

Strategy for Sweden's development
cooperation with

the Democratic Republic of the Congo

2015–2019



REGERINGSKANSLIET

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**Government Offices
of Sweden**

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1. Direction

Swedish development cooperation with DR Congo within the framework of this strategy aims to contribute to strengthening the conditions for sustainable peace and statebuilding and improve living conditions for people living in poverty and oppression. The strategy is valid for the period 2015–2019. The strategy comprises a total of SEK 1 250 million for the period, of which SEK 1 225 million is for activities conducted by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and SEK 25 million for the activities of the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA)¹.

Sida's contributions within the framework of the strategy are expected to contribute to:

Strengthened democracy and gender equality, and greater respect for human rights

- Strengthened democratic institutions and rule of law
- Increased participation of women in elected decision-making forums, primarily at local level
- Strengthened capacity of civil society to promote transparency, accountability and improved respect for human rights
- Increased transparency surrounding trade in conflict minerals

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

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

- Improved opportunities for productive employment for women and young people that is socially and environmentally sustainable

Improved basic health

- Improved access to high-quality child and maternal care
- Increased awareness of and access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), focusing on young people
- Strengthened capacity to prevent and alleviate the consequences of sexual and gender-based violence

Protecting human security and freedom from violence

- Strengthened conflict resolution and reconciliation initiatives that contribute to local conflict resolution
- Strengthened capacity among reintegrated internally displaced persons and refugees, children previously associated with armed forces and groups and recipient local communities to deal with recurring crises

The Folke Bernadotte Academy's contributions within the framework of the strategy are expected to contribute to:

- Strengthened capacity among individuals and institutions to promote security and human rights

2. Country context

The situation in DR Congo is unstable and the development challenges are major. For several decades, the eastern parts of the country have been marked by conflicts, resulting in a protracted humanitarian crisis with almost three million internally displaced persons. The UN has a Stabilization Mission – MONUSCO – on the ground, tasked with protecting civilians, among other things. The recruitment of child soldiers occurs in several armed groups and to a certain extent also in the government forces. The ability to deal with recurring crises and conflicts is weak. The root causes of the conflicts, such as natural resources and land issues, as well as the involvement of neighbouring countries in eastern DR Congo, have not been dealt with despite these issues being included in several peace agreements. The illegal trade in minerals, timber and other natural resources is contributing to the conflicts in eastern DR Congo. The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region of 2013 forms the basis of continued dialogue and peacebuilding regionally.

Poverty is widespread throughout the country. DR Congo is in second last place on the UNDP Human Development Index for 2014. The proportion of the population living below the poverty line of USD 1.25 per day is approximately 70 per cent. However, economic growth has been relatively high in recent years, at around 7 per cent per year. There is potential to sustainably develop industries based on the country's huge natural resources, including minerals and hydropower. So far, revenue from these industries has not benefited the population, partly because of widespread corruption and a non-existent distribution policy.

The health system is suffering from considerable deficiencies, and a major share of health care is provided by civil society with the support of national and international organisations. Child mortality among those under the age of five and maternal mortality are among the highest in the world, despite certain progress having been made. Access to sexual and reproductive health services, including contraceptives, is poor. Young women and girls are particularly vulnerable.

The Congolese state is weak and corruption is all pervasive in society. There are major deficiencies regarding democratic governance, functioning legal systems and the respect for human rights. DR Congo is considered one of the least gender-equal countries in the world, and the status of women and girls in society is very low. Other groups also live in extremely vulnerable conditions. Sexual and gender-based violence is a serious problem, also in non-conflict areas.

A majority of the population currently living in poverty is directly dependent on access to natural resources and is vulnerable to external disasters, such as drought, landslides and flooding. Environmental damage, climate change and poor access to, or conflict over, natural resources thus adversely impact their livelihood.

The motive behind the orientation of Swedish development cooperation with DR Congo is widespread poverty and the conflicts in the eastern parts of the country. Sweden has a long history of development cooperation in DR Congo in areas such as human rights, good governance, gender equality and basic health care. In addition to this, extensive humanitarian aid is provided. Moreover, Sweden has contributed personnel to the UN and EU military and civilian operations in the country. A regional approach to the countries in the Great Lakes region is being sought.

DR Congo has a poverty reduction strategy covering four areas: strengthened governance and peace; greater diversification of the economy and increased employment; better access to basic public services and strengthened human capital; and environmental protection and resilience to climate change. The political will and ability of the Congolese government are weak when it comes to dealing with the country's extensive development needs, the rich natural resources and the root causes of the conflicts. In addition, the capacity of state institutions at national level is low. Cooperation with state actors has therefore been limited, and cooperation has mostly taken place at local level.

3. Activities

Swedish development cooperation is to focus on some of the root causes of the conflicts and obstacles to development.

Poor peoples' perspectives on development and a rights perspective should be mainstreamed into all activities. Attention should be paid to, inter alia, gender equality, children's rights, and the rights of other vulnerable individuals and groups that are discriminated against. Gender equality is to remain a Swedish priority in DR Congo. An environmental and a climate perspective should be integrated in order to promote long-term sustainable development.

Focus of activities and the specific context govern the choice of partners and forms of cooperation. A balance is to be sought when choosing partners. Cooperation with public administration and institutions may take place to a limited extent as a complement to cooperation with other actors. To ensure that cooperation gains traction and keeps a focus, a combination of local and strategic national support will be sought. Cooperation with the government administration and its agencies at central level may take place if it is deemed strategic for contributing to statebuilding. Otherwise, cooperation should preferably take place with authorities at local level.

Cooperation should be structured to contribute to strengthened capacity and long-term sustainable results. Long-term, programme-based support may be combined with strategic and catalytic contributions. As the situation in DR Congo is marked by conflict and rapid change, flexibility is required in development cooperation and a conflict-sensitive approach needs to be applied. Sida is to be prepared for strategic contributions of a limited nature to contribute to desired results at crucial stages. Synergies between the different areas of the strategy are to be harnessed as far as possible. Complementarity with other relevant strategies is also to be sought. Moreover, activities should, where appropriate, be coordinated with supplementary humanitarian aid and synergies are to be sought.

Sweden's activities in DR Congo are to contribute to achieving the five peacebuilding and statebuilding goals in the New Deal and the principles in the New Deal on cooperation and ownership². Use of the national systems should also increase gradually as a part of long-term statebuilding. The Swedish government assesses that general budget support is not an option at present.

Civil society and the media can be important agents for change. Civil society often enjoys the trust of the people as civil society organisations provide a large share of public services. Together with the media, civil society has an important role to play in promoting accountability and democratic development. However, the capacity of civil society is weak and needs to be strengthened.

Sida can support cross-border programmes and collaboration between countries in the region as a complement to, and in synergy with, bilateral contributions as part of efforts to counter the regional conflict and promote regional integration.

Instability in parts of the country and the Government's insufficient willingness to implement reforms are contributing factors to the strategy being characterized by risk. Risk assessment and risk management are therefore crucial. Risks can be spread by combining contributions of varying risk levels so as to achieve the best results possible at an acceptable risk level. The risk of corruption is high and should therefore be given particular attention in the design of development cooperation. Wherever possible, development cooperation should contribute to preventing and combating corruption.

The forms for follow-up are described in the Government's Guidelines for results strategies within Sweden's international aid and also apply to the activities of Sida as well as the FBA. The integration of environment and climate issues should also be followed up within the framework of standard reporting. Sida and the FBA are to report separately to the Government

²A New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States with objectives in areas such as inclusive political solutions, people's security, access to legal systems, employment and living standards, management of central government revenue, and public services capacity.

Offices (Ministry for Foreign Affairs). Sida and the FBA are to continuously keep each other informed about the implementation of the strategy.

Strengthened democracy and gender equality, and greater respect for human rights

Democratic institutions, good governance, accountability and openness, public participation, less corruption and combating impunity are all necessary conditions to enable people living in poverty in DR Congo to improve their living conditions. This area is also very important for both statebuilding as well as peacebuilding in DR Congo. Rule of law and respect for human rights are essential in order to establish democratic governance in DR Congo. The capacity of the judicial system therefore needs to be strengthened and civil society needs to be supported to give citizens access to public services when the State does not have the capacity to provide such services.

Development cooperation is also to focus on strengthening democratic institutions and contributing to greater respect for political and civil rights, such as the rights of marginalised groups and the rights of the child, freedom of expression and human rights defenders, as well as greater openness and more opportunities for citizens to hold decision-makers to account. Civil society organisations are important actors for change. Within the frame-work of support to the legal sector and civil society, efforts to combat impunity and corruption are to be integrated, including prosecution for crimes under the Rome Statute. The local, regional and national elections that are planned up til 2016 will be important for the country's future development. Electoral support is to be considered.

Through development cooperation, Sweden is to highlight issues concerning socioeconomic and cultural obstacles to gender equality, as well as issues concerning the institutional frameworks, such as the family code. To contribute to greater gender equality, activities are to focus on women's increased participation and influence in political processes and peace processes, in line with Security Council Resolution 1325 and the subsequent resolutions. Contributions may also help prevent sexual and gender-based violence. Men and boys are to be involved.

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

The conditions for self-sufficiency and productive employment are severely limited by the enormous development challenges, such as conflicts, corruption and lack of reforms. It is estimated that almost 90 per cent of economic activity takes place in the informal sector, where agriculture is the key industry. Sweden's development cooperation should therefore primarily focus on improving living conditions for vulnerable groups and promoting their ability to earn an income and support themselves in an environmentally, economically and socially sustainable way. Important industries that sustain the majority of the population include agriculture, forestry and mining. Areas in which small-scale extraction of conflict minerals takes place should be considered and activities may include contributions that help to integrate small-scale mining into the legal framework or help to establish alternative livelihood opportunities for people earning their living primarily from illegal trade in conflict minerals. An environment and climate perspective, including the environmentally sustainable use of land, natural resources and ecosystems, is to be an integral part of contributions to improve health, reduce vulnerability and increase resilience to environmental impacts, climate change and natural disasters. Women's livelihoods and empowerment should be prioritised, particularly with regard to land rights. The potential exists to make agriculture more efficient and to integrate rights issues and contribute to reduced climate impacts in the forestry sector.

Improved basic health

Improved access to quality health care can be crucial in contributing to reducing poverty and improve living conditions. Swedish development cooperation is to focus on improving access to integrated primary health care, with a focus on the most vulnerable mothers, children and young people. Development cooperation could, for example, focus on health services and information that contributes to improve the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of women and men, with a particular focus on young people. To create the conditions for sustainable results, SRHR contributions should include boys and men. It is crucial to

strengthen national health systems so as to ensure the long-term sustainability of results.

Swedish development cooperation is to focus on supporting the care and treatment of victims of sexual and gender-based violence. Synergies in this area are to be sought with preventive contributions on sexual and gender-based violence.

Sweden's comparative advantages for activities in this area include a broad SRHR perspective that covers access to contraceptives, comprehensive sexuality education and the combating of sexual and gender-based violence, and a clear link to overarching gender equality work.

Protecting human security and freedom from violence

The lack of human security represents a considerable barrier to development in DR Congo. The legitimacy and capacity of the Congolese State are poor and the peace- and statebuilding processes that are necessary remain very weak. The continued conflicts in the eastern provinces have caused extensive human suffering and resilience to recurring crises is weak. Landmines and other explosive remnants of war add to this insecurity.

Development cooperation is to focus on supporting peace- and statebuilding processes, even though results can only be expected in the long term. Focus should be placed on conflict resolution and reconciliation initiatives at local level, and may also help to reduce conflicts over natural resources. Increased participation of women in peace processes is to be sought, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the subsequent resolutions.

Moreover, development cooperation is to focus on strengthening the resilience of the population to recurring crises and conflicts as a means of contributing to greater stability and security. Special focus should be placed on the safe and sustainable return of internally displaced persons and refugees, children previously associated with armed groups and recipient local communities.

The FBA's activities are to focus on strengthening capacity for greater respect for human rights in the security sector. To achieve this, the FBA could, for example, be active in three areas: greater knowledge of human rights, strengthened democratic governance of and within the security sector, and strengthened democratic dialogue at national and local level. In addition, activities are to contribute to enhancing the ability of civil society and state structures to prevent sexual and gender-based violence and strengthen women's capacity to participate in peace and security promotion. Activities are also to focus on enhancing the ability of local communities to sustainably reintegrate former combatants. Contributions could, for example, include training, secondments, advice, methods development and policy support, and should primarily take place in eastern DR Congo, with the possibility of contributions in Kinshasa.