengthen resilience takes place on a cross-sectoral basis, also with regard to environmental health risks. Greater resilience and adaptation to the risks of climate and environmental change make people healthier and better equipped to educate and provide for themselves. Increased capacity to manage water resources can also be expected to lead to better access to sustainable community water and sanitation services.

Given the importance of continued improvements in maternal and child mortality rates, not least for the poorest segments of society, Swedish aid is to continue to support efforts in this regard. Deficiencies in the health system contribute to maternal and child mortality. Support could therefore build on Sweden's comparative advantage in, for example, health financing. As a large proportion of child mortality is water-related, e.g. contaminated water or drowning, activities should also focus on this aspect. Synergies can be expected between contributions to reduce maternal and child mortality rates and activities to increase respect for human rights and to promote women's labour market participation.

4. Follow-up

Follow-up procedures are outlined in the Guidelines for results strategies within Sweden's international aid.