

Annex C. Field visit to Liberia

As part of the peer review of Sweden, a team of examiners from France and Korea and members of the OECD Secretariat visited Liberia in November 2018. The team met the Swedish Ambassador, the Head of the Development Cooperation Office and their teams as well as representatives of the government of Liberia, other bilateral and multilateral partners, Swedish and Liberian civil society organisations, the private sector, and researchers.

Development in Liberia

A peaceful transition of power in Liberia marks progress, but significant development challenges remain

Liberia is a least developed, fragile and post-conflict country. Two brutal civil wars between 1989 and 2003, destroyed lives and vital infrastructure. Progress is being made, though, to rebuild the country. In 2018, Liberia passed a milestone with the first peaceful and democratic transfer of political power in more than 70 years. The United Nations (UN) Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) also ended its presence in the country in 2018.

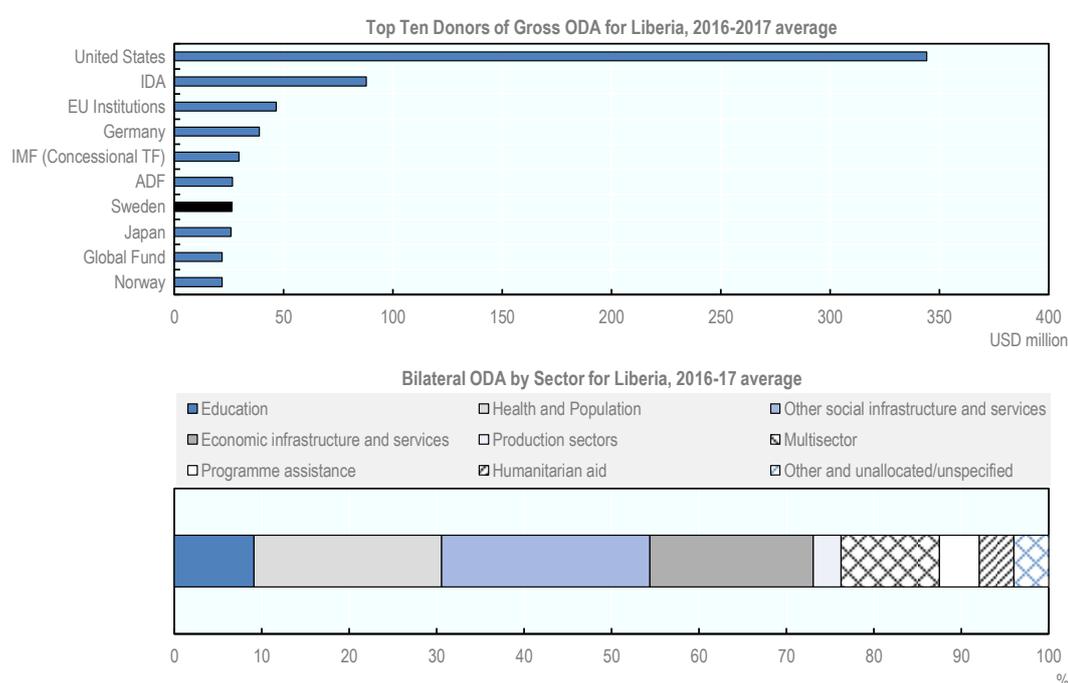
However, despite these successes, Liberia faces significant development challenges. It is one of the poorest countries in the world with a gross national income (GNI) per capita in 2017 of USD 620, using the World Bank's methodology. Liberia ranks 181st out of 189 countries on the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index (UNDP, 2018). More than half of the population (50.9%) lives below the national poverty line, with large geographical disparities in poverty (World Bank, 2018). Sexual and gender-based violence is extremely high in Liberia - a legacy from the wars - with rape the second-most commonly reported serious crime (OHCHR, 2016).

Liberia's economy had been growing at over 5% between 2005 and 2013. However, GDP growth rates fell sharply in 2014-15 as a result of the Ebola crisis and falling international commodity prices and have failed to pick up since, with the IMF estimating growth at 1.2% in 2018 and 0.4% in 2019 (IMF, 2019). Liberia's economy is highly dependent on providing foreign concessions in the agriculture, mining and forestry sectors, but gains are not being distributed to enable inclusive growth. The World Bank (2018) notes that 85% of young people, who make up two-thirds of Liberia's population, are unemployed.

Liberia remains a highly aid-dependent country, despite a significant drop in the amount of official development assistance (ODA) it has received since 2015. Liberia received USD 621.6 million in net ODA in 2017, which was 43% less than it received in 2015. ODA makes up 33.5% of Liberia's GNI. The United States is the largest donor to Liberia and Sweden is the eighth-largest donor (Figure C.1).

Table C.1. Aid at a glance - Liberia

Receipts for Liberia			
	2015	2016	2017
Net ODA (USD million)	1094.4	815.1	621.6
Net ODA/GNI (%)	62.4	44.8	33.5
Gross ODA (USD million)	1138.7	820.3	628.8
Bilateral share (gross ODA) (%)	57.7	66.1	65.4
Total net recipients (USD million)	1857.7	155.3	364.3

Figure C.1. Aid at a glance - Liberia

Source: OECD (2019b), "Aid at a Glance" (database), <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/aid-at-a-glance.htm>.

Towards a comprehensive Swedish development effort

Sweden has contributed to peacekeeping and peace building in Liberia

Sweden has had a long-standing relationship with Liberia dating back to the 1960s, when the government of Liberia granted a concession to the Liberian-American-Swedish Mining Company for the extraction of iron ore deposits. Shortly after this joint venture received the concession, Sweden initiated a development co-operation programme, and it has been a consistent development partner to Liberia ever since.

In keeping with Sweden's long history of promoting peace and conflict prevention at the international level, Sweden has played an active role in supporting Liberia's transition to peace. Sweden contributed troops to UNMIL between 2004 and 2006 (Government Offices of Sweden, 2018a). As Chair of the Liberian configuration to the UN Peacebuilding Commission, Sweden has helped to promote an integrated, strategic and coherent approach

to peace building in Liberia across the UN. Countries who are formally on the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda, as is the case with Liberia, also are entitled to access to the UN Peacebuilding Fund. Sweden committed the second-largest volume of ODA to the Fund in 2017.¹ Sweden, along with the United States, is partnering with Liberia to assist in the implementation of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, which seeks to improve the effectiveness of development co-operation in fragile states and contexts.

Sweden has also supported Liberia's successful accession process to the World Trade Organization through technical assistance provided by Sweden's National Board of Trade. The Board continues to provide support to enable Liberia to take full advantage of its membership.

Sweden's policies, strategies and aid allocation

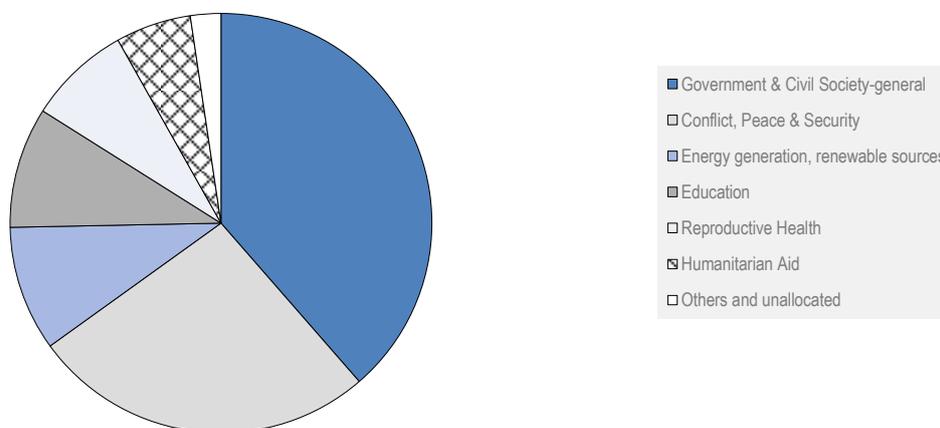
Conflict-sensitive and poverty-focused strategy

Sweden's development co-operation strategy in Liberia for the period 2016-20 (Government Offices of Sweden, 2016) is underpinned by a thorough conflict analysis (University of Bradford, Saferworld and Stockholm Policy Group, 2015) and focuses on the key drivers of conflict. This strategy is based on three thematic areas: first, strengthening democracy, gender equality and human rights; second, better opportunities and tools to enable poor people to improve their living conditions; and third, safeguarding human security and freedom from violence. The last of these is a new goal, and is in line with analysis showing that poor human security and exposure to violence are clear drivers of conflict in Liberia. FBA's assignment falls under the third thematic area. Sweden's strategy is also fully aligned to the New Deal's Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals for working in fragile and conflict-affected states and contexts.²

The strategy is assiduous in its focus on poor people's needs and rights, and this, coupled with the strategy's conflict-sensitive approach, is a clear added value of Sweden's support. For example, Sweden has concentrated its democracy and human rights programming in some of Liberia's poorest counties to ensure it leaves no one behind. Within its livelihoods programming, Sweden's support for feeder roads is aimed at improving the rural poor's access to markets and public health services. The embassy is in the process of applying Sweden's multidimensional poverty toolkit, which should further enhance its already strong approach to leaving no one behind.

Sweden allocates its ODA in accordance with its policy priorities, as shown in Figure C.2. The majority of its ODA is spent on government and civil society and conflict, peace and security.

Figure C.2. Swedish ODA to Liberia by sector, commitments, 2016-17 average



Source: Adapted from OECD (2018), “Creditor Reporting System” (database), <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=crs1> (accessed January 2019).

Sweden’s strong focus on gender equality and women rights includes tackling sensitive issues

Sweden’s strategy in Liberia contains explicit objectives to improve gender equality and women’s rights. Sweden funds programmes aimed at improving women’s participation in peace-building initiatives and supporting the Liberian women’s rights movement. In line with its feminist foreign policy (Government Offices of Sweden, 2018b), Sweden actively uses its political voice to raise attention to sensitive issues like sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and sexual and reproductive health and rights in Liberia. It has led the way among the donor community in supporting programming on these issues. On SGBV, Sweden’s focus on long-term, sustainable results means it is increasingly working to change societal perceptions of gender norms; this includes working with men and boys.

Increased attention to environment and climate change, but further work is needed to fully integrate this across the whole portfolio

Sweden’s embassy in Liberia is actively trying to enhance its focus on the environment and climate change within its programming. The strategy includes a new objective of supporting renewable energy under the livelihoods thematic area. The embassy has recruited a programme officer to strengthen its capacity and commissioned research to map out existing renewable projects and initiatives to help identify where Sweden can add value. It intends to embark on a joint European Union rural electrification programme in South East Liberia. The embassy also is drawing on the partnership of Sweden and Liberia with Power Africa to support a Liberian Challenge Fund on Renewable Energy and Adaptation to Climate Technologies aimed at stimulating private sector entrepreneurs in renewables.³

In addition, the embassy is trying to improve the integration of an environmental perspective across its wider programming. It held an internal workshop to strengthen staff capacity, and this has led to a greater focus on both new and ongoing contributions across the embassy’s three main pillars of work (Sida, 2017). However, the embassy is aware that

more could be done to ensure the environment is more systematically integrated across all its programming.

Opportunity to improve synergies with Sweden's other development strategies

A number of Sweden's other regional and thematic strategies have programmes in Liberia. However, at present, the embassy does not have a comprehensive overview of how these strategies are being operationalised on the ground. This is hindering Sweden from improving co-ordination of its programming, exploiting synergies and avoiding overlaps. For example, in 2017, the regional strategy for Africa South of Sahara provided support to the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding in Liberia, which is also funded via the country strategy, and Sweden's thematic strategy for sustainable peace funded six activities in Liberia in parallel to the activities funded through the Liberia country strategy (Sida, 2017).

The embassy is aware of the problem and is actively trying to reach out in order to improve co-ordination. Its annual plan for 2018 includes an ambition to exploit synergies with Sweden's Africa regional strategy team, given its support to the Economic Community of West African States' early warning programme. As noted, the embassy also has reached out to the Africa team on its renewable energy work and partnership with Power Africa. There is room for Sweden to more systematically ensure that information is shared among country, global, thematic and regional strategy holders to ensure a more coherent and cohesive programme at the country level.

Organisation and management

There is scope for Sida and the Folke Bernadotte Academy to move from co-ordination to collaboration

Sweden's country strategy for Liberia is one of several development co-operation strategies that now include a separate and explicit objective for the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) (Government Offices of Sweden, 2016). This is a positive development and has enabled Sweden to better align FBA's programming with its strategic objectives and to enhance co-ordination between Sida and the FBA. Both organisations, for example, are supporting the decentralisation process. FBA with capacity building of Liberia's county superintendents, who are the individuals charged with for example co-ordinating the decentralisation at the county level. Sida through its support to UNDP's Liberia Decentralization Support Program and FBA through its direct, assistance aimed at supporting the ongoing security sector reform process, through capacity development at the local level.

There is scope to explore greater collaboration and undertake joint programming, given the two organisations' complementary skills and given that capacity building on human rights is also a Sida objective within the country strategy. Promoting shared planning and reporting procedures for FBA and Sida programming in Liberia could be one way to facilitate this.

Sweden's whole-of-government approach highly evident in Liberia

Sweden is drawing on the whole of its government's expertise in order to deliver its development co-operation objectives in Liberia. Four Swedish government agencies - the National Board of Trade, the Land Registration Authority, the Police Authority and the General Audit Commission- are working to build the capacity of their Liberian government counterparts in their respective competency areas. This is in line with Sweden's new

strategy for capacity development and partnerships in support of the 2030 Agenda (Government Offices of Sweden, 2018c).

Focused approach to managing risk

Sweden is committed to identifying and managing risks within its development co-operation programme in Liberia. The embassy has adopted a focused approach, outlining three major risks with the potential to derail implementation of the strategy in 2018 and setting out appropriate control actions for managing these risks (Sida, 2017). This is in keeping with Sweden's new risk and materiality approach to its development co-operation, which entails identifying risks earlier in the programme cycle and then putting in place management strategies. Risks are monitored continuously throughout the programme cycle, partners are encouraged to be honest and frank about the risks they face, and support is provided to help them to manage those risks.

While a wide range of different types of risks are taken into account, tackling corruption risks is a high priority, given that corruption is widespread and permeates all levels of society in Liberia (Sida 2018). The embassy has an anti-corruption plan, conducts continuous training for its staff on anti-corruption that is complemented by a tutor-mentee system, and has a financial controller in the embassy to help to enhance the embassy's ability to prevent, detect and sanction corruption. Sweden also is looking into how it can undertake programming to support the Liberian government's anti-corruption efforts, in recognition that corruption is a major driver of conflict (Sida, 2017). Although the embassy has a number of tools for managing risks, not all tools have been used so far to the extent possible. This is mainly due to resource constraints. Spot checks, for example, were highlighted by the embassy as an under used tool so far in Liberia.

Empowered and capable staff are a major asset

Thanks to Sweden's decentralised approach to development co-operation, the embassy in Liberia has a highly competent and empowered team of development specialists who drive Sweden's strategy development and lead on its operationalisation. This is a real asset. It enables Sweden to ensure its development co-operation is based on the local context and responsive to changing needs, and that quality assurance is done in the field.

Sweden's adept local staff are encouraged to represent Sweden at the technical level within Liberia. Access to training and mentoring schemes enable local staff to have professional development.

Partnerships, results and accountability

Sweden is engaged in donor co-ordination, aligned with partner countries priorities and is building government capacity

Sweden is committed to working with other donors in Liberia and often leads donor co-ordination efforts. For example, the embassy chairs the Development Partners Group on gender with the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and it is the donor facilitator for the Enhanced Integrated Framework donor working group that helps Liberia to tackle supply side constraints to trade. Sweden favours long-term support and actively works through joint funding programmes. Given the risks and levels of corruption in the country, Sweden is also joining efforts with other donors to enhance coordination and information sharing mechanisms, and harmonise practices that may otherwise do harm or indirectly fuel corruption.

Sweden's strategy is aligned with Liberia's Agenda for Transformation as well as Liberia Rising 2030.

Sweden is appreciated for actively contributing to strengthening the government's capacity. Sweden supports key strategic reforms such as the public finance management programme, which builds capacities of the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP). In addition, Swedish support to a budget strengthening initiative has provided technical assistance to the MFDP and the Liberia Revenue Authority (Sida, 2018).

Constructive, reliable and generous partner to civil society and multilateral organisations

Sweden delivers long-term, flexible funding to its civil society organisations (CSOs) and multilateral partners and bases its relationships on trust and dialogue. Its funding to these organisations can often have a catalytic effect for partners in terms of resource mobilisation.

Sweden considers a vibrant civil society a foundation for democratic governance. To date, it has only partnered directly with Swedish and international CSOs in Liberia. But it often tasks these organisations with providing capacity development to smaller, local CSOs in Liberia. There are opportunities for Sweden to explore options for engaging directly with local partners and to better communicate the criteria for available funding to potential partners.

Sweden supports long-term results in Liberia and uses programme evaluations, research and reviews to inform its programming

The embassy of Sweden in Liberia is supporting long-term, sustainable results in line with Sweden's results-based management approach. It is encouraging its partners to demonstrate progress at the programme level, without prescribing a fixed methodology for monitoring results. This gives partners the flexibility to use their own, existing systems. While most of the partners welcome this flexibility, some partners in Liberia would benefit from more guidance.

Sweden does assess its performance at the strategy level, and despite the absence of a standard set of results for monitoring its programmes, it is able to demonstrate progress at the country level, using a traffic light system that assesses progress in the overall context towards achieving Sweden's objectives and programme portfolio progress.

Sweden supports its partners to undertake systematic programme evaluations and the findings are used to inform programming. The embassy also undertakes its own decentralised evaluations, and it commissions an extensive set of its own context analyses and reviews at strategy level to fill knowledge gaps. The operational plan for the strategy identifies eight different knowledge products that the embassy intends to commission.⁴ The embassy encourages the sharing of its knowledge products in Liberia with the public, government and other donors - which is good practice - but there is scope for a more systematic knowledge-management system within Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to ensure that other teams can learn from the embassy's work.

Notes

¹ Sweden was the second-largest donor to the UN Peacebuilding Fund in 2017, when flexible and restrictive funding are taken into account, providing USD 10.53 million. See <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?datasetcode=multisystem>.

² The New Deal's Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs) call on donors to focus on five areas when working in fragile and conflict-affected states and contexts: legitimate politics (foster inclusive political settlements and conflict resolution); security (establish and strengthen people's security); justice (address injustices and increase people's access to justice); economic foundations (generate employment and improve livelihoods); and revenues and services (manage revenue and build capacity for accountable and fair service delivery). Sweden's strategy covers all these areas. For more on the PSGs, see <https://www.pbsbdialogue.org/en/new-deal/new-deal-principles/>.

³ Sweden supports Power Africa through its Africa regional strategy. The Renewable Energy and Adaptation to Climate Change Technologies window is part of Power Africa's Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund.

⁴ These include a study of gender within public administrations, a study on masculinity, and a power analysis of key actors and drivers within the land sector.

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