

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Strategy for peace, security and stabilisation 2024–2028

1. Starting points and added value

Violent conflicts cause distress and poverty in large parts of the world, they force people to flee and prevent people from reaching their full potential. Women, girls and children, in particular, get increasingly vulnerable to various types of violence and abuse in conflict situations. Conflicts are also a breeding ground for criminality, terrorism, violent extremism and organised crime, which contribute to the smuggling of weapons and drugs, and to various forms of human trafficking. In other words, wars and conflicts around the world also affect Sweden's security and prosperity. Accordingly, there are several reasons why Sweden should contribute to global efforts on peace and security.

2. Direction and objective of Sweden's development assistance

The objective of Sweden's international development cooperation is to create opportunities to improve the living conditions of people in poverty and under oppression. Based on principles of development effectiveness, Sweden's development cooperation will be effective, results-oriented and catalytic.

This strategy will contribute to conflict management and conflict prevention with a view to improving development opportunities and reducing humanitarian needs. The strategy will complement and strengthen other components of development assistance in conflict countries and areas at a high risk of conflict. Particular emphasis will be placed on coherence with bilateral and regional strategies related to conflict contexts. Interventions guided by the strategy will be coordinated with relevant missions abroad and contribute to overall Swedish development cooperation in prioritised countries. In addition, the strategy will make it possible to promote the Government's priorities in peace promotion, security and stabilisation in countries or situations where engagement is politically motivated but where there is no applicable country strategy.

The strategy will run from 2024 until 2028 and include the funds allocated in the appropriation directions for the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) under appropriation item 1:1.26, and in the appropriation directions for the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) under appropriation item 1:1.4 'Development Cooperation' and appropriation item 1:4.1 'Folke Bernadotte Academy', with regard to administrative costs associated with the implementation of the strategy for each budget year.

Sida's and the FBA's activities will contribute to the following objectives:

1. Protection from violence for civilians, with a particular focus on sexual violence and the protection of children, as well as improved conditions for better accountability for conflict-related violence.
2. Conflict prevention and stabilisation in fragile and conflict-affected areas, including initiatives for mine clearance, demobilisation and reduced proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and other measures to enhance conditions for return to conflict-affected areas.
3. Greater traction for Swedish priorities, such as efforts to promote the rule of law, democratic accountability and inclusion, in multilateral organisations' conflict management and conflict prevention efforts at country level.
4. Inclusive peace processes and local ownership of national and regional peace efforts, with a focus on gender equality and the participation of women and youth.

3. Context

Armed conflicts lead to human suffering, material destruction, the displacement of civilians and increased humanitarian needs. There is a clear link between poverty and conflict. According to the OECD, more than half of the world's population living in extreme poverty will reside in conflict-affected and fragile states by 2030. In several of these countries, the effects of climate change are evident and risk creating conflicts and reinforcing other conflict-driving factors. Since conflict hampers development, conflict-related assistance contributes to the overall goal of poverty reduction and the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

People in conflict-affected countries need protection from violence, abuse and coercion. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to conflict-related sexual violence. Children are disproportionately affected by the effects of war, and the lives of more and more children are seriously affected by conflict. The spread of small arms and light weapons in the wake of conflicts threatens peace and security in other parts of the world and contributes to organised crime. Mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war hamper development and reconstruction and prevent people from returning to their homes.

Prevention efforts are just as important as dealing with the consequences of conflicts. Effective prevention saves lives, protects investments in development and is less costly, both from a societal and financial perspective, than dealing with armed conflicts once they have erupted. This is why development assistance must also help prevent and counter the root causes of war and conflict so as to avert human suffering, forced displacement and food insecurity. The support will also help create the conditions for return to previously conflict-affected areas.

Working with peace promotion and conflict prevention is associated with major risks and challenges. The experience of recent decades of conflict-related development support shows that capacity-building interventions rarely have the intended effect if there is a lack of political will and local ownership on the part of the recipient. For this reason, conflict-related support will be characterised by concrete objectives for interventions and an analytical understanding of the political economy in the conflict and post-conflict countries where development support is provided.

5. Activities

Activities will be designed based on Sweden's other development support to fragile and conflict-affected countries, including that which is channelled via core support to multilateral organisations and bilateral and regional strategies, to ensure that activities carried out under the strategies have a clear added value. The strategy will be used for activities that are not made possible through other strategies, and to implement measures and support actors that leverage other Swedish engagement. Activities will place particular attention on the EU's southern and eastern neighbourhood, the Sahel region and the Horn of Africa. Measures will primarily focus on achieving results in countries that are prioritised in Sweden's foreign and security policy and where Swedish participation is expected to provide particular value added.

The FBA and Sida will produce a joint operational analysis that clarifies how interventions carried out by the agencies, complement and reinforce each other in relation to the common objectives of the strategy. These agencies will engage in regular coordination activities in the implementation of the strategy.

Where relevant, synergies will be sought with thematically related strategies, and with the parts of the agencies' engagement that are financed under expenditure area 5 (International cooperation). Internationally agreed principles on aid and development effectiveness will be applied. Efforts to enhance transparency and reduce corruption will be integrated into all activities.

The links between humanitarian assistance, long-term development cooperation and peacebuilding interventions (triple nexus) will be harnessed and strengthened.

Activities under strategy objective 1 will contribute to protecting civilians from conflict-related violence both through preventive and pre-emptive efforts and interventions in conflict and post-conflict countries. Priority will be given to interventions for women, youth, and children.

Activities under strategy objective 2 will contribute to increased human security and other measures to enhance conditions for the return of people who have fled areas that were previously conflict-affected.

Activities under strategy objective 3 will contribute to increased effectiveness and greater impact in areas prioritised by Sweden within the conflict management and conflict prevention efforts of multilateral organisations that have an impact at country level. This includes efforts to enhance the rule of law, democratic accountability and inclusion. The activities will be designed in close dialogue with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Swedish missions abroad in conflict and post-conflict countries to ensure that the interventions carried out at global and regional level have the greatest possible impact at country level.

Activities under strategy objective 4 will contribute to local ownership and greater influence for civil society in regional and national peace efforts. Sida and the FBA will prioritise activities that link local actors with regional and national processes. The activities will also contribute to inclusive peace processes, particularly regarding women's meaningful participation in line with Sweden's action plan for women, peace and security. Based on dialogue with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, it should be possible to target the activities towards specially prioritised countries and processes.

4. Follow-up, collaboration and partners

Activities carried out within the framework of the strategy will be regularly followed up through consultations between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sida and the FBA. The consultations will aim to ensure that Sweden's engagement in the area of conflict are coherent and will provide a forum for information exchange. Planned decisions regarding interventions will be communicated in writing. Sida and the FBA will also consult on interventions considered to be sensitive and/or of a fundamentally strategic nature. Activities will be followed up and reported on, in line with applicable guidelines for development assistance strategies. The annual strategy report will include an account, analysis and assessment of the results of activities in relation to the stated objectives. To clarify synergies with other development assistance domains, the account will also include a summary of the countries where interventions carried out under this strategy, have contributed to concrete activities. Where possible, gender-disaggregated statistics will be included in the account of activities.

The strategy enables support to multilateral organisations, civil society organisations and relevant state actors. Support to multilateral actors will contribute to effectiveness and concrete results at country level in geographical contexts prioritised by Sweden. Support to civil society organisations should mainly be provided to organisations with a strong local presence in relevant country contexts. Within the framework of the strategy, the agencies will strive for effective aid coordination with a particular focus on cooperation with the EU and like-minded donor countries.

The EU's integrated approach will guide the way, and synergies will be sought with relevant aspects of the civilian component of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy.