



SWEDEN

“ A sharp change of direction - destination still unknown ”

By CONCORD Sweden

Main trends

In 2022, Swedish development cooperation faced volatile budget changes. Sweden responded to Russia's war on Ukraine by holding back EUR 1 billion from development programmes to fund the reception of Ukrainian refugees in Sweden. After pushback from stakeholders and fewer than expected refugees, Sweden ended up spending only 40% of the predicted amount. The former government had vowed to restore money to the aid budget. However, the coalition government elected in 2022 did not return the unused amount. The three coalition parties and their ally, extreme right Sweden Democrats, all differ on development policy priorities. The two smaller government parties remain committed to international cooperation and Sweden's longstanding 1 % of GNI budget in principle. However, the two bigger parties promote aid cuts and a shift towards “Swedish interests” in areas such as migration, security, climate and trade. Migration policy conditionality is debated, but so far, few political announcements seem grounded in reality. The priorities of the government for 2023 and beyond are clearly focused on supporting Ukraine and the neighbourhood; finding synergies between trade, private business and development; and humanitarian relief. Focus areas other than those mentioned above exist on paper but have not received corresponding resources or attention. Also, it is not clear which are the priorities for implementation. After one year, not much has been presented that supports the government's intentions of improving effectiveness.

Government's relationship with civil society

There are formalised Joint Commitments to dialogue in Swedish development cooperation between the MFA and CSOs. These entail a Joint Commitments document with (unevenly applied) guidelines for dialogue at embassy and government level, a Joint Commitments steering group, and an Annual Dialogue Forum. Specific units at the MFA and Sida can also initiate more specific thematic or geographic dialogue through formal and informal meetings/processes with civil society.

Reported ODA: EUR 5117 million
0.90% GNI (↓ from 0.91% in 2021)

Non-inflated ODA: EUR 4756 million
0.83% GNI (↓ from 0.89% in 2021)

Total inflated ODA: EUR 361 million
7% of total



Swedish governmental institutions traditionally include civil society in development policy dialogue. Several ministers in the current government have been criticised by CSOs and by opposition parties for scaling down the dialogue with CSOs to mere information sessions and refraining from it on issues with direct implications for CSOs' work or which might significantly impact on development policy as a whole. The frequency of meetings between the ministry and CSOs did improve somewhat after the government finished its initial internal drafts of policy priorities in April.

The Swedish government should:

- **Confirm the overarching goal of Swedish development cooperation, as defined in Parliament, and make sure that new goals related to “Swedish interests” are clearly connected to that overarching goal, a poverty and human rights perspective, DAC rules and development effectiveness principles.**
- **Ensure that the planned process of focusing Swedish aid maintains a focus on LDCs and is done using transparent criteria aimed at poverty reduction, democracy and human rights defenders and commitments in international frameworks for sustainable development.**
- **Account for the ODA share of GNI in the national budget proposals, to allow independent reviews of Sweden's commitment to the international ODA targets, and also adjust recurring issues with over-forecasting of IDRC.**
- **Live up to the government's promises of increased financial support to civil society, human rights and democracy movements and the rights of women and girls, with a focus on underfunded and local actors in difficult contexts and to civil society as a development actor in its own right.**