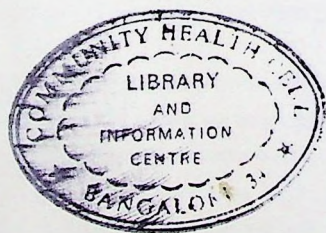


ON A NEW TACK

This is a booklet from SIDA
(Swedish International
Development Authority) about how
partners in development
now should be able to talk
more plainly with one another
—as methods and roles
are being re-defined.





The overall purpose of development assistance

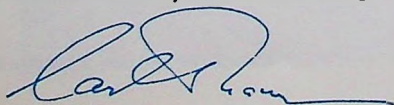
is to improve the lot of the poor in the developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. There are many different ideas as to the best approach. But most people agree that the basic principle of aid must be as the Chinese saying has it: "give a man a fish and he will eat for a day, teach a man to fish and he will eat for the rest of his life."

Development assistance then, is largely a matter of supporting people in their own struggle to improve their situation. Developing countries, in the nature of things, lack the capacity to manage all the factors that spell development. In a misguided attempt to improve efficiency donors have been tempted to take over the administration of their "own" projects. Over the years, there have been many examples of this – and SIDA has been as guilty as anyone else.

But it has gradually become clear that the donor's demand for efficiency and quick results has actually hindered long-term sustainable development. Instead, it must be the country itself that takes responsibility for long-term development. So now the donor's main role will be to transfer knowledge and other resources – to provide the tools, but not to do the job.

This new vision of the development process makes new demands on development partners. In recent years we have tried to make SIDA's vision known, and to change our own methods to match this vision.

This booklet then, describes how we now work, and why we must work in this way. The theme is simple: help towards self-help.



Carl Tham

SIDA'S DIRECTOR GENERAL

SIDA (SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY) WAS FOUNDED IN 1965. IT IS A GOVERNMENT AGENCY RESPONSIBLE TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The very fact that one country gives aid to another will always carry its discreet implication: there is inequality between us. To overcome this feeling, in order to talk sensibly and feel at ease with one another, may be difficult at times, for giver as well as for receiver.

The wish to establish cooperation in development need not be seen as one-sided: the donor country – in this case Sweden – has something to gain, too.

The donor's fundamental purpose can be described as an effort to promote solidarity, justice and equality in the world. Ultimately, this purpose is in line with the donor country's own interests.

It is also true that some development projects provide international opportunities for Swedish companies products and technologies to show what they can do. Whether we like it or not, aid does have this dimension. To claim that all development assistance is totally altruistic smacks of hypocrisy. To pretend that no one ever profits on the Swedish side cannot be taken seriously by either partner.

However, although much can be said about the mutual interests and

mutual benefits of development cooperation, today and also for some time in the future, it is the recipient who is directly dependent. This dependence is most obvious and painful for “them” – not for us.

To pretend that there is an equal partnership is false: one country gives and the other receives. Ignoring this inequality would only produce a strained, awkward dialogue. In the long run both parties would find such pretense embarrassing.

As in every relationship where there is clearly a giver and a receiver – in personal relationships as well as in relationships between governments – the parties must strive for the right kind of approach, the right way of tuning in to each other; or else their attempts at an unstrained and meaningful dialogue will fail.

SIDA's role in this dialogue has been the object of discussion for some years now – both within SIDA and elsewhere – and it is still in a state of gradual change.



GUSTAF ENEROTH

SIDA'S MAIN OFFICE IS IN STOCKHOLM, AND THERE ARE DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE OFFICES IN 17 COUNTRIES. ABOUT 550 PEOPLE ARE EMPLOYED AS ESTABLISHED CIVIL SERVANTS, AND ABOUT 800 MORE ON CONTRACT OR ATTACHED TO PROJECTS.

In many a poor country, governments are weak and have little popular support. Debts may be heavy, education lacking. What better reason for well-off countries to act with gusto and zeal, putting things right? Fly in the experts, use short cuts, get results. A wave of new optimism, therefore, could sweep the troubled country for some time. Indeed, it often did; but only for some time.

Aid should produce something of permanent value. The need for

an immediate response to some sudden catastrophe may foster the attitude that quick decisions and prompt actions are more important than careful planning based on a thorough analysis of conditions in the country. But for every programme and project that is to have a lasting impact, the proper roles and division of responsibility must be considered, and the rules of the game followed.

SIDA seeks to establish long-term relationships with its partners.

To attempt something of lasting value for the people while following the agreed rules of the game may sometimes seem a long and hard road to travel. This is especially true where the recipient country has such serious internal problems that it is not really able to manage its own side of the partnership.

In this situation donor organizations have – quite understandably – tried to get around the problem: they have put in a lot of expertise and resources, and they have imposed their own separate organisation.

Sometimes the result seemed to offer new hope to a village or district. It appeared, to those on the spot, that people were to have a better life.

But so often, after just a few years, all that remained were bits of rusty machines, some overgrown wheel-tracks, and a feeling of emptiness and of disillusionment.







सुल

THE SWEDISH PARLIAMENT DIRECTS SIDA'S WORK, AND ACTIVITIES ARE FINANCED FROM TAXES. SIDA'S BOARD INCLUDES REPRESENTATIVES OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES, THE UNIONS, ASSOCIATIONS, AS WELL AS OF SIDA STAFF.

When a giver comes along with his own answers to the problems, ready and willing to take over things, the receiver seldom has the strength to hold his ground, voice a doubt, or put forward an objection. So, it is up to the giver to keep himself in check, asking the question: how can we, in fact, best benefit those people we want to reach?

Many of the countries which need help are caught in a vice: they are deeply in debt, and their dependence on aid is great. How could such a hard-pressed country claim its right to self-determination, or throw off or even reduce its dependence? Where would it find the strength to ask for more responsibility and influence over how aid is planned?

Over the years the dilemma has grown.

Under these conditions, the governments, authorities and organisations who accept aid must inevitably have come to feel that there are few options open to them. They are hardly in a position to say no to the donor's ideas of how assistance should be planned and put into effect.

In some cases the simple truth must be that, both psychologically and in fact, the recipient feels duty-bound to say thank you for whatever is offered, and in whatever form.

When this is the case, the question of responsibility is unclear. If things start to go wrong, who is responsible for changing direction, or putting on the brake?

Sweden and SIDA have taken up the question of “changing roles” with some of the countries and organisations providing continuous development assistance. The point of departure has been that change is needed, or there is a risk that aid may not produce the desired effect.

Recipient countries have been more and more involved in this discussion.

A general agreement has begun to emerge:

- Both the giver and the receiver need to change their way of looking at things in the future.
- The recipient countries must be ready and able to take their own share of responsibility for planning and implementation.
- To make this possible, the donor country must – as one of its most important responsibilities – contribute to the build-up of the recipient country’s capacity and competence, as well as its institutions.

This approach will mean that the familiar image of a development assistance “expert” may change.

The new kind of expert may well know all about power stations, or wells, or telephone installations, or roads, but will also have another skill from which the country can benefit: namely, how an effective organisation can be built up and what makes it work.

SWEDISH DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE HAS FIVE SPECIFIC GOALS: TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE RESOURCES OF THE COUNTRY; TO EQUITABLE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GROWTH; TO ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE; TO THE GROWTH OF DEMOCRACY; AND TO A HUSBANDING OF RESOURCES AND OF THE ENVIRONMENT.

Our new role as donors will mean a change, replace some habits with a new approach. To put it briefly: Receivers will have a larger share of responsibility, more say in decisions that affect them, as partners in that work of aid and assistance that Sweden is prepared to undertake. And all should be within a framework that fits their own experience and concepts.

This view is not a sudden new revelation, of course. From time to time, and to a greater or lesser extent, it has always guided our thinking about development. In theory. But when it comes to the practical



application, the desire to help and to save time has often taken precedence over the longer-term question of how the recipient country can best assimilate, maintain, and develop the values and new opportunities that aid brings.

Basic conditions in the various developing countries are very different. Now that roles are changing, bringing a clearer division of responsibility between the partners and inviting a frank explicit dialogue, these differences must be taken into account.

So, it is not a question of a change in development policy. It is not a rash assumption of roles so new as to be unrecognizable. Not at all; the destination is the same – it is just that we are on a new tack.

This new tack can have an important effect. Now, more than before, it would seem that the experience of both partners will be openly shared – the good as well as the bad. Now more than before, there should be a mutual determination to systematically take this experience into account.



SWEDEN'S TOTAL APPROPRIATION FOR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IN 1991/92 WAS 13,800,000,000 KRONOR. OF THIS, JUST OVER HALF WAS ADMINISTERED BY SIDA.

Sweden and SIDA now stand for a way of looking at things that more and more countries seem to agree with, based on a great deal of experience: The time is past when donors pushed and shoved, "it's all for the best", and then left behind them a growing uncertainty on the day they departed for home.

Richer countries should give assistance to poorer. This is consistent with the feelings most of us share: when we notice others are in distress, then we try to help them. This feeling is deeply rooted in our innermost visions of humanity, in our respect for life, and for the sacred value of a human being. In view of this, the idea of development assistance seems timeless and obvious.

Need the realisation of this basic idea – as far as one can, to satisfy the simple human needs of people who are in the greatest distress – be a very complicated process?

It could be argued that as long as the resources and the will to help are there, then development assistance is easy. Why should any very complicated process be necessary? Isn't it enough just to send the food, tents and blankets – or whatever – to where they are most needed? After all, that is exactly what we do when there is an emergency.

But development assistance does not live in a vacuum. It is part of the complicated economic, political and social relations between nations, peoples, and parts of the world – all subject to change. The crises of the 1980s, changes in the world's economy, the increasing burden of debt of some countries – these have sometimes prompted a feeling of resignation, or at least of uncertainty about the future of international aid and development.

But now people are looking for a new course to take us out of the doldrums – a new tack.

The Nordic countries have a great deal of experience of long-term development partnerships with their so-called programme countries. These efforts and undertakings have earned confidence and respect.

One sign of this is that SIDA's efforts to establish new roles in its dialogue with development partners – the new tack – has aroused a great deal of interest internationally. The efforts are seen as significant: they could influence the philosophy of development and be applicable to other partnerships between peoples or governments.

Our efforts have been seen as interesting and promising, by both developing and donor countries – even at this early stage. Perhaps this is a sign that the old dilemmas of development assistance are now widely acknowledged.

There is a wish to gather new hope and a new ambition.

Sweden has not travelled far on this new course. Any progress we have made should be seen as something to think about, and as a big challenge. This new tack means we fill our sails with wind, but sail into unfamiliar waters: we must keep a sharp lookout.

THE WORLD BANK AND THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) HAVE A CRUCIAL INFLUENCE OVER THE FUTURE POSSIBILITIES FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. THE WORLD BANK IS A UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION WHICH, BY GRANTING LONG-TERM LOANS, CAN STIMULATE INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT. ITS SISTER ORGANISATION, IMF, AMONG OTHER THINGS GRANTS SHORT-TERM LOANS BUT MAKES CERTAIN STIPULATIONS AS TO HOW THE ECONOMY OF THE COUNTRY SHALL BE MANAGED.

It is inevitable that we, like all others who give credit and long term aid, will have a set of conditions to go along with our offerings of assistance. Conditions are a way of sending messages to those in power, a pressing call for change and progress. Still, the various demands on a troubled country must not become such tangles of conditions – overlapping, confusing, even contradictory – that they obstruct rather than encourage.

Discussions about how these conditions can be made meaningful, and produce a result, reflect a dilemma. The aid givers want to get the developing countries on their feet, but there is no ready formula for how this can be achieved.

No model has yet shown itself to be valid and applicable everywhere. The countries that need help all have different potentials. The countries ready to give help have different interpretations of the situation, and different ideas of what should be done.

So, there is a continuous debate, not only between donor and recipient, but also between the various governments, organisations, and financial

GUSTAF EKERÖTH



institutions; in fact between everyone who has the power and the resources to provide assistance and to formulate the conditions on which it will be granted. Some general agreement as to a way of looking at things has gradually emerged:

- A country needing help to get on its feet will seldom gain lasting benefit from aid based only on compassion, not properly thought through, and requiring nothing of the recipient. A tendency to make no demands on the recipient often works against the effort to encourage social and economic growth and stability – which was the underlying motive for giving aid in the first place.
- The recipient country should now take more responsibility for its own development. It follows that conditions stipulated by the different donors must not be so restricting as to virtually block any freedom of choice. This would again underline dependence, obscure a clear view of things, and spread a feeling of despair.

In fact, the combined demands for change have sometimes been so great and the pace so forced, that the resultant upheaval is more than an advanced industrialised country would be able to manage.

Instead, the conditions required of a country in a state of crisis should be few, very clear, and – as far as possible – the same for all donors. If international donors can agree about a way of assessing the problems and the potentials, and about the criteria on which they will base their judgements, much would be gained for all concerned.

THE WORLD BANK AND THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND ARE IN THE POSITION OF BEING ABLE TO DRAW UP MOST OF THE GENERAL ECONOMIC TERMS FOR DEVELOPMENT, BUT THEY ALSO USE THEIR FUNDS AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT PARTICULAR SECTORS OR PROJECTS IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Judgements about the terms and conditions for aid and development are formed among many kinds of decision makers in concrete and glass offices, world-wide; in Rome and in Washington as well as in The Hague and in Melbourne. The crucial question is ever-present: by what ways and means can the Earth's poorest be given their best chance for a decent life? Is it possible and likely, then, that there can be agreement, across the board – or that the Swedish outlook, such as it may be, should prove compatible with the views of others?

The on-going interaction and exchange – where Swedish experience has played some part – has now reached the point where a coordinated approach seems to be within reach.

The governments and organisations responsible have now the same general view of the Third World and how the principle of help towards

self-help should be applied – at least in theory.

The Swedish contribution has not been a matter of suppressing or denying our experience and standpoints. Rather, we have assiduously argued to win sympathy and acceptance for them. Our views have had some effect on other donor countries, and even on such powerful and influential organisations as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These have enormous influence on what can be achieved. That our view has earned respect may be due to the fact that Sweden has been a relatively large and very active donor over many years.

In the future then, Sweden and other donors will try to be consistent and restrictive in asking for their own special conditions and terms. This voluntary limitation means that it will be even more important to decide just when and how it remains imperative that we express the Swedish experience, the Swedish outlook. Whatever this should be, it must be based on our field experience, on reports and evaluations of undeniable substance. Consequently, front-line experience should carry even more weight now than before.

Sweden will continue to apply its own independent judgement. Each proposal for an international aid program will be examined as to how the conditions, practical content and means of funding are likely to have effect. Our cardinal principle is that actions should promote democracy, and help the poor to make a better life for themselves.

An important task for Swedish development assistance in the near future is to help countries improve their ability to make their own analysis, their own evaluation and their own negotiating position, in the planning that will affect their own country.

PART OF SWEDEN'S CONTRIBUTION IS TO "PROGRAMME COUNTRIES". THESE ARE COUNTRIES WITH WHICH SWEDEN HAS AGREED LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES. THE 19 COUNTRIES ARE GUINEA-BISSAU, UGANDA, ETHIOPIA, KENYA, TANZANIA, ANGOLA, ZAMBIA, NAMIBIA, ZIMBABWE, MOZAMBIQUE, BOTSWANA, LESOTHO, CAPE VERDE, INDIA, BANGLADESH, SRI LANKA, LAOS, VIETNAM AND N. CARAGUA.

One thing is most essential, and will remain so, in what we do for any country. Our job is to stimulate ability, self-confidence, an organization, a self-reliant way for people to be getting on, improving and developing whatever held a promise and seemed useful – not just in our hands while we stayed on, but longer; in their own hands, on their own terms.

Development is often seen in terms of projects – boring a well, building a power station, laying out an irrigation system – or whatever. These are clear and tangible: people and machines are put to work.

But the lack of development in a country is not only, or even most importantly, a question of lack of physical resources.

It is also a question of all the things that have blocked the use of such resources as there are; not least, human resources. One of the biggest and most difficult tasks ahead of us, when we give aid, is to try to develop the country's own capacity, the institutions and organisations, so that they will be able to take over the "project", ensure that it will continue to function and to benefit people.



Imagine a Sweden with the road and rail network fully laid out and built, but with no agency, board or company capable of maintaining and running it. Imagine the telecommunication network complete, but with no-one to operate it. Imagine the hydro-electric turbines humming away but with no capacity or staff for inspection and service.

Of course this is not exactly the situation in developing countries, but it illustrates the problems we are facing. In developing countries it is not only the organisation and upkeep of technical structures that falls short. It is also such elementary things as the basic necessities of life, food, medical care, or the chance to go to school.

To a great extent, the individual has every reason to feel that he is on his own, with no one to help him. He must either provide for himself and his family, rely on chance, or some remote authority, or even divinity.

This situation actually hinders an exchange between the individual and society. In our world, development has been a result of interaction between the individual and society. In developing countries, this interaction may take its own, different form; but it is still needed.

The conclusion? Unless the donor can bring about an increase in the country's own capacity to manage resources, even an increase in aid might have no effect.



GUSTAF ENEKOTH

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A TOTAL OF 90 COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD RECEIVE DIRECT ASSISTANCE FROM SWEDEN. COSTA-RICA AND CHILE ARE EXAMPLES OF COUNTRIES WHERE THE AMOUNT OF AID HAS INCREASED OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS. EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES HAVE RECEIVED AID SINCE 1990.

Both giver and receiver must take on a new responsibility. This means taking a closer look at things that need to be examined and revised, not always to the delight of everyone. As for ourselves, we have to assume a role that is not all pleasantries but may require clarity, firmness; all in good cause and for the sake of an unfailingly pertinent dialogue.

The only way to manage effective development assistance is to approach our partners with sincerity and frankness.

We must try to make plain just what it is we on our side are able to offer, and on what conditions. We should ask that our partner on the other side meets us in this same spirit, and is ready to apply the same hard-headed judgements. Neither side has anything to gain from "well-meant chaos." Expectations on both sides must be defined and made clear.

Toadying – either on the part of the rich country because of a bad conscience about the inequalities in the world, or from the poor country because of a feeling of dependence – will distort the dialogue and fail to

produce the effect we all want.

The problems need to be brought out into the light.

Some examples:

There can be vested interests on either side. One must look out for these. They could distort the input and reduce its impact.

Politicians and government employees could see the introduction of new roles as being to their disadvantage, and therefore oppose them.

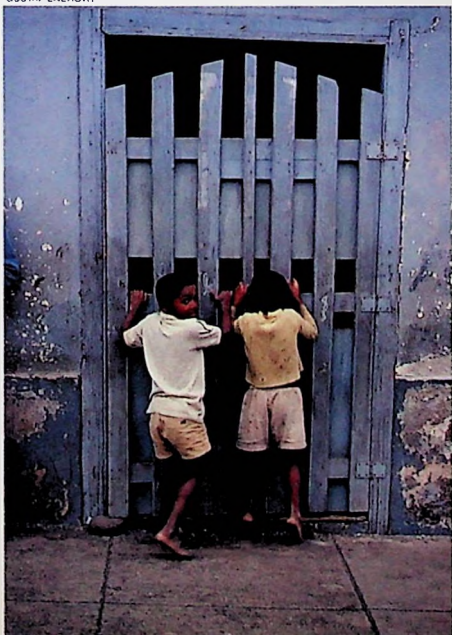
If we ask the recipient country for details of its budget – for example how much it intends spending on the armed forces, or on a new government building – we may be seen as interfering.

We want to draw more attention and direct more aid to the very poor.

We want to give them the chance of productive work – preferably, near where they live. To speak very candidly: it sometimes seems that donors are more concerned about the poor than the government of the country.

These examples show how important it is that our signals come across clearly. Rather than trying to please, we should always say what we mean as clearly as we can. It is only by doing this that we give our partners a fair chance to use their own experience and criteria to interpret just what we mean, and what our intentions are.

GUSTAF ENEROTH



SWEDEN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IS NOT ONLY COUNTRY-TO-COUNTRY, BUT IS ALSO CHANNELLED THROUGH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS — MAINLY THE UN AND VARIOUS OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS SUCH AS THOSE OF THE TRADES UNION MOVEMENT, THE CHURCHES, AND THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT.

Development assistance is also subject to fashions and trends. Organisations and countries can sometimes seem to all be running in the same direction. SIDA must have its ear to the ground, be well aware of what is going on, but not necessarily follow the herd. The key is to take a long-term view.



GUSTAF ENEPOT

Looking into the future can be difficult. Donors sometimes seem to follow in each other's footsteps, even when the input allows more time for proper planning than does emergency assistance.

Ideas can pop up as a result of something that catches people's attention, for example in the media. At one stage perhaps, the prevailing idea seems to be that the situation in Africa is promising, but in Asia is hopeless. At some other time the popular belief is that the opposite is true.

Sometimes a particular type of aid gets a very bad name, while another is seen as a model to be followed – all because a single project worked out well or badly. What can happen is that a good idea is discarded because of one failure – the baby thrown out with the bathwater – while the other which seemed to work well is copied – and results in disappointment.

SIDA takes the longer view, is concerned to share responsibility, and to develop competence in the country. In this way, the partners will be better able to analyse and understand whether any success or failure is the result of some detail or can be traced to the concept as such. The ideal is to establish such a sound base of understanding that activities can be critically assessed and revised, if need be, while they are still going on.

IN MAPUTO, THE CAPITAL OF MOZAMBIQUE, WAGES ARE HIGHER THAN IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. STILL, AN AVERAGE EARNER IN MAPUTO MUST SPEND HALF OF HIS WAGE ON ELECTRICITY AND WATER.

A mutual understanding
that encourages
a clear-sighted realistic approach:
the recipient country
shall manage
the funds as part of its own national budget,
shall have the responsibility
that they are paid out
at the right place and time.
Tenders are invited, examined and evaluated
by the country's own authorities.

Sometimes development assistance funds go directly to the project rather than via the national budget and the ministries of the receiving country. The direct route can have advantages. Time is saved, red tape and waste can be avoided. There is less risk of the activities coming to a halt while the ministry goes through the procedures of budgeting and paying out.

But the short cut also has disadvantages. The flow and scale of aid may not show up clearly in government statistics. And the central government may feel it has been bypassed. So this short cut will scarcely encourage a feeling of shared responsibility, of being in control, of seeing the whole picture.

The short cut, by circumventing the highest and proper authorities of the country, has another effect: any weaknesses and deficiencies in the administration pass unnoticed. Yet it is just these deficiencies that must be brought to light and put right if the country is to take a greater share of responsibility, and be more cost-conscious about aid.



GUSTAF ENEROTH

SIDA's policy is, except in exceptional circumstances or unless the situation in the country demands otherwise, to pay the funds to the government. They then appear as part of the national budget and are paid out in the normal way.

The recipient country shall also take more responsibility than earlier for purchasing – inviting companies to tender, examining and evaluating the bids, and deciding who shall be given the job.

The progress towards a greater and more clearly defined economic responsibility must go hand-in-hand with a general agreement of what now constitutes SIDA's role.

SIDA's new role emphasises overall strategies and so increases SIDA's chances of doing the checking and evaluating for which it is responsible. To follow the flow of funds to their target, to check how effectively they are put to use, to intervene when there is any sign of mismanagement or corruption; these will always remain our duty. We are answerable to the people we want to reach and help, as well as to the people who are actually doing the helping – the Swedish taxpayers.

LAND THAT CAN BE CULTIVATED AND PROVIDE A LIVING FOR THE PEOPLE WORKING IT IS NOW SO SCARCE IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD THAT MORE THAN TEN PERCENT OF THE RURAL POPULATION IS WITHOUT SUCH LAND

O ur job should not be to get involved in detail. If the new roles mean having fewer of our own people in the country where we participate, a great deal more may be required of those who are actually there. It is no longer sufficient just to be skilled. One must also have the special ability to make others skilled — ideally, to the extent that one is no longer needed.



GUSTAF ENEROTH

One of the mistakes

made in development assistance over the years has been that the ability to put over and transfer knowledge and skills to the people working with you has been insufficiently emphasized.

Specialists sent to the country often did a valuable job using their skills and insights. But they did not always have the ability to introduce and transfer those skills and insights to the people around them.

Some studies – among others by SIDA – indicate that the locally recruited people were often given rather routine tasks to do, tasks

which did not utilise such competence as they had. In future, more emphasis will be put on the transfer of skills. SIDA's recruitment and training will encourage this ability to get skills across to others.

Experts should aim to make themselves redundant; to put it drastically, work themselves out of a job.

We are presently studying how contracts and agreements can be designed to foster and reward this inherent ambition.



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NINETY FIVE PERCENT OF THE WORLD'S INDUSTRIES ARE IN WHAT HAS OFTEN BEEN CALLED "THE WEST". IN FACT IT WOULD BE MORE ACCURATE TO SAY THE NORTH. THE CONCEPT NORTH/SOUTH IS NOW MORE AND MORE USED TO REFER TO THE RICHER AND THE POORER WORLD.

W

hat about now, at this stage of change?

Surely – you may ask –

a quick and obvious leap forward

in some part of the world that really needs it should
not be delayed or passed over

because of an ongoing search for new roles?

The easy answer would be: Certainly not.

A more candid answer is:

We may well run into short term disappointments,
occasionally find ourselves moving sluggishly
for reasons that are not wholly evident.

On balance, however,

new values and opportunities

are at stake,

justifying the long term view.

Changing roles, while work is going on under all sorts of conditions, and with many different partners, cannot be less than difficult. A reappraisal of our work patterns and past actions would probably be easier if we were making a very drastic change in our approach. But this is not the case. Our established way of doing things has not shown itself to be useless – far from it.

Swedish development assistance has been so well thought out and has in many cases produced such positive results, that there is every reason to move with care and consideration

now, when things are changing. It is important to bear in mind that the attitudes and methods that are gradually going to change or be replaced have not come about by chance or without solid practical justification.

As in all human endeavor it takes time for new attitudes and working methods to gain a footing and prove their value. For this reason, it is particularly necessary that emergency assistance – needed at very short notice – should be considered separately.

Emergencies just happen – they don't wait on our convenience.



THE POPULATION OF THE WORLD INCREASES BY 90 MILLION PER YEAR
THE GREATEST INCREASE IS IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES

Anxiety about the earth,
the air, the water,
the depletion of the environment
that puts all living things at risk
— that anxiety is felt
among all countries and people.
Strangely enough, it is from this very threat
and from these shared fears
that a new opportunity may emerge:
a chance that North will be talking to South
on more equal terms than ever before.



That there is an equal interdependence – this has hardly ever been the case in earlier discussions about development.

When interests are quite obviously and immediately mutual, when the same threat may affect the whole of humanity – on whatever latitude, under whatever constellation of stars we dwell – then people come to feel that some actions should be taken and some sacrifices made – together.

At worse, this concern for the environment could provoke a free-for-all which would underline and confirm the contrast between those with power and those without, between prosperity and poverty, between freedom of choice and dependence.

But concern for the environment can also lead us into an arena where the North and South get used to a new relationship, with a mutual interest in defending certain values, and where neither has any cause to feel more secure or protected than the other.



TWO-THIRDS OF THE POPULATION OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
LIVE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE BUT HAVE ACCESS TO ONLY ONE QUARTER OF THE SOCIAL
BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO TOWN DWELLERS — FOR EXAMPLE, EDUCATION,
MEDICAL CARE, CLEAN WATER, OR SANITATION

The goal for development assistance remains the same.

As before — progress will be mixed with setbacks.

It is in the nature of such endeavours, and those who take part understand it well.

There is always the question:
how did things work out?

There may be clues
in a government report,
or in words exchanged at a high-level meeting.

Yes, it may look fine,
there's progress, no doubt
— but still a question remains.

That question is crucial.

It aims for the truth of a project:

How many
of the village people were involved?

The idea is that it should be possible to put

more responsibility on the recipient country – the ministry, the organisation, the people themselves.

The donor should refrain from introducing such special terms and conditions as would proscribe this. The donor certainly does not give up his right to his own general view of things, his right to make demands, to specify terms. But he will be more concerned with strategy, and less with implementation.

There will always be a gap between what we would like to achieve and what we actually do achieve. A crucial precondition for success is that the people we want to help become actively engaged in what is going on.

GUSTAF ENEROTH

All too often, inputs from the outside world have been such that the local people have not been consulted, or able to take part. Under such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the result has more often been disappointing than encouraging.

The people we are trying to reach should take some responsibility and an active part in the work. This anchors the project firmly in the community. It is then more likely to have a life of its own, even after the experts have gone home.



GUSTAF EKEROOTH



To change the roles between partners in the sensitive area of development assistance would be pointless if only the donor had a say in the matter. We are able to propose such changes out of respect for the actual situation of receivers, as we know it. Their response, on the other hand, is founded on respect for a Swedish policy of support for the poor in the world, which has earned credibility for what we propose. Without this particular background of long-standing mutual trust, the dialogue could easily turn sour. Then, things would remain as they were.

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Changes in the economical, political and environmental conditions of the world mean that the preconditions for development assistance, as well as the potentials, are changing too. Within SIDA there is an on-going discussion about how these changes affect our work. Sida presents its views in a series of three booklets. The first gives the political and economic context. The second, "On a New Tack", explains the new roles of the partners, and how the recipient countries are encouraged to take more responsibility for their own development. The third, "On the Right Road", gives examples of projects which have resulted in positive change for the people we want to reach.



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