

The Management of Results Information at Sida

**Proposals for agency routines
and priorities in the information age**

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**Department for Evaluation
and Internal Audit**

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1 Introduction

This report presents a set of proposals for new routines and priorities for the management of results information at Sida. The purpose is to contribute to an efficient use of such information by and within the agency.

The background to the study is that Sida, in particular the Stockholm Office, rarely has easy access to relevant and useful data, for example when producing annual reports and results analyses, when providing information to the Swedish public, when preparing special monitoring and evaluation initiatives, and sometimes even when managing individual programmes.¹ These problems are due mainly to the facts:

- that relevant and useful information about individual projects and programmes is not always produced in the first place,
- that such information, even if produced, is rarely summarised in a user-friendly format, and
- that the information is never disseminated in an optimal way to potential users within the agency.

The report was prepared by Sida's Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit (UTV) on the basis of a case study of four bilateral programmes in the education and natural resources sectors in Tanzania: educational materials (ECU), decentralisation of education (BMU), teachers' training, and LAMP/Babati, as they are labelled in Sida's PLUS system for operative planning and financial management. Main sources of information were relevant planning, monitoring and evaluation documents available at the Swedish embassy in Dar es Salaam, and interviews with embassy, consultancy and counterpart staff.

The report is kept deliberately short in order to be digestible to a broader audience within Sida. Some of the proposals presented are likely to be controversial, partly because they imply a break away from current agency practices, partly because they will be perceived as adding burden to already time-constrained staff. The proposals are however consistent with other major initiatives already underway to adapt the agency to the information age (such as the project for document management and workflow), and the administrative benefits of the proposals are likely to outweigh the costs even to individual programme officers.

It is also this study's conviction that Sida's management information system in any case has to be quite thoroughly re-engineered in the next few years to meet increasing public demand for a more transparent and productive "new bureaucracy". Sida can do itself a favour by being in the forefront of such public agency development.

¹ These problems have recently been highlighted in The Institute of Social Studies *The Eye of the Needle – Evaluation of Swedish-Mozambican Development Co-operation Country Strategy*, December 2000, (page 39–40): "The absence of a meaningful information system [at Sida] is an expensive and inefficient affair... The present data management system engenders built-in obsolescence – an inefficient system, the use of which inevitably invites periodic bursts of data detection, search and gathering (often carried out by consultants) in an attempt to catch up, yet always falling behind."

2 Observations

Three observations made by the study of the Tanzania programmes are particularly relevant to the purpose of the study:

- ❑ counterparts' progress reports on programme expenditure, activities and outputs are not always compliant with Sida's reporting standards,
- ❑ there is an almost overwhelming amount of monitoring, evaluation and related reports produced by different programme stakeholders, and
- ❑ a considerable part of the information about programme results is not routinely made available to other important stakeholders, such as Sida's Stockholm Office.

Before elaborating on these observations (in sections 2.1–2.3 respectively) it is necessary to define the key terms used in the report:

Table 1: Definition of key terms

English term	Swedish term	Meaning	Example
Impact	Långsiktig effekt	What the programme contributes to in terms of wider developments	Increased Babati District Council revenue
Outcome	Kortsiktig effekt	What the programme achieves in terms of benefits to the target group	Strengthened Babati District Council administration for revenue collection
Output	Prestation	What the programme delivers in terms of goods and services to the target group	Fifteen seminars on revenue collection for ten Babati District Council staff
Activity	Aktivitet	What the programme does	Planning and implementation of seminars on tax revenue collection

Since this report concerns routines and priorities for the management of results information, a few more definitions are necessary: *results information* refers to data on actual (as opposed to planned) outputs, outcomes and impact of Sida sponsored co-operation, *management* to the production, processing and dissemination of such information, and *routines* and *priorities* to the more practical steps required by proper information management.

2.1 Information about programme progress

Part of UTV's study concerned an in-depth assessment of the content of counterpart reports on programme progress, i.e. on programme expenditure, activities and outputs. Some thirty quarterly reports, produced by the four programmes during the period 1997–99, were assessed against three reporting standards derived from *Sidas avtalshandbok* (appendix 3b, article 10) and *Sida at Work* (page 73–76):

- ❑ Standard 1: *The presentation of total programme expenditure should be broken down and structured in the same way as the annual plan of operation.* In other words, if the annual plan of operation concerns a total of sixty separately budgeted projects (or programme components), the report should be structured in the same way and order, and follow-up on the expenditure of each project (or component).
- ❑ Standard 2: *Reallocations of funds during the reporting period should be explained.* In other words, if the programme management found reason to reallocate funds from one programme component to another, this must be explained in the report, including a specification of the origin, destination and amount of reallocated funds.
- ❑ Standard 3: *The content of programme components should be specified as far as possible.* In other words, if one of the components of an education sector programme is the production of course materials, the report should specify the type and quantity of the produced material.

How well do the reviewed quarterly reports comply with these reporting standards?² The LAMP/Babati reports comply with all three standards. The funds disbursed by Sida are reported on in accordance with the annual plan of operation. Where deviations from the plan were found necessary during the course of the programme, and reallocations between or within components made, this is generally explained in the reports. Finally, the specification of programme components could hardly be expected to be more detailed and informative.³

In contrast, the reports on the education sector programmes are not compliant with Sida's standards. For example, there is no breakdown of the total BMU and ECU 1999 expenditure in accordance with their respective action plans, or at all.⁴ The number of reallocations made between different education programme components is probably large, but the reports do not explain how funds are reallocated. This means that the reports do not signal when individual components are considered completed and terminated. It also means that it is difficult to understand what lies in the pipeline and how the programmes actually develop.

The reports on the teachers' training programme are good examples of reporting which specifies what individual components actually consist of. The reports do not provide quantitative information about the goods and services produced, but this is understandable since most components are not easily quantifiable, and since data on actual quantities in any case may not always be available to the Department of Teachers' Education which produces the reports.

The BMU and ECU programmes mainly include components for the procurement, production and distribution of large and uniform quantities of educational materials, ideal for quantitative reporting. The BMU reports provide detailed and specific information about the Pilot Project for Publishing (PPP4) component, which represents almost 50% of the 1998–99 budget. However,

² A special paper, provided by UTV upon request, presents the detailed findings of the assessment of the quarterly and annual reports (UTV Working Paper 2001:4).

³ Except in the case of the April-June 1999 quarterly report which was produced by the Ministry for Regional Administration and Local Government (the Swedish Embassy's official counterpart), not by the Babati District Council (the embassy's actual counterpart) which produced all other and, hardly surprising, far more informative reports. The Ministry has absolutely no chance of knowing in detail what is going on in the LAMP/Babati programme.

⁴ The expenditure breakdown of the teachers' training programme is consistent with the annual plans of operation. But it is unclear to what extent the reported expenditure also involves funds from previous Sida programmes and funds provided by the Government of Tanzania and other donors. Consequently, it is not clear if all the funds disbursed by Sida under the present agreement are covered in the reports.

the reporting on backlog outputs (i.e. materials production remaining from previous years) is generally very difficult to understand. In some cases it is outright incomprehensible. The ECU reports are similar: they specify and quantify some components, mainly in the area of central production, but not others, chiefly in the area of decentralised production and improvements of physical facilities.⁵

Even if the reports on the education sector programmes do not comply with Sida's reporting standards, it should be noted that it was only a few years ago that the Swedish National Audit Office concluded that a number of counterpart reports were missing at the embassy in Dar es Salaam.⁶ Since then, the embassy has made a determined effort to make sure that the reports in fact are submitted. As a result, all the reports required by this study were available at the embassy. A second step of this effort is now required to make sure that the actual content of these reports comply with Sida's standards. But how?

2.2 Information about development effects

Development effects are defined as the outcome and impact of Sida sponsored programmes. Without information about development effects, Sida and its counterparts cannot determine whether or not the investments made are justifiable. For example, if it is unclear if the Babati District Council strengthened its administration for revenue collection as a result of ten seminars (see table 1), it is equally unclear whether these seminars in fact were meaningful.

A somewhat surprising observation made by UTV is that there is a whole jungle of results oriented documentation on the reviewed programmes, generated by almost an overkill of monitoring, evaluation and related initiatives. The LAMP/Babati programme has produced a long row of internal monitoring and evaluation reports⁷, and there is almost a meter of baseline data stored at the LAMP Office in Dar es Salaam. The embassy has contracted a monitoring team which semi-annually produces reports that are packed with results information, and a separate in-depth impact research study of the programme has been undertaken. On top of that there is also a number of impact related studies carried out by independent research institutions such as Swedish universities.

There is a risk that all these activities consume too much time and resources, for example at the expense of programme implementation. This was also a concern expressed by the consultant to the programme. In particular, there is a risk that the value added by this long row of monitoring and evaluation activities is limited (and not justifying the costs). The semi-annual monitoring team mission reports are a case in point. The team has done an excellent job in summarising programme progress so far, and in providing what appears to be relevant and useful recommendations. But little of the information found in the reports is actually new to the

⁵ It can be noted that the quality of the reports has been markedly reduced since the BMU and ECU began to report jointly in 1999.

⁶ The Swedish National Audit Office, *Revisionspromemoria avseende löpande granskning vid den integrerade utlandsmyndigheten i Tanzania*, 1998-06-18 (page 7).

⁷ See e.g. LAMP, *Internal monitoring report*, February 1998, and *LAMP impact study*, March 1999.

programme managers (even if it may be new to Sida), which is hardly surprising since the main source of information of the monitoring team is the programme management itself.⁸

The documentation on the education programmes is a bit difficult to discuss since time and planning of UTV's study did not allow for a careful search of reports available outside the embassy. Judging from planning documents, however, there is quite a large number of internal monitoring and evaluation activities carried out by the programmes.⁹ The embassy has also initiated a number of evaluation-oriented missions, in particular with respect to the Pilot Project for Publishing which is the main component of the BMU and ECU programmes.

Do Sida and other stakeholders really need all the information generated by the programmes and by independent consultants? Is it possible to focus the production of reports on key information about programme outcomes and impact?

2.3 Dissemination of information

Given the large amount of information, it is understandable that all documents are not distributed to all stakeholders. Some reports are stored by counterparts and consultants but not by the embassy, or by the embassy but not by Sida Stockholm.¹⁰

It is also striking that the information flow is generally paper based. Documents are delivered in hardcopy form by hand, post or diplomatic courier, and almost never in digital form by e-mail. A quick survey at Sida Stockholm reveals that programme officers hardly ever receive follow-up, monitoring and evaluation reports in digital form (including on diskette). This is not the way to disseminate information in the new millennium.

This study does not argue that each and every report should be disseminated to all Sida staff. In many cases, however, the incomplete dissemination reduces Sida's scope for learning and control. What could be done to solve this problem?

⁸ At least according to the programme consultant (Orgut). This was also one of the findings of UTV's studies on the use of evaluations: evaluations are less useful to counterparts since they are based on the information provided by precisely the same counterparts. As such, evaluations become information messengers (from one stakeholder group to another) rather than information producers. See Carlsson J., Eriksson-Baaz M., Fallenius A-M., and Lövgren E., *Are evaluations useful? Cases from Swedish development co-operation*, Sida Studies in Evaluation 99/1.

⁹ The BMU/ECU joint annual operational plan for 1999, for example, lists eleven different monitoring trips to be carried out to various districts in Tanzania during the year.

¹⁰ For example, most of the important LAMP/Babati documents are stored at the embassy in Dar es Salaam, but not in Stockholm; less than half of the quarterly and annual reports on the education programmes are available in Stockholm; and there are several monitoring and evaluation reports produced by BMU and ECU which have not been distributed to the embassy or to Sida Stockholm.

3 Proposals for new routines and priorities

The observations on counterparts' progress reports, the almost impenetrable amount of results oriented documentation, and the incomplete dissemination of information suggest that it is possible to make Sida's management of results information far more efficient and useful than it is today. The following sections discuss new routines and priorities which offer good opportunities of improvement in this respect.

Even if some proposals are likely to be controversial, in particular to time-constrained programme officers at the embassies, it should be noted that the workload savings are likely to be considerable. At present, too much time is spent by Sida staff trying to make sense of progress reports, preparing and guiding unproductive monitoring and evaluation initiatives, searching for information hidden somewhere in the organisation, and striving to make use of too many and too extensive paper based documents. No wonder stress and overtime top the list of work environment complaints among agency staff.

3.1 Information about programme progress

Information about programme expenditure, activities and outputs is mainly found in counterparts' quarterly reports. As already mentioned, these reports do not, and cannot be expected to, cover also programme outcomes and impact.

It is not only Sida's control responsibility that calls for report compliance with the standards reviewed in section 2.1. Equally important, not least from a programme sustainability perspective, is that counterparts develop a capacity for proper planning, budgeting and monitoring. In this regard, the reviewed programmes offer a good opportunity for the integration and mainstreaming of good governance aspects in bilateral co-operation.

But how, more precisely, do progress reports comply with Sida's reporting standards? The typical report reviewed by this study is a 10–20-page document, including all sorts of annexes. A good deal of the information found in the reports is not necessary, at least not for the reports to comply with the discussed standards. The reports need not cover more than a follow up of programme expenditure and a specification of activities (or activity categories) and outputs, for example in the following way and format:

Table 2: Format for progress reporting (based on quarterly, semi-annual or annual periodicity)

Item	Planned activity	Output	Budget (SEK)	Expenditure (SEK)	Comment
1.11.2	Distribution of 80.000 English course books	62,000 books sent to five schools on Zanzibar	95,200 (including 5,200 reallocated from 1.11.3)	86,900	

Item refers to the activity (or component) number in the annual plan of operation; *planned activity* to the annual plan for that particular activity; *output* to accumulated annual delivery of goods and services; *budget* to the annual budget for that particular activity, including funds reallocated during the present year; and *expenditure* to accumulated annual expenditure.

Reports which supply such information (in the table format) would normally not be more than 2–5 pages, even for very complex programmes. The reports would not only be compliant with Sida’s reporting standards, they would also be far shorter than they are today, and certainly less time-consuming to produce. If the reports for some reason cannot supply some of the necessary data, they would simply have to indicate this in the table (“n/a”), and perhaps explain why in the comment column.

The reviewed reports present a considerable challenge to the reader. It is cumbersome and sometimes impossible to understand how different reports are connected to each other, which also makes it difficult to get an overall picture of the programme status, for example after the first quarterly report is submitted in April. The proposal for the structure and content of progress reports would help improve this situation, and make the understanding and use of the reports much easier than it is today.

A note on sector programme support is necessary. In cases where several donors are involved in one programme, it is imperative that the counterpart is not required to produce different kinds of reports to different donors. While there may be exceptions, UTV’s proposal for the content of progress reporting is most certainly universal and hence acceptable (at least as a minimum requirement) to all major donor agencies. In cases where several donors pool un-earmarked funds into one programme, the programme cannot be required to break down expenditure per each donor.

3.2 Information about development effects

The impression from Tanzania, and indeed also from other UTV studies, is that the search for information about programme outcomes and impact, is very much an ad hoc affair which lacks strategic priorities for more exactly what data to collect. The result is much information which is never used for learning and control purposes.

This problem is partly rooted in all-embracing terms of reference for monitoring and evaluation teams, calling for an overall search of results in relation to programme objectives. But since there is an almost infinite amount of results of any programme, and since the objectives often are too many and too vague, there is actually little guidance for what information the teams are supposed to look for.

It is not possible to give recommendations for what kind of information outcome and impact oriented studies should produce. It all depends on the programme and the purpose of the studies. But a few points of departure for the setting of priorities would help make such missions more strategically focussed on key information.

Analysis of actual programme structure and content

The preparation of monitoring and evaluation studies should always start by a thorough analysis of what the targeted programme actually consists of, as often somewhat opposed to the annual plan of operation.¹¹ The first key to such analyses is the information about programme progress found in counterpart reports. If compliant with Sida’s reporting standards (see section 3.1), such

¹¹ Differences between programme plans and actual implementation are due mainly to the facts that reallocations from planned to other (not always planned) programme components are common, and that the plans, as expressed by programme objectives, often are vague and overambitious.

reports are effective instruments for sorting out which type of information that should be collected and analysed. This can be illustrated by some examples from the quarterly reports on the teachers' training programme.

The relative detail and consistency of the quarterly reports on the teachers' training programme make it possible to summarise and get a simple overview of the actual programme structure, even if extremely complex, and to put at least a tentative price tag on different activity categories. According to the reports, total programme expenditure for the three main programme components during the period 1997–99 can be classified, although rather painstakingly since the reports do not have a standardised format or periodicity, in the following activity categories¹²:

Table 3: Teachers' training programme expenditure per activity category 1997–99 (SEK '000)

Programme component	Activity category	Total expenditure
Distance education	Programme recurrent costs, including the purchase and maintenance of vehicles and computers, and training, workshops and study tours for programme staff	2 277 (48%)
	Production of course materials	1 605 (34%)
	Training	370 (7%)
	Purchase of course materials	240 (5%)
	Distribution of course materials	239 (5%)
	Other	28 (1%)
	Sub-total	4 759 (100%)
Residential in-service courses	Examination of teachers, including the setting and marking of teachers' exams	1 761 (44%)
	Purchase of educational materials	1 553 (38%)
	Other	610 (15%)
	Programme recurrent costs, i.e. purchase of a computer, and follow-up	127 (3%)
	Sub-total	4 051 (100%)
In-service training of college tutors	Programme recurrent costs, mainly hardware purchase and maintenance, and study tours for programme staff	1 383 (37%)
	Training, seminars and workshops	1 112 (30%)
	Other, including house construction (0,9 million)	1 058 (29%)
	Purchase of educational materials	134 (4%)
	Sub-total	3 687 (100%)

This type of summary of programme expenditure in a small number of activity categories is an important guide for outcome and impact oriented studies since it gives preliminary indications of the type of information that is needed, and not needed, for such studies.

For example, an evaluation of the distance education component, supposed to search for relevant and useful information about development effects, should focus on the production, purchase and distribution of course materials, which represented the bulk of the actual programme substance. Such a focus has rather far-reaching implications for how the evaluation should be further planned and carried out.

¹² The classification and distribution of expenditure in different activity categories should not be treated as exact. There are some expenditure items that are difficult to classify due to vague specification in the reviewed reports. Also, it is not entirely clear from the reports exactly how much money that indeed was spent on each component and sub-component (see UTV Working Paper 2001: 04 for examples).

Similarly, an evaluation of the in-service training of college tutors should focus on the effects of workshop, seminar and study tour activities, which is the central component theme, and which will determine all other aspects of the evaluation process.¹³

There may be good reasons for evaluating also (or only) the smaller and less dominant activity categories of the distance education and the in-service training components. But the point is that such decisions must also, and perhaps in particular, be based on a proper understanding of the actual programme structure and content.

If, on the other hand, the preparation of evaluation studies do not accommodate prior analyses of actual programme structures, there is an obvious risk that too much time, money and opportunities are lost before the evaluators have a chance to focus the study on core programme results, or even before they understand what the results really are.¹⁴ There is also a risk that the consultants treat the non-focused terms of reference as a requisite for not focussing the study at all. Finally, there is a risk that wrong consultants are hired.¹⁵

Programme rationales and LFA

A second key to preparatory analyses of actual programme structures, and of what the programmes try to achieve in terms of outcomes and impact, is the logical framework approach (LFA). LFA is central to any monitoring and evaluation exercise. It is a simple way of summarising the rationales of programme components, and it provides priority and a common organising structure to the search of results information.

The programme components reviewed by UTV's study all have underlying rationales, although not always expressed in LFA terms, that could be used to summarise their respective goal hierarchies, and to structure individual monitoring and evaluation initiatives. For example, even if PPP, one of the BMU components, was not exactly planned in accordance with standard LFA practices, it does have an easily understood general logic, namely to provide the Tanzanian school system with adequate and properly priced textbooks by means of commercial production and distribution. Likewise, the district and village capacity building component of the Babati programme serves the purpose of increasing tax revenue in order to build a ground for sustainable public services in the Babati district.

¹³ The problem of not preparing monitoring and evaluation studies on the basis of quarterly reports (or at least on a proper understanding of what the targeted programmes actually consist) has recently been experienced by UTV itself. The problems which plagued the Department's evaluability study on Sida's democracy and human rights support could to some extent have been foreseen and solved if the preparation of the study had been based on adequate quarterly reports rather than, which was the case, on counterpart applications and Sida's decision memos.

¹⁴ In this respect, it should be noted that it is not (at all) clear from Sida's decision memo, from the agreement, or even from the annual plans of operations that, for example, the distance education component actually and mainly consists of production, purchase and distribution of course materials. This information is only found in the quarterly reports. Also, since all the reviewed programmes make (sometimes rather drastic) reallocations of funds between and within planned components, as well as to new and "unplanned" sub-components, the quarterly reports provide far better information about the actual programme structure and content than the various planning documents. This, of course, is not to say that programme plans are irrelevant to evaluations. Plans are indeed crucial to judgements of effectiveness (based on comparisons between actual and planned results). But before such judgements can be made, the evaluators must first establish what the results really are. And before they can do that, they need detailed information about the activities that were actually carried out within the programme.

¹⁵ For example, if an evaluation of the distance education component focuses on the production, purchase and distribution of course materials, the consultancy team would probably have to include a procurement and logistics expert, not just any kind of evaluator.

The objectives of the PPP and Babati components are actually more complicated than that. But the main point is that, in general, it is indeed possible to recapitulate, make explicit, elaborate (if necessary) and specify (which is often necessary) the underlying logic of the reviewed components, and to summarise this logic in conventional logframes that could be used to back up monitoring and evaluation missions.

The logframe is nothing but a condensed story of what kind of development certain programme components try to achieve. As such, it also sets the priorities for what kind of information to collect and analyse, namely such information that provides answers to whether or not the different steps in the logframe have been achieved as a result of undertaking component activities.

But logframes can only help set unambiguous priorities for data collection and analysis if the objectives reflected in the logframe are reasonably specific. If the purpose (in the logframe meaning of the term) of the training activities of the Babati district and village capacity building is formulated as *development of the Babati District Council (BDC), better public services provided by the Babati District Council, or development of the Babati district*, it is unclear what information that is needed for evaluation exercises.

But if the purpose is formulated as *strengthened BDC administration for tax revenue collection*, which appears to be the main medium-term rationale of this particular component of the LAMP/Babati programme, the logframe becomes more specific, probably more realistic, and definitely easier to use as a guide for the collection and analysis of relevant information. In other words, for the logframes to be useful to the setting of priorities for evaluation, they have to be operationally oriented, which in many cases means that they should reflect a less ambitious level than is common logframe practice at Sida today.

Table 4 gives two examples of more and less specific, operationally oriented and hence useful logframes for the Babati district and village capacity building component. The point is to illustrate the general direction of logframe design that is required by the preparation of efficient and useful evaluation exercises:

Table 4: More and less specific, operationally oriented and useful logframes

More specific, operational and useful logframe		Less specific, operational and useful logframe	
Impact	Increased revenue for the BDC (or at least not decreased revenue)	Impact	Development of the Babati district
Outcome	Strengthened BDC administration for revenue collection	Outcome	Better public services provided by BDC
Output	Ten seminars on revenue collection methods for fifteen BDC staff	Output	Increased BDC revenue
Activity	Planning and implementation of seminars on tax revenue collection for BDC staff	Activity	Capacity building

With a specific logframe, the evaluation exercise becomes rather straightforward.¹⁶ The evaluators would collect and analyse data which provides answers whether the seminars for the

¹⁶ It is important to note that specific logframes of this sort also, and perhaps particularly, help the programme management concentrate on a “focal problem”, in this case on the problem of insufficient tax revenue for sustainable public services. Also, the summary character of the logframe means that important steps, for example between the output and outcome levels, are not shown in the means-ends hierarchy. Seminars on tax collection methods do not automatically result in increased revenue. The trained staff must first really learn from the seminars, and then put the new skills and knowledge conveyed by the seminars into actual BDC tax collection practice.

BDC staff actually resulted in a strengthened BDC administration for revenue collection, effective tax collection practices, increased revenue, and sustainable public services, and make a judgement of the component on the basis of that information.

If the terms of reference for evaluations missions make explicit the underlying rationales, and logframes, of the programme components, the evaluation is likely to become more strategically focussed, and the information produced less extensive but still more useful.

There is little new to the idea that priority and strategy should be built into evaluation exercises through analyses of actual programme structures and the unearthing of programme rationales. What is new is rather to provide practical guidelines for finally putting this idea into common Sida practice.

The main problem of making component logframes explicit is not that a portion of Sida's programmes has never been logframed¹⁷, but that some programme components are complex constructions of a large number of small and, from a results perspective, unrelated project clusters. The reason for lumping together distinct sets of projects in one programme "component" (for example in the annual plans of operation) may partly be because there is little time available to programme stakeholders to administer individual sub-components separately.

The Babati district and village capacity building component is, again, a case in point. It consists of five sub-components, of which three actually have nothing to do with revenue collection (compare with table 4).¹⁸ The reason for not including the two extension-related sub-components in the farmers' extension service component in the annual plan of operation is unclear to this study. It can in any case be concluded that it is not possible to mix the revenue collection and the extension-related sub-components in one single logframe that would serve as a guide for evaluation. The preparation of logframes for evaluation purposes should therefore focus on the *main* rationale of the component, which in this case is revenue collection (both in terms of budget and expenditure).

Annual reports

Where the situation is one of Swedish consultants travelling to counterpart countries to reproduce information that already exists within the evaluated programmes (which appears to be a common situation), it would of course be better if instead the programme management presented that information in the annual reports. These reports could then be used by the monitoring and evaluation teams as a point of departure for producing new and additional data, and perhaps for questioning the information provided by the programme.

Again, the idea that the planning of monitoring and evaluation initiatives should take stock of existing results information is hardly new. Neither that programme results should be summarised in annual reports: that is precisely what annual reports should include. But these ideas still have to be put in practice. Monitoring and evaluation teams often spend too much time excavating programme basics and compiling results information that already exists among certain but not

¹⁷ What matters is whether the programmes have an underlying logic that could be translated into a logframe format (a number of already logframed programmes will probably anyway have to be restructured to make the logframes more specific).

¹⁸ Increased revenue collection (1998/99 budget: MTsh 0.9); BDC organisation and management, mainly in the area of revenue collection (MTsh 9.3); in-service training of district extension staff (MTsh 4.4); training of extension trainers (MTsh 2.8); and BDC management of LAMP (MTsh 16.7).

other stakeholder groups, and the annual reports, at least those reviewed by this study, basically repeat what was already said in the quarterly reports, which cover programme expenditure, activities, and outputs only.

In other words, it should be possible to forward the position and usefulness of monitoring and evaluation activities by means of a prior and strategic collection of core outcome and impact information, made by the programme management (i.e. Sida's counterparts and consultants) and presented in the annual reports. Such a strategic collection and presentation should basically follow the routines and priorities discussed in the previous section on programme rationales and logframes.¹⁹ The reports should be as focussed as possible. In the case of LAMP/Babati (see table 4), information about the district's tax collection capacity, tax collection methods, tax revenue, and the sustainability of public services in the Babati District is what should be presented, not just any kind of data on the development in the Babati District.

If for some reason the programme management is not capable of producing annual reports of this sort, special expertise could be contracted to do the job jointly with the programme management until the latter has developed such capacity.

In many cases, however, the programme managers will not have much (or any) information about development effects to report on. There may be legitimate reasons for such lack of information. First, development effects tend to be difficult and expensive to identify. Second, effects do not always exist until the concerned programme has been running for a few years, or even until it has been terminated. In such cases where the programme management does not have any information about development effects (relevant to the specific logframes), the annual report should simply state, in a sentence or two, that this is in fact the situation.

In sum, given the present number of follow-up initiatives and the overwhelming amount of documentation available, not only in the LAMP/Babati case, the routines and priorities presented in section 3.2 would imply less time and resources spent by counterpart, embassy and consultancy staff on monitoring, evaluation and related activities. In general, it would also imply less information that is actually more useful to Sida's learning and control purposes.

3.3 Dissemination of information

One of the most intriguing aspects of Sida's information management is the fact that while relevant and useful data often exists somewhere in the organisation (or by consultants and counterparts), it is not made readily available to all potential users within the agency. The ever persisting problem of, for example, finding and making use of data for the production of results-based country strategies is typically rooted in inadequate processing and dissemination – not lack – of information.

Key documents are too often left to collect dust in the archives of counterparts, consultants and embassies. The wealth of information that embassy officers possesses after one or two years' responsibility for programme administration and follow-up is not optimally shared with stakeholders within or outside the agency. With high staff turn over, the problem of Sida's institutional memory becomes acute.

¹⁹ If this proposal for annual reporting sounds promising to Sida, UTV will provide some concrete examples, for example from the LAMP/Babati programme, of how this could be done in practice.

This section discusses how existing results information could be disseminated and shared in order to facilitate efficient analysis and use of information for managerial purposes, such as when producing Sida's annual reports and results analyses, when providing information to the Swedish public, when preparing special monitoring and evaluation initiatives, and when managing individual projects and programmes. *However, before they can even start to be implemented, UTV's proposals have to be endorsed, owned and further elaborated on by Sida's top management.*

It should be noted that the proposals are valid also in cases where the root problem is that relevant and useful information was never collected in the first place, i.e. that data is lacking and not just that it has not been disseminated. At the end of the day, when the information has been collected, it obviously also needs to be disseminated properly.

Information about programme progress

Progress reports (with quarterly, semi-annual, annual or whatever periodicity) should always be linked electronically to Sida's PLUS-system, and hence be made available to all agency staff at an almost negligible cost. This means that counterparts should always send the reports to Sida in digital form, not (only) in hard copy versions. Counterparts which do not have access to e-mail should send a file on a diskette, which can then be linked by the responsible programme officer to the PLUS-system.

The benefits also in terms of transparency and accountability of such routines should not be underestimated. While this study found that all progress reports were available, this is definitely not always the case for other Sida projects and programmes.

Information about development effects

There is no reason why any key document and report dealing with development effects should not be linked electronically to the PLUS-system in the same way as progress reports. The internal dissemination problems would disappear with a few mouse clicks.

For Sida's managerial purposes, it would also help the use of results information if the data could be summarised in a simple format designed to facilitate, for example, the production of Sida's annual reports, the results analyses of the country strategy processes, and specially targeted communication to the Swedish public. While definitely not easy to achieve in large organisations, the benefits of such multi-purpose and generally accessible data summaries would far outweigh the costs.²⁰

But what is a multi-purpose and accessible data summary of results information? What information, more precisely, should be summarised? Who should make the summary, and when? While these questions need to be addressed more thoroughly than is possible in this study, a few hints for further analysis could be useful:

- The data summary should and need not be more than a 2-3-page document for each programme, or each major programme component, and for each budget year. It should be linked to the PLUS-system. It may also form part of an extended version of the proposed rating system at Sida, and hence open the scope for rating based also on development effects.

²⁰ In particular when compared to the costs of present routines, for example the four man-weeks staff time required to produce the average results analysis, a document of typically less than 20 pages.

- The summary should be structured along specific and useful logframes of each programme or major programme component (see section 3.2 and table 4).
- The logframes should be used as guides and priorities for what information to summarise, and not to summarise (see section 3.2 and table 4).
- The summary should be made by the embassy or Stockholm-based officers responsible for the individual programmes, recurrently as part of their daily job. This means that the officers should continuously add new and relevant results information (i.e. relevant to the output, outcome and impact levels of specific logframes) whenever they come across such information, either in written form or, for example, in meetings with programme stakeholders. In cases where the original source of information contains far more information than can be summarised, an electronic link to the original source should be included in the summary. While this may be seen as an additional burden for the programme officers, the focus and summary-character of the information means that the work should not take more than an average of a few minutes per week. If the officers for some reason do not have any relevant information to be summarised, the summary document would just be left unfilled. It is important for the agency to know also what information it does not possess.

The benefits of these summaries would be instant access to accumulated key information about programme results for all Sida staff, including, of course, the programme officers themselves. Those responsible at Sida Stockholm for the write up of the agency's annual report would simply check the information provided, and perhaps dig further in the referred-to documents linked to the system, without bothering the embassy or other staff with requests for further information. This is just one area where time savings can be expected, indeed also to the benefit of the staff responsible for making the summaries (see Annex 1 for a proposed summary structure).

4 Summary of recommendations to Sida

This chapter summarises UTV's recommendations to Sida for improved agency routines and priorities for the management of results information. Some of the recommendations are general in the sense that they serve as departure points for further debate and elaboration rather than as detailed and once-for-all proposals.

Information about programme progress

1. Sida should make sure that progress reports on programme expenditure, activities and outputs always comply with the reporting standards outlined in section 2.1.
2. Sida should always communicate to its counterparts that the requirements for progress reporting in fact are quite simple (and universal), and that the reports need not provide more information, for each separately budgeted item of the annual plan of operation, than that included in table 2 in section 3.1.

Information about development effects

3. Sida should make sure that the early stages of its monitoring and evaluation studies always include a thorough analysis of what the targeted programmes actually consist of, as often somewhat opposed to the annual plans of operation (see table 3 in section 3.2).
4. Sida should make sure that the early stages of its monitoring and evaluation studies always recapitulate, make explicit, elaborate (if necessary) and specify (which is often necessary) the underlying logframes of targeted programme components, and that these logframes are used to guide and focus the studies on relevant and useful information about programme results (see table 4 and the surrounding text in section 3.2).
5. In cases where the programme component targeted by monitoring and evaluation studies is too complex and diverse to be summarised in one coherent logframe, Sida should make sure that the studies focus on the results of the main rationale of the targeted component (see page 11–13).
6. Sida should make sure that the early stages of its monitoring and evaluation studies always take stock of existing results information, in particular that provided in counterparts' annual reports (see page 11–13).
7. Since programme expenditure, activities and outputs are covered in reports on programme progress, Sida should make sure that counterparts' annual reports focus on information on programme outcomes and impact. If counterparts do not have the capacity of producing such reports, special expertise should be contracted to do the job jointly with the counterparts until the latter has developed such capacity. If counterparts do not have any information about outcomes and impact to report on, the annual report should simply state that this in fact is the case (see page 11–13).

Dissemination of information

8. Sida should make sure that any relevant and useful report on programme outputs, outcomes and impact is linked electronically to the PLUS-system, and, ideally, integrated with the proposed system for project rating in one single intranet platform, (see page 15–16).
9. Sida should make sure that responsible programme officers produce an annual programme results summary which also should be linked electronically to the PLUS and rating system(s) (see pages 15–16 and annex 1).

Annex 1: Proposed structure for results summaries

Data summary for LAMP/Babati village and capacity development component

Planned impact: Increased BDC revenue

Actual impact:

Planned outcome: Strengthened BDC administration for revenue collection

Actual outcome:

Planned outputs: Fifteen seminars for ten Babati District Council (BDC) staff

Actual outputs:

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