

MATRIXING AID

Janet Vähämäki



Matrixing Aid

The Rise and Fall of 'Results Initiatives' in Swedish
Development Aid

Janet Vähämäki

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To Hanna, Elias
and
Torulf

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Abbreviations

| | |
|-----------|---|
| BITS | Beredningen för Internationellt Tekniskt-Ekonomiskt Samarbete (Swedish Agency for International Economic and Technical Cooperation) |
| EGDI | Expert Group on Development Issues |
| ESV | Ekonomistyrningsverket (The Swedish National Financial Management Authority) |
| Gov | The Government |
| IBRD | International Bank for Reconstruction and Development |
| LFA | The Logical Framework Approach |
| NIB | Nämnden för Internationellt Bistånd (Swedish Agency for International Assistance) |
| OECD/DAC | Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee |
| PGD | Policy for Global Development |
| RiR | Riksrevisionen (Swedish National Audit Office) |
| RR | Riksdagens Revisorer (Parliamentary Auditors) |
| RRV | Riksrevisionsverket (National Audit Bureau) |
| SAREC | Styrelsen för u-landsforskning (Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries) |
| SADEV | Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation |
| SASDA | Secretariat for Analysis of Swedish Development Assistance |
| SIDA | Swedish International Development Authority |
| Sida | Swedish International Development Agency |
| SiRS | Sida Rating Initiative |
| SOU | Statens Offentliga Utredningar (Official Reports of the Swedish Government) |
| SwedeCorp | Styrelsen för internationellt näringslivsbistånd (Swedish International Enterprise Development Corporation) |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |

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1 Introduction

“Does aid work?” or “Does aid lead to results?” are probably the most common questions posed to a development aid worker. Whether public development aid or, in other words, financial assistance provided by governments to assist the development of countries with fewer resources, has led to any improvement or “results” is a certainly a legitimate question. In 2014, public development aid financing amounted to some USD 134 billion from OECD countries and USD 6.47 billion from Sweden (OECD 2016). This is money taken from a government’s budget, which is mainly financed by tax payers. In democracies, such as Sweden, elected governments have the obligation to explain their decisions and actions to their citizens. Furthermore, citizens certainly have the right to know what happens with their tax money.

I have myself worked with development aid for about 15 years, and I have now devoted four years to studying a development aid agency, Sida, the Swedish International Development Agency, from the outside. I would claim that providing an answer to the question of whether and how aid leads to “results” is a question that is a daily concern for any development aid worker. The search for results or effectiveness of aid has also been of major concern for Sida and Swedish public aid since the “birth” of public development aid in the 1960s. As early as 1962, the first Government Bill for Development Cooperation declared the efforts for effectiveness a “major task, which also ought to lie in the interest of the recipient” and which “would require a mutual cooperation between the donor and the recipient” (Gov 1962:100:8). Ever since 1965, Sida¹, the main government public agency for development aid, has sought to operationalize these political ambitions.

One way in which Sida has tried to operationalize this political ambition has been by launching and implementing so-called “results initiatives”². This was done in 1971, 1981, 1998 and 2012. What is interesting about these four “results initiatives” is that they have all been introduced with the intention to “systematize results” from Sida-financed aid projects and programmes *in addition* to already established results measurement and management routines within the agency. So, the launching of the initiatives could be

¹ The organization SIDA (Swedish International Development Authority) was formed in 1965. In 1995, four development organizations, including SIDA, merged to form Sida (Swedish International Development Agency). Although SIDA had launched at Sida in 1971, 1981, 1998 and 2012. See further descriptions of what the initiatives have in common in Chapter 3.

understood as occasions when Sida felt it necessary to further specify its answers to the question of “whether aid works” or “whether aid produces results”. However, all four results initiatives have had lifespans of only about 3–10 years. So, it seems that they have served the purpose for a while, but that they have all fallen out of favor after some time in implementation. Why is this so?

Government reforms such as results management reforms have been argued to come with the introduction of certain technologies (Rose and Miller 2008). Within development aid the Logical Framework is an example of a technology used since the 1970s to strengthen results orientation. The Logical Framework consists of a matrix, which allows users to map out how resources and activities will contribute to achieving objectives and results using quantifiable indicators to measure progress (Binnedjikt 2001; Coleman 1987). A Logical Framework or a similar type of a results matrix is typically required by donors in order to make an organization’s activities and projected results visible (Coleman 1987; Earle 2002; Martinez 2013; Quattrone 2009). The assumption has been that using the Logical Framework would lead both to changes in reality and also to more effective and productive organizations. Continuous monitoring of costs and results would ensure changes in attitudes and thinking in a results-based manner. A common character also in the four results initiatives at Sida is that they have all introduced or re-emphasised the necessity to use a certain “results matrix” to support the visualization and systematization of results produced.

However, literature on results management reforms has shown that implementation of results management reforms often face challenges when being implemented (Arnaboldi et al. 2015; Hvidman and Andersen 2014; Thomas 2007; Van Thiel and Leeuw 2002). Typically, public organizations and aid organizations face both multiple audiences and an information overload, which implies that the means of measures and indicators that are to be inserted in the results matrix are seldom straightforward (Binnedjikt 2001; Mayne 2007; Thomas 2007; Vähämäki et al. 2011). Aid organizations often are to rely on outcome and impact data collected by partner countries, which have limited technical capacity and resources, with subsequent problems related to quality, coverage and timeliness (Binnedjikt 2001; Jerven 2013). Jerven (2013) has for example shown that due to “poor numbers” and statistics from recipient countries of aid, donors have no accurate sense of the impact of the aid they supply. When primary information is not available, it is, for example according to Easterly, impossible to know what actually works and why (Easterly 2007). This means that the question of whether aid has led to results actually is not answerable.

Subsequently, some argue that all difficulties in results management derive from the main assumption in the technologies that assume decision-making follows a linear or scientific approach with a straightforward progression from inputs to outputs to outcomes (see for example Sundström 2006). A common critique in both development aid literature and in literature on the public sector is that due to the complex nature of reality it is not actually possible to predict processes in the way assumed in linear approaches, like that applied in the Logical Framework (Earle 2002; Eyben et al. 2016; Radin 2006; Ramalingam et al. 2014; Sundström 2006; Thomas 2007). Reality is never linear in the sense expected in the models. Predicting outcomes and which success is expected is thus difficult, since these predictions are something that the organizations do not have control over (Mayne 2007; Thomas 2007). Subsequently, it has been argued that there are certain “model problems” in models such as the Logical Framework (Jacobsson and Sundström 2006). However, Jacobsson and Sundström (2006) argue that since these technologies typically are seen as the main solution for demonstrating effectiveness, organizations continue trying them out and see all problems related to the reform mainly as “implementation problems”. Therefore, organizations continue trying out similar technologies, despite difficulties to implement them in practice.

However, due to the constantly asked question of “Does aid work?” or “Does aid lead to results?” it is easy to understand that not only aid agencies but also academic scholars have been bothered about finding answers to the question. Scholars have, for example, examined whether, or under which conditions, aid contributes to economic growth, which has been assumed to lead to decreased poverty (Banerjee 2006; Burnside and Dollar 1997; Easterly 2007; Moyo 2009; Riddell 2007; Sachs 2006). In this literature, some studies have found evidence that aid contributes to economic growth, at least in certain circumstances, in the receiving countries (Banerjee 2006; Burnside and Dollar 2000) or at least when aid is conducted in a certain way, or provided to a certain sector or to address a certain problem, such as preventing malaria with mosquito nets (Riddell 2007; Sachs 2006). Typically, it is argued that extreme poverty rates have decreased in the world during the past decades (see for example World Bank 2016). Others have argued that foreign aid has not contributed to economic growth and that it is ineffective and detrimental to development (Easterly 2007; Moyo 2009). Yet others have claimed that “despite tremendous efforts and good intentions, aid often produces disappointing results” and claimed that aid itself creates incentives that could be perceived as factors undermining its own sustainability (Ostrom 2002:158). So, in general there certainly exist studies that argue that aid has contributed to “results” but there are also studies that claim that it has not.

In sum, despite all these studies and efforts carried out by donor agencies such as Sida, it seems that answering the question with a simple “yes” or “no” is not easy. Riddell (2007), who has devoted some thirty years to studying whether aid works, concludes in his book *Does Foreign Aid Really Work?* that:

We live today in the age of sound-bite, where the public increasingly wants to know, in one simple sentence, the answer to complex questions. Does foreign aid really work? One of the key messages of this book is that this question cannot adequately be answered with a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ (Riddell, 2007:xvii).

The conclusion drawn by Riddell (2007), in other words, is that there is no conclusive evidence either way in response to the question of whether aid works. However, what Riddell (2007) and many other scholars (see for example Cassen 1994; Cracknell 2000; Ramalingam 2013) who have also studied this topic declare is that since development aid is so complex and politically loaded, there are also multiple answers to this question.

This thesis will not attempt to answer or even discuss the question of whether aid leads to results as such. Neither is the focus of this thesis to suggest which type of results management model, such as the Logical Framework, would serve development aid practice best. The focus of this thesis is rather to understand why new results initiatives with similar technologies are continuously re-introduced despite the fact that previous research has shown that there seems to be no “blue print” model or research approach that provides a one and only solution and answer to the question of whether aid leads to results. The interest of this thesis is to dig deeper into the question of what actually drives the rise as well as the fall of the results initiatives. Could the continuous re-introduction of results initiatives be beneficial and possibly even be undertaken for a purpose other than to demonstrate “results”?

In the next section I will discuss how previous literature has described how public aid and aid agencies operate when they seek answers to the question on whether aid leads to results.

1.1 Public Development Aid and Aid Agencies

According to Riddell (2007) aid donors can adopt three different approaches when they are to answer the question of whether aid leads to results: a) to convince the public that some aid does indeed work; b) try to convince the public that steps are being taken to enhance the impact of aid, while trying to reduce the number of cases where it does not work well; or to c) try to nurture, extend and deepen support for aid, acknowledging that a significant

part of it is clearly ineffective, and sharing knowledge about its failures as well as evident successes. The third answer, to admit that aid is complex and might sometimes be ineffective and where some failure is inevitable, is an answer Riddell (2007:115) claims “has been avoided almost entirely”. So, the picture given by Riddell (2007) on how aid donors act when they are to respond to the question is that they avoid providing a “true” picture as an answer to the question.

The reasons why aid organizations refrain from admitting that aid is a difficult task have been explained by the complexity itself; that it is too difficult to explain the aid context (Ramalingam 2013). The sector is not only surrounded by complexity in terms of the problems it tries to solve. The solutions applied to the problems are also often complex (Ellerman 2001; Ramalingam 2013). In aid projects, typically, a whole chain of actors is part of the process of “solving” a particular problem. These actors are everything from other domestic agencies within the public sector to businesses, university institutions, civil society organizations and individuals, who are all part of solving the problems in the “aid chain” (Wallace et al. 2007). One could say that within this system, donor aid agencies find themselves between two main actors: a) the taxpayers and politicians in the developed countries providing aid and b) the recipients of aid. A specific challenge in development aid is the so-called “broken feedback loop” (Martens 2005; Martens et al. 2002). Martens et al. (2002) describe this broken feedback loop as follows:

A unique and most striking characteristic of foreign aid is that the people for whose benefit aid agencies work are not the same as those from whom their revenues are obtained; they actually live in different countries and different political constituencies. This geographical and political separation between beneficiaries and taxpayers blocks the normal performance feedback process: beneficiaries may be able to observe performance but cannot modulate payments (rewards to the agents) in function of performance (Martens et al. 2002:17).

If applying this idea of the broken feedback loop to Swedish development aid, the Swedish public, which could be considered the main principal of development aid, has minimal information about what is happening in practice in development projects without information provided by the development agency (e.g. from Sida). It has been argued that this ambiguity greatly affects the way development organizations operate (van Ufford et al. 1988). In the donor country, politicians may be interested in their political survival and in convincing the public that tax payer money is being spent in a wise and efficient manner. Politicians thus need information that foreign aid is delivering results, and a large amount of the aid bureaucrat’s time is thus spent on “keeping government officials informed and satisfied that their

general goals are being achieved and that more support is needed over the long term” (Ostrom 2002:158).

Given the broken feedback loop and the complex nature of development assistance, this task has been reported as being challenging (see for example Martens et al. 2002). The type of information requested is often simple information and simplified narratives, which are difficult to provide, since, according to Ostrom (2002) there are no “sure” technologies to ensure whether progress is really being made. However, given the “broken feedback loop” one might expect that the sector is particularly vulnerable and sensitive to the opinions of externals. In addition, information passed on, for example by the media, on “results” of aid is important for aid agencies since citizens in countries providing aid seldom have the possibility to see with their own eyes what their money has contributed to.

Aid agencies can thus be seen as “mediators” between the preferences and interests of all individuals and actors involved in the aid delivery chain (Martens 2005) or as “brokers” that continuously translate normative scripts into practical reality (Bierschenk et al. 2002; Lewis and Mosse 2006). Development aid agencies are continuously translating information from recipients of aid and various actors, which they then transform and disseminate as aid “results”. For aid recipients the fragmented landscape of donors aid has been claimed to be a “cirque de irrational”, where many recipients are fully occupied with only living up to different donor requirements (Ramalingam 2013:3). Development aid agencies thus constantly need to try to serve the interests of both recipients and citizens in developed countries. In the end this asymmetric relation leads to another core question of whose perspective of what should be seen as “results” actually counts: that of the donors or the recipients? (Olsson and Wohlgemuth 2003).

Subsequently, Eyben (2010:389) has argued that donors simply refrain from explaining the complexity of the sector since “it would be difficult to win an election on the basis that policy making is terribly messy and that politicians and civil servants have very little control over what happens”. Figures on public perception of aid support this fact (Riddell 2007; SCB 2015). People in general are more interested in domestic affairs, such as their own health or education systems, than public development aid (Riddell 2007). Similarly, in Sweden, polls show that the public in general has limited knowledge about aid. In the poll conducted by Statistics Sweden concerning the Swedish population’s perceptions on aid in 2015, 48% answered that they have “not so good knowledge about how Sweden worked with aid to poor people” (SCB 2015:4). The same poll and research done by, for instance, Rosling (2016) have consistently shown that the public in general has an unrealistic

picture of poverty in the world. In general, the public tends to think that things are worse in developing countries than they actually are.

However, despite these facts, there has been a constant increase in the public support for aid. Public support for aid has been increasing continuously since the 1970's (Ekengren 2010a). In 2015, 78% of the Swedish population were positive toward aid provision (SCB 2015:10). In 2013, development aid was the twelfth largest expense for the public sector (Odén 2013). Despite the fact that neither Sida nor anyone else has ever been able to provide a simple “yes” or “no” answer to the question of whether aid leads to results, there is continuous support for the sector, with Sida being the largest development aid agency in Sweden in charge of public aid.

The discussion above demonstrates that there is something else about aid in addition to its effectiveness that is of concern to anyone involved in aid. I would argue that this “something else” could be called the *solidarity rationale* in aid. I will in the following describe how development aid practice can be understood as operating and constantly mediating between what I believe are the two rationales in development aid: Solidarity and Effectiveness.

1.2 The Solidarity and the Effectiveness Rationales

1.2.1 The Solidarity Rationale

When analyzing Swedish aid policy from its inception in the 1960s it is clear that the public development aid sector was built primarily on aid as a “moral” and “solidarity” duty for Sweden. In the first Aid Bill (Gov 1962:100:5), the motives were declared to be based on feelings of “moral obligation and international solidarity” and the “importance of human values and social equality [...] solidarity and responsibility across borders”. The motives of solidarity and equality were declared to be core aims and “that Swedish aid needed no other motives than these” (Gov 1962:100:5) as motives to support the main goal of aid: the eradication of poverty.³

³ The main goal for Swedish aid has always been related to poverty reduction. In the first Aid Bill (Gov 1962:100:5), the goal was formulated as to “raise the living standards of poor people”; in other words, the emphasis was that aid as such was the main change agent toward meeting the goal. In subsequent Aid Bills, the emphasis was on the possible and actual role of aid in the change process. The emphasis of the role of aid has subsequently been reduced. In the latest Aid Bill (Gov 2002/2003:122:5), the goal is “to contribute to creating conditions for poor people to improve their living conditions”. See Odén (2013) for a further discussion.

Solidarity has, ever since, been declared as *the* main motive for Swedish public development aid in all four subsequent Aid Bills (Gov 1968:101, Gov 1977/78:135 and Gov 2002/03:122).

In its most general use, the term “solidarity” focuses on what ties all of us human beings together into one big moral community, where individuals are “co-responsible” for the actions and desires, the faults and merits of every other individual (Bayertz 1999). Laitinen et al. (2014) argue that solidarity is often we-thinking; the target of concern in solidarity is us together, and is based on the principles of friendship or national “brother or sister-hood”. Identification with a group and the notion that the group’s well-being is part of each member’s well-being is central and constitutive of solidarity. Exhibiting solidarity has thus been declared as something that individuals benefit from; since man is then able to “identify his feelings more and more with their good [...] he comes, as though instinctively, to be conscious of himself as a being who of course pays regard to others” (Bain and Mill 1882:46).

Similarly, studies on aid giving have argued that for individuals, the main rationale for aid provision is also altruism and doing something good for someone else (Ramalingam 2013; Riddell 2007; Lumsdaine 1993). The act of giving or providing aid can thus be viewed as something that for many people has a value of its own. Konow and Earley (2008) have for example argued that a person who helps others is often happier. Ekengren (2010b) has noted that people’s general generosity affects their attitudes toward aid and that the more frequently a person gives money, the more positive he/she is toward aid and further giving. Riddell (2007) argues that people in general are not overly interested in knowing too many details about aid. So, for most people, the mere knowledge that they are giving and supporting someone else is sufficient. A driver for why aid is provided thus seems to be that people simply gain good feelings from aid provision.

However, even if solidarity has been argued as being a “warm” word, coming from positive emotional dimensions, it has also been argued as coming from “a ground feeling of obligation” (Laitinen et al. 2014) or being a “moral obligation” (Lumsdaine 1993). Bayertz (1999) has argued that the idea of solidarity between all human beings is often restricted. Since people also have feelings of conflict and egotism, one typically does not exhibit “solidarity” with just anybody, but only with other members of the particular community with which one identifies. Societal solidarity or “quasi solidarity” is thus argued by Bayertz (1999) to be the condition in large societies, where most human beings are strangers to each other and when the solidarity act is transferred to a bureaucratic apparatus and carried out anonymously. This could be described as the case in public development aid,

where the act of solidarity is often organized by governments, carried out by bureaucracies and performed between people from different nations. Lumsdaine (1993) argues that it is beneficial for both people and countries *to be seen as* tough, reliable and honest. Showing acts of solidarity could thus be done to serve for example a state's international interests and to gain a good reputation (Lumsdaine 1993).

Martens et al. (2005), who have followed arguments posed by Carr et al. (2005), argue that aid provision is a cognitive process that occurs in the human mind. Martens et al. (2005) explain that when a donor, or a citizen in a developed country, encounters individuals who are deprived of essential resources, the situation may generate empathy, but it may also generate something he calls a "dissonance in the mind", meaning a situation that the donor might find unsatisfying. If the observed situation of the deprived does not correspond to his own perception of how the world should be, then this situation may trigger a response where the donor, or the citizen, wants to help, or provide assistance, in order to alleviate this dissonance. Martens et al. (2005:646) has subsequently argued that providing aid could be viewed as "a transaction: the donor transfers resources to the recipient in return for a reduction of dissonance in the donor's mind". So, one might also understand the solidary act of aid provision as coming from "feelings of guilt" (Riddell 2007:157). Ramalingam (2013:7), for example, argues that people wish to "get that special feeling which comes from helping to end poverty" through aid provision, but that the act is mainly done due to bad conscience deriving from the inequalities in the world. By providing aid, providers reduce the dissonance in our minds and feel better about the situation.

Lindenberg (1998:46) argues that acting in solidarity is precarious and needs to be supported by factors that increase the salience of something that he calls "the solidarity framework". This means, he argues, that people always observe different situations through frameworks shaped by different goals and relationships. If a friend, for example, asks to borrow money, I might initially perceive the situation to be in the category of "helping a friend in need", instead of primarily experiencing the loss of money as a cost. Helping a friend is salient, while economic thinking fades into the background. However, if the same friend asks for money for the third time in a row without having paid back any of his/her debts, I may frame the situation different, and, for example, want to increase my control and be assured that I will be repaid.

According to Hopkins (2000:445), "A major condition for sustainability of future aid is *the belief* in its efficacy". A precondition for the continuous survival of public development aid is that actors involved in it continue to believe that it leads to something good. So, one could say that people's

altruism depends on whether they continue to believe that donor aid agencies are effectively delivering “results”. For aid agencies this means that their survival depends on whether people trust the information they send out. If one sees the core of development aid as an act of solidarity, every critique, opinion or personal feeling that money is not used in a proper manner would be a factor in not supporting the “solidarity framework” as posed by Lindenberg (1998), but would rather support a “distrust framework”, implying a situation where explicit checking is needed. Power (1997) has argued that explicit checking of someone else would only need to occur in situations of doubt, conflict, mistrust, and danger; i.e. only in these situations would there be a bias towards a “distrust framework”, which in turn leads to a further search to find out whether the aid has been used in an effective manner. I will now turn to discussing typicalities within the other rationale in aid: the *effectiveness rationale*.

1.2.2 The Effectiveness Rationale

A typical model used by organizations to make visible and plan effectiveness is to use a basic production model, where inputs are transported through a production process into outputs. Outputs, in turn, are transformed into outcomes. “Results” and effects are then commonly viewed as something caused as a consequence of something else. Typically, the causal change process is illustrated with models that illustrate the process of change. A typical model used in the public sector is the following:

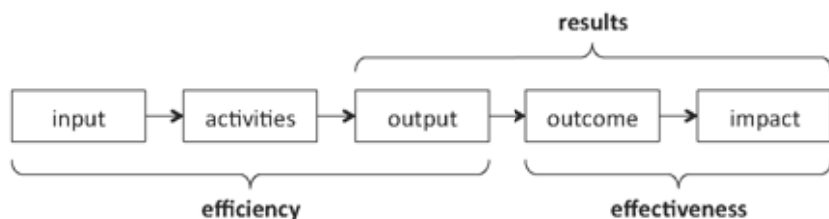


Figure 1. The “results” production model. Source: The author. Inspired by OECD/DAC 2002; Modell and Grönlund, 2006

In this picture, resources (inputs) are allocated to activities, which in turn produce outputs and outcomes. A difference is made between efficiency and effectiveness. In line with the production model used by Modell and Grönlund (2006) efficiency is viewed as the effects of the production within the organization (inre effektivitet), whereas effectiveness is viewed as the effects on outcomes outside the organization (yttre effektivitet). The concept of “results” is typically, as in the results based management model used by OECD/DAC (2002), seen as the latter part of a causal chain of a process; as

output, outcome, impact or effect. Ever since the 1960s, these types of models have been *the* dominating way of perceiving how *effectiveness* is to be achieved in the public sector (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004; Sundström 2003) including development aid (see Gov 1962:100) and in many international organizations (see for example UNESCO 1959; USAID 1969).

In literature on performance management there is a common understanding that whereas reforms in the 1980s all tended to focus more on “outputs”, it has been argued that the focus on “outcomes” or “impact” is more dominant today (Ferlie et al. 2009; Power 2015; White 2010; Wimbush 2011). In most public management literature, the 1990s is described as a period when ideas within New Public Management (NPM) were introduced. According to Hood (1991), during this time, the NPM ideas such as greater emphasis on output controls and explicit formal measurable standards and measures of performance and success, were presented as the means to “solve management-ills” and an “all-purpose key to better provision of public services” (Hood 1991:181). During this time, it was argued that performance measurement had become the “hottest topic in government today” (Blodgett and Newfarmer 1996). Behn proposed that performance measurement had become one of the three “big questions” in public administration in the 1990s (Behn 1995). And Radin (2006) argued that if there was a single theme that characterized the public sector in the 1990s, it was the demand for performance (Radin 2006).

So, whereas the 1990s have typically been described as a time during which “outputs” were in focus, the “most important changes affecting modern public sector management in the 2000s” have been declared by Wimbush (2011:212) among others to be the “shift to a focus on outcomes”, whereas White (2010) has argued that the impact focus was the “novelty”. A commonality in articles proposing or arguing for a novel way of reporting results is that the previous way of reporting is painted black. White (2010:154), for example, argues that we have learnt that “outcome monitoring does not tell us about the success of government programmes or the interventions supported by international development agencies”, therefore, aid agencies now report rather on “impacts”.

The results measurement and management ideas can be seen as a practice closely linked to the thinking behind insurance – there is a wish to calculate the probability of something happening in the future, a calculus to be done on the basis of statistical information from the past (Ewald 1991). The idea is thus the basis of economic theory where there is typically a wish to know and predict the future and tame uncertainty (Hacking 1981). Results management models have strived to encourage strategic, linear, rational thinking in change processes and to express, simplify and reproduce

complex processes by using numbers for comparison (Espeland and Stevens 1998; Vollmer 2007).

The steering idea behind performance management models assume that performance information generated during implementation is to be used by managers in managerial decisions (Hvidman and Andersen 2014) for purposes of control and learning (Mayne 2008) and for purposes of evaluation, control, budget, motivation, promotion, celebration and improvement (Behn 2003). Results can be measured at the organizational, programme (or outside the organization), individual or governmental level. Most literature on the topic seems to focus on organizational performance (Ferlie et al. 2009; Wimbush 2011), focusing on the organization's ability to achieve goals (Corvellec 1997). Within the public sector, another steering level is that between the agency and the government, which Pollitt (2006), for example, refers to as "public sector performance steering". In the development aid sector, the term Results Based Management (RBM) has been used to signify the whole management process of development aid projects.

It is understandable that the results management ideas and the models have been very attractive to organizations since they promise so much. They have often been promoted and spurred by the idea that "what gets measured gets done" (Peters et al. 1982:268). In development aid, Results Based Management was promoted by Kusek and Rist (2004) through the following statements:

- If you do not measure results, you cannot tell success from failure.
- If you cannot see success, you cannot reward it.
- If you cannot reward success, you are probably rewarding failure.
- If you cannot see success, you cannot learn from it.
- If you cannot recognize failure, you cannot correct it.
- If you can demonstrate results, you can win public support.

From Kusek and Rist (2004:11)

So, the ideas of results measurement have been promoted as supporting many needs in organizations. According to Behn (2003) there are eight purposes for which managers measure and manage performance: 1. Evaluate, 2. Control, 3. Budget, 4. Motivate, 5. Promote, 6. Celebrate, 7. Learn and 8. Improve. One could thus say that the purposes are both for internal needs within an organization and also external needs outside an organization. So, optimally, results measurement and management would be something that benefits, for example, donor aid agencies, not only with regards to their need to demonstrate results, but also in their internal management. Also, optimally, introducing these types of management

models would lead to increased trust and solidarity, and subsequently decrease the need for further control.

1.2.3 Tensions In and Between the Two Rationales

The optimal scenario for development aid would be that aid supports both the solidarity and the effectiveness rationales, and that measures taken to increase and show effectiveness also lead to increased effectiveness as well as increased trust and solidarity. However, scholars have shown that this has not always been the case (see for example Adcroft and Willis 2005; Behn 1995; Jacobsson and Sundström 2006; Smith 1993). It has been argued that the positive effects of performance measurement systems cannot be taken for granted (Arnaboldi et al. 2015; Ferlie et al. 2007; Speklé and Verbeeten 2014). Jacobsson and Sundström (2006) for example, argue that evaluations done on results measurement and management have most often found that organizations have encountered severe difficulties in implementation. In their view, this is due to the fact that the models are built on principal-agent theories, which are built primarily on distrust. They argue that results management models thus rather lead to “anxious agencies, who most often listen upwards after what is accepted and viable” (Jacobsson and Sundström 2006:164).

Similarly, a wide variety of literature has also argued that results measurement and management reforms have led to so-called “unintended consequences” or “perverse effects” (see, for example Adcroft and Willis 2005; Natsios 2010; Smith 1993). Unintended consequences might be that management only focuses on the quantified aspects that are part of the performance measurement scheme, at the expense of unquantified aspects of performance, or that only short-term targets are pursued at the expense of legitimate long-term objectives (Smith 1993). Some literature has argued that these types of reforms have led to staff spending increasing amounts of time collecting data and monitoring their activities and not enough time on managing (Diefenbach 2009; Forssell and Westerberg 2014; Johansson and Lindgren 2013; Meyer and Gupta 1994; Natsios 2010). Johansson and Lindgren (2013) have argued that there are consequences not only for internal management but also for public service delivery in general. Natsios (2010) has argued that results measurement has led to “counter-bureaucracy” and an “obsessive measurement disorder” within the aid donor agency USAID and, similarly, Diefenbach (2009:986) has claimed that the unintended consequences of the widespread “efficiency and measurement fever” have led to a “whole range of negative psycho-social and organizational effects”. So, the literature on unintended consequences has demonstrated that it seems as though on certain occasions, when the reforms

are pushed very hard, the effectiveness rationale seems to take over and cause negative effects. So, some literature has argued that the introduction of the models might in the end have led to more control and more distrust rather than back to trust and solidarity.

Some literature has argued that one factor that determines whether we believe certain information depends on *the distance*. Robson (1992) has explained that a typical feature with the concept of “distance” is that distance can create a perceived need for more information in order to overcome the problem of distance. Similarly, Sundström (2011:275), who has studied the relation between distance and performance information, has argued that “trust and control are interrelated, as a lack of trust may be moderated by control yet at the same time a lack of trust triggers the perceived need for control”.

Similarly, in aid literature it has been argued that aid bureaucrats tend to have a bias toward the effectiveness rationale due to the distance between the donor and the recipient (Carr et al. 2005; Ostrom 2002). Carr et al. (2005) argue that in situations where we cannot see what is happening in reality with our own eyes, this might lead to an increased drive to find measured results and scientific explanations to alleviate the “dissonance in the mind”. For example, if the only information available about what has happened in an aid project is a results matrix with quantifiable numbers and this information does not resonate with our understanding of what has happened in reality, the donor’s dissonance and distrust may increase, and lead to further control efforts being made. So whilst objectivity and measurements have often been seen as ways of dealing with distrust and distance (Porter 1996), objectivity and measurements might also increase distrust. This could be increasingly so in the reality of development aid agencies who need to try to serve the interests of both recipients and citizens in developed countries. Since demonstrating effectiveness for citizens in developed countries for their continuous belief and trust in the solidarity actions taken by the aid agency, the demands imposed within the effectiveness rationale might become perceived as a larger concern.

However, there are also studies proposing that there might not need to be a conflict or a tension between different rationales. An example of this is the study done by Wällstedt (2015) who has studied how increased demands for performance measurement and control have affected work in elderly care. In his study, Wällstedt (2015) has suggested a dichotomy between “control” and “care”, which would be similar rationales in elderly care, as the solidarity and effectiveness rationales are in aid. Wällstedt (2015:217) concluded that “control and care work pretty well together, because they are allowed to exist side by side and interfere in each other’s realities in

constructive ways”. So, according to Wällstedt (2015) staff within elderly care most often learnt to adjust to the multiple demands placed on them. The optimal for development aid would also, of course, be if there was a balance between the solidarity and the effectiveness rationales; that everyone interested could be assured easily that it is effective and thereby gain a good feeling from this act of solidarity.

I have in this part shown that even though humans and organizations might wish to exhibit solidarity and feel that they gain meaning from supporting others, they need continuous reassurance that their support is in fact beneficial. For aid organizations, buying into the effectiveness rationale by, for example, using results measurement and management models, is a way in which they can demonstrate that they take actions to demonstrate the effectiveness and results of aid.

However, none of the rationales is stable; solidarity may be driven by several motives and the pursuit of effectiveness has often led to other consequences. One might assume that not only the tensions between the rationales, but also the tensions *within* each of the two rationales, drive management reforms. I will now turn to discussing how this tension between the solidarity and effectiveness rationale can be understood as leading to “tides of reforms” and the consequent re-introduction of similar reform ideas.

1.3 Tides of Reforms

In literature on management reforms it has been argued that different political reform ideas typically come and go in different “tides of reforms” (Ferlie et al. 2009; Light 2006; Light 2011). Light (2011:7) has argued that reform tides function “just like the tides of the ocean”; they rise, they reach an apogee and they fall back. Similarly, scholars within organizational institutionalism often have taken it for granted that organizational ideas, like fashions, come and go (see for example Abrahamsson 1996; Gill and Whittle 1993; Cox and Minaham 2006). In management fashion studies the assumption is that management fashions rise in the same way as ‘real’ fashions with rapid upswings, which are then followed by equally rapid downturns. Popular organizational ideas are viewed as transitory, ideas whose time comes and goes (Røvik 2011).

A typical research subject in literature that has taken the existence of “tides of reforms” as given has been to discuss what it is that drives or causes the tides of reforms. One could say that this literature has tried to identify *mechanisms* that contribute to the rise or to the fall of a reform. The predominant explanation given is the fact that people tend to continue

believing in rationality and rational models (see for example Abrahamsson 1996; Brunsson 2006; Ferlie et al. 2009; Sundström 2003), this despite the fact that they might fail to achieve their objective.

Ferlie et al.'s (2009) explanation for this continuous belief is that since political parties in modern democracies continuously need to demonstrate how they are beneficial to their voters the quest for "performance" or "results" remains a permanent feature. However, since there is an intrinsic "attribution problem" with the fact of actually knowing what has caused positive or negative changes in society one might expect that there will always be a new quest for new models and techniques that can actually deliver measures and knowledge about "results" (Ferlie et al. 2009). So, according to Ferlie et al. (2009) a mechanism that causes the continuous rise and fall of "results initiatives" would be the continuous inconsistency in capturing policies or reality by particular techniques such as Management by Objectives, Balanced Scorecard, or the Logical Framework.

Brunsson (2009) has argued that the rise and fall of reforms could be seen as a routinized and stable element in organizations. Brunsson (2006) explains the rise of new reforms with "mechanisms of hope", i.e. that organizations and people continue hoping that reforms will this time succeed, despite previous efforts to do so. The continuous hope explains why new reforms are continuously being launched. The rise in new reforms is also possible due to mechanisms of forgetfulness, which ensures, according to Brunsson and Olsen (1993) that experience of the past will not interfere with the reform; it supports the fact that reform interest is always in the future rather than the present. Also, since implementation often creates new problems, new solutions are always attractive for organizational members (Brunsson and Olsen 1993). Subsequently, it has been argued that government officials responsible for designing new information and control systems ignore history (Sundström 2006). Only single-loop learning, i.e. a repeated attempt to solve the same problem with the same solution, takes place and mistakes from the previous attempt seldom occur when new reforms are introduced (Sundström 2006). A proposition is thus that management reforms seldom, if ever, lead to changed practice.

Scholars within so-called management fashion theory have explained the fact that different management technologies during certain times become objects of great attention and that there exists a supply-and-demand market for these types of technologies (see for example Abrahamsson and Eisenman 2008; Gill and Whittle 1993). It is argued that there is a market for certain types of management models, often set and planned by, for example, a "fashion-setting community", such as consultants, business and media. Ideas and management models are then on certain occasions, occasions on which

they reach the status of a fashion, seen by managers in organizations as being useful for the organization (Abrahamsson 1996; Abrahamsson and Eisenman 2008; Røvik 2011; Gill and Whittle 1993).

A criticism of earlier studies on “tides of reforms” is that many of these studies have been done mainly on the “surface level”, focusing only on “talk” and “headlines” (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011). A typical perspective in the previous studies is thus that the effectiveness rationale is imposed on organizations by external actors, and that organizations subsequently adjust to these demands in order to gain legitimacy for being effective (see for example Meyer and Rowan 1977). Studies have also studied mainly how actors in an organization’s environment behave when they try to convince others to follow rational reform ideas. In Brunsson’s (2006, 2009) studies, for example, reforms are often invented by “reformers”, who are typically politicians or government officials, whereas state agencies are the “reformees” who are to implement the reforms. Previous literature has thus mainly explained organizational behavior as well as the tides of reforms from the point of view of different mechanisms that drive organizations to be seen as effective. Focus in research has been to discuss how and why organizations tend to continuously need to demonstrate that they are rational. It has to a lesser extent taken into account mechanisms that drive people and organizations to, for example, show solidarity, actions that people and organizations simply do because of, for example, feelings and emotions. In other words, there has been a greater focus on the push of the effectiveness rationale rather than on how one can understand how the solidarity rationale drives people and organizations to actions.

Moreover, few studies have been conducted to capture the whole life cycle of the reforms and demonstrate what happens with reform ideas over a longer time period (Røvik 2007; Tomson 2008). Also, few studies have focused on what actually happens *within* organizations when the reforms are implemented (Clark 2004; Williams 2004). A continuous call, has thus been to study in-depth what happens and how reforms and technologies in fact are implemented in organizational day-to-day practices (Burchell et al. 1980; DiMaggio 1988; Hopwood 1983; Kurunmäki et al. 2011; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011; Zucker 1987) as well as understanding how the intraorganizational behavior of organizational members and conflicting demands actually affect what organizations are doing (Greenwood et al. 2008).

Eyben (2010:382), who has studied how development aid agencies actually deal with different demands, has argued that staff are “closet relationists”, meaning that despite heavy pressure on results measurement and management, they typically still continue mainly to work within what I

would call the solidarity rationale. Eyben's (2010) argument is that staff within aid agencies will only play within the effectiveness rationale "on the surface" but that they actually play mainly within the solidarity rationale. However, Eyben (2010) too has echoed the study of how people actually deal with this conflict in organizational practice:

So far, no official aid agency has been prepared to undertake a study that aims to learn about their staff's everyday practices – what they are doing, as distinct from what they report they are doing – and their effects. (Eyben 2010:384)

Subsequently, if we want to learn more about mechanisms behind the rise and fall of the four results initiatives at Sida there is a need to take into account how the two rationales solidarity and effectiveness have interplayed in development aid over a longer period of time, and in what way the interplay between the two rationales might be a mechanism explaining the rise and fall of the four results initiatives. Moreover, there is a need to study the rise and fall of reforms during longer time periods, and with a focus on what happens *within* organizations and with people who work in these organizations.

1.4 Aim and Questions

The main study object for this thesis is the four results initiatives launched at Sida in 1971, 1981, 1998 and 2012. The initiatives were on these occasions introduced with the aim to "systematize results" produced within the agency and to boost results-oriented thinking; they were thus introduced in addition to already established results measurement and management routines within the agency. However, all the results initiatives have fallen after some time of implementation

The *purpose* of this thesis is to increase our understanding of tides of reforms. In order to do so I will identify and discuss mechanisms that drive the rise, as well as the fall, of management reforms.

I ask the following key questions to the four empirical cases, i.e. the four results initiatives in a public sector aid organization, Sida:

1. What influences public sector aid organizations to initiate results initiatives?
2. What happens when the results initiatives are launched, and what happens thereafter? How do different groups of people act and react?
3. And, what happens when the initiatives fall out of favor?

The identification of mechanisms has been claimed by Brante (2014) to be *the* core task of science. Whereas the concept of mechanisms is often used as a concept to unpack the “black box”, i.e. to find out what contributes to what and, for example, explain how and why a certain program works or fails to work (Astbury and Leeuw 2010). My perception of mechanisms in this thesis is that there may be deeper and more fine-grained explanations of a social phenomenon, which in my case is the rise and fall of management reforms. My wish is that analyzing why seemingly similar reforms seem to be continuously re-introduced will contribute to deeper insights into how change happens (or does not happen).

The main contribution of this study is to provide insights as to what happens *within* an organization and over a longer time perspective when an organization is faced with conflicting demands from two rationales. I believe that the fact that similar results initiatives have all risen and fallen tells us a great deal, not only concerning the actual possibility to report on results and which types or results are “reportable,” but also concerning the institutionalization processes, in addition to what development aid practice is all about. I hope that this thesis will also contribute to a broader understanding of management reforms not only in development aid but in all public policy sectors, for any policy maker or practitioner involved in the implementation of such reforms.

In the following chapter, Chapter Two, I will discuss how previous literature, primarily within organizational institutionalism, has explained how organizations typically interact and respond to demands in their environment and how these theoretical insights can further deepen our knowledge on mechanisms that contribute to the rise and fall of management reforms. At the end of this chapter, I will develop further contributions I want to make to previous literature on the topic.

In Chapter Three I will explain how I have gone about conducting this study, i.e. I will explain my research methods.

Chapters Four to Seven are devoted to the four empirical case stories. Chapter Four deals with the 1971 initiative, i.e. Sida’s Results Valuation Initiative (1971-1974). Chapter Five deals with the 1981 initiative, ie. SIDA Project/Programme Follow-up System (1981-1987). Chapter Six deals with the 1998 initiative, i.e. Sida Rating Initiative (1998-2007). Chapter Seven deals with the 2012 initiative, i.e. the Results Summary Initiative (2012-2016). In each chapter the first part deals with how the external environment looked prior to the launch of the initiative. The second part of the chapter deals with what happened within the organization when the initiative was

launched and implemented, and what happened thereafter, when the initiative fell out of favor.

In Chapter Eight I will answer and discuss my research questions and in Chapter Nine I will specify more clearly the contributions to previous literature that can be made from this study.

2 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I will discuss what we know about mechanisms that contribute to the rise and fall of management reforms. There does not exist *one* set of theories and literature discussing the topic. I will mainly review literature and theories developed within organizational institutionalism, where it is typically perceived that organizational action is shaped by ideas and interactions taking place in the broader environment of organizations. As organizations need to be legitimate in order to survive, they act in line with institutionalized ideas and expectations. The processes of how ideas become “taken for granted” or become institutionalized both in an organization’s institutional environment and within an organization, have been described as the *institutionalization process*. The institutionalization process may be a way of describing the rise of management reforms. However, since it is commonly seen that ideas and technologies often have difficulties to “stick” in organizations, literature has discussed processes of how they become de-institutionalized. De-institutionalization processes could be a way of describing the fall of management reforms.

This chapter is divided into four parts: In the first part I discuss how literature within organizational institutionalism has described how organizations are influenced by their institutional environment, i.e. how the effect of *environmental demand* on organizations is described. In the second part, I discuss how literature has described the *institutionalization process*. In the third part of the chapter I discuss organizational responses and the *de-institutionalization process*. And, finally, in the fourth part I discuss an alternative way of describing the rise and fall of management reforms: through mechanisms of *hope and/or despair*.

2.1 Environmental Demand

2.1.1 The Importance of Being Legitimate

A basic idea within organizational institutionalism is that organizational action is shaped by ideas and interactions taking place in their surroundings, or in their so-called institutional environment. According to Meyer and Rowan (1977:352), this consists of “myths” or “institutionalized products, services, techniques, policies and programs,” and according to Zucker (1983:105) as the “common understandings of what is appropriate and, fundamentally, meaningful behavior”. Organizational actions must therefore

be understood in relation to other organizations and actors in their environment, since these ideas or “myths” influence organizations.

The “myths” are thus seen as ideas that are “taken for granted” by most actors in the organization’s environment. The process of how an idea becomes taken for granted in an organization’s environment and within the organization has been called “institutionalization”. Meyer and Rowan (1977:341) define institutionalization as the “processes by which social processes, obligations or actualities come to take on a rule-like status in social thought and action”. When certain ideas become institutionalized, they tend to exclude other ideas. Using the wording of Zucker (1983:3), this means that “alternatives are literally unthinkable”. The end product of institutionalization would thus be an “institution,” which Greenwood et al. (2008:5) define as:

More or less taken for granted repetitive social behaviors that are underpinned by normative systems and cognitive understandings that give meaning to social exchange and thus enable self-producing social order. (Greenwood et al. 2008:5)

Institutions can be perceived as the routine ways in which things are organized or how ideas are perceived, either in an organization’s environment or within an organization for solving certain problems.

In organizational institutionalism, it is proposed that the organizations’ behaviors are given by their need to be regarded as legitimate in their institutional environment. In order to survive, organizations must convince larger audiences that they are legitimate entities worthy of support (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Therefore, legitimacy is seen as a force that works as a constraint with regard to change and pressures organizations to act the same way and according to expectations from their environment (DiMaggio 1983). Subsequently, in order to secure social approval or legitimacy, it has been argued that organizations conform to the demands in their environment; they become isomorphic (Meyer and Rowan 1977).

Since legitimacy is necessary for organizational survival, Meyer and Rowan (1977:352) argue that: “organizational success depends on factors other than efficient coordination and control of productive activities”. It is thus suggested that organizational success is rather defined by the extent to which organizations incorporate certain practices and procedures and not based on the actual efficiency of their output (Meyer and Scott 1983). The importance of organizations conforming to what their environment expects from them makes it more important for organizations to “show a face of,” for example, “effectiveness” than to conform to the demands of their work activities. So, if the environment expects an organization to be “effective”, the perceived

public opinions concerning its effectiveness may be more important for the public than, for example, internally defining what effectiveness means for the organization and then conforming to those principles.

A core perspective in organizational institutionalism is thus that organizations are driven to act in accordance with their perception of what their environment expects from them, since this is how organizations obtain legitimacy. Legitimacy can be seen as a shield against external questioning. Legitimacy has been argued to “protect organizations from having its conduct questioned” (Meyer and Rowan 1977:349) and to “insulate the organization from external pressures” (Deephouse and Suchman 2008:51). In other words, legitimacy as such has been conceptualized in organizational institutionalism as the presence or absence of questioning (Meyer and Scott 1983). So, if an organization is legitimate, then its actions and its activities will not be questioned to the same extent. Deephouse and Suchman (2008:51) have moreover argued that legitimacy gives an organization “a freedom to pursue its activities”. In other words, it has been argued that if organizations adapt to demands from their environment, they gain legitimacy, which in turn implies that they are freer to pursue activities they perceive as important.

It could thus be argued that on the occasions during which the question of whether aid leads to results has been forcefully raised by a large number of actors, Sida has lacked legitimacy in the eyes of those asking the question. Demonstrating “results” and showing a “face of” that the organization effectively conducts actions that are beneficial for people living in poverty could be considered as highly important for insulating further questioning and increasing the legitimacy of an organization such as Sida.

2.1.2 Power and Conflicting Demands

This identified need to be considered legitimate and rational in the eyes of the institutional environment is proposed as more significant for organizations surrounded by complex networks of interactions (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Meyer and Scott 1983). Scott and Meyer (1991) propose that conflicting institutional demands are particularly likely to emerge in fragmented fields; in other words, fields with a number of uncoordinated organizations or social actors upon which field members depend. As described in the previous chapter, the development aid sector could be considered a highly fragmented field, as it relies on, and is responsive to, multiple and uncoordinated constituents. A government agency such as Sida might, for example, be viewed as being influenced by several actors: the government, the media, international bodies, consultants, etc. with

competing and different influence over the agency. So, the institutional environment surrounding organizations such as Sida might be perceived as embedded in multiple demands; demands which, according to Kraatz and Block (2008:243), lead to the organization playing “two or more games at the same time”. These might, for example, be the demands imposed on Sida to mediate or act on demands imposed within the solidarity rationale as well as demands imposed on demonstration of further effectiveness.

In their framework on how organizations respond to different pressures in their institutional environment, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that since organizations strive toward being considered legitimate, they adopt similar structures and forms, and as a result they become increasingly similar. In their framework, they propose three types of pressure (*normative*, *mimetic* and *coercive*) that lead to organizations gaining institutional isomorphism (i.e. a societal mandate or legitimacy to operate). Although the framework was originally developed from the observation that many organizations tend to adopt similar structures (a topic that is beyond my research interest), the framework has also been used as a basis for discussing multiple pressures on organizations.

In DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) framework, *mimetic* is perceived to be a standard response to uncertainty, and it is the tendency of an organization to imitate another organization’s structure in the belief that the latter’s structure is beneficial. This might, for example, be if an organization copies a results model from another organization they perceive as legitimate. *Normative* refers to the pressure exerted by professions; for example, the development and adoption of normative standards on how to deliver aid (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). These could also be pressures widely considered to be the proper course of action, or even a moral duty, such as when a signal is received from an international body such as the OECD that a “best practice” is a correct moral choice (Boxenbaum and Jonsson 2008). *Coercive*, in turn, concerns pressures from other organizations upon which the organization is dependent and from cultural expectations in the society where the organization operates. As for a public agency, the coercive pressures can be understood as the demands of the state or other large actors, such as audit institutions or international bodies, to adopt specific structures or else face sanctions (Boxenbaum and Jonsson 2008).

It has been argued that most studies using the framework of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) have studied the mimetic forces (Boxenbaum and Jonsson 2008; Lawrence 2008). A common object for study has been how ideas are disseminated and diffused in an organization’s institutional environment in the same way as fashions. Studies have been carried out on the “fashion-setting community”, which can be viewed as actors such as consultants,

business and media. In other words, the main assumption is that the “supply side” plans and then disseminates the ideas (See for example Abrahamson and Eisenman 2008; Gill and Whittle 1993). Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall (2002:6), for example, launch the concept of “carriers” of management ideas, where the carriers are perceived to be those “who see themselves and are perceived as being concerned with management” and who disseminate these ideas to managers as recipes and solutions. An assumption is thus that fashions arise due to actions taken by someone outside the affected organizations, but that organizations then adopt or incorporate them when these are perceived as valuable for solving current organizational problems.

As stated above, there have been fewer studies on coercive and normative forces of pressure on organizations. Lawrence (2008) argues that the reason most scholars within organizational institutionalism have focused on the mimetic forces is that scholars have often lacked the perspectives of power in their studies (Lawrence 2008). Although Lawrence (2008) argues that none of the forces of pressure (mimetic, normative or coercive) take into account aspects of power, I suggest that since imitation is the main mechanism for mimesis, it can be seen as a pressure that organizations “take in” voluntarily, whereas one can assume a greater potential conflict when organizations are required to follow externally imposed coercive as well as normative pressures.

In an earlier paper, Lawrence (2001) argues that power and the type of power imposed on an organization is related to the pace and the stability of whether and how something is institutionalized. He argues, for example, that mere influence or mere force would not lead to something remaining institutionalized, but that if influence or force is combined with a power form that consequently demands institutionalization of the practice, then institutionalization can occur at a faster pace and become sustainable over time. In the paper, Lawrence (2001) thus suggests that whether or not institutionalization in fact takes place could depend on the *type* of power imposed on an organization.

Pache and Santos (2010) argue that conflicting institutional demands may also differ with regard to the nature of their prescriptions. Institutional demands may either be at the ideological level, prescribing which *goals* (i.e. essentially what the organization should do) are legitimate to pursue, or they may be at the functional level, requiring organizations to adopt appropriate *means* or courses of action. In their framework, means might be a control model tried out in an organization. They argue that conflicts at a means level often focus on technical issues and that:

...these demands are relatively peripheral for organizations. Such conflict may not necessarily be worth the cost of an institutional battle. Moreover, the

demands' content is potentially flexible and negotiable (Pache and Santos 2010:464).

According to Pache and Santos (2010), organizations are likely to respond more forcefully to conflicting demands at a goals level since this is a level that threatens their core understanding of what the organization is about. However, they argue that technical issues, for example, might sometimes become conflicts that also threaten the organization at a goal-level.

Pache and Santos (2010) argue, in line with earlier work by Scott and Meyer (1991), that conflicting institutional demands are particularly likely to emerge in fragmented fields, i.e. fields that have a number of uncoordinated organizations or social actors on which field members depend. In their view, the educational sector, for example, can be perceived as a fragmented field since organizations in the field are typically responsive to multiple and uncoordinated constituencies. In contrast, a centralized field is a field in which organizations are typically dependent on one principal constituent, whose authority in the field is both formalized and recognized (Meyer and Scott 1991). For Sida, the external actor upon which it is dependent when it comes to resources is the government. However, as explained earlier, the agency has always been embedded in several different relations with other actors. And first and foremost, Sida is and has always been dependent on the public will of Swedish citizens for continuous support to development aid. One could thus say that Sida is embedded in both a centralized and a fragmented field.

Since Sida is a public agency, the power imposed upon it by the government in the form of legally binding mandates could thus be considered more powerful than that imposed by any other actor in an organization's environment. Røvik (2011) has argued that it is more likely that a management concept will be entrenched or adopted within an organization and that a regulation will produce intended effects if an authority upon which an organization is dependent conducts the regulation. Similarly, Peters (1997) has declared that governments are actors which have been conventionally characterized by a unique mode of "authority" – with the capacity to impose legally binding constraints and sanctions over given jurisdictions.

However, an organization such as Sida might also be greatly influenced by other powerful actors, and their relationship with Sida might have changed over time. Power (1997), for example, has argued there was an explosion of auditing activities in the early 1980s, implying that societies started to invest more heavily in an industry of checking and controlling. As a consequence, it has been argued that there are also more organizations and actors today who not only audit but also certify, as well as setting norms and standards

(Brunsson and Jacobsson 2000). According to Brunsson and Jacobsson (2000) these types of standard setters and certifiers today exercise power and influence over, for example, public sector organizations. Within the development aid sector, the OECD/DAC might, for example, be considered as exerting strong normative pressure on both Sida and the Swedish government by means of standards and “best practices”. The member organizations within OECD/DAC are all bilateral donor agencies which are the funders of the OECD/DAC. However, due to their membership, they have also committed themselves to fulfill and follow rules, standards and prescribed best practices decided upon by the OECD/DAC. In line with the proposals on changes that have taken place in regards to the increased power imposed on organizations by actor such as standard setters, one could assume that the landscape of actor on which Sida is dependent on has also changed.

In sum, earlier literature has described how the environmental demand can differ in terms of what is pursued, with what force and how it is done as well as who is pursuing it. Moreover, the way pressure is imposed could change over time.

I now turn to discussing the institutionalization process; the process of how different ideas become taken for granted both in the institutional environment and within the organization. I first describe how the process has typically been described by scholars within organizational institutionalism. Thereafter, I discuss a somewhat different perspective of how ideas become adopted within the public sector in a framework developed by Rose and Miller (2008).

2.2 The Institutionalization Process

2.2.1 Imitation, Translation and Circulation of Ideas

Institutionalization is typically described as a step-by-step process, where the process first takes place in the institutional environment and, secondly, when the idea is adopted by the organization. Zucker (1987) for example argues that there is an early phase of partial acceptance, followed by a middle phase of rapid diffusion and wider acceptance and finally a phase of saturation and complete legitimation. Power (2015), who has studied institutionalization processes with regard to accounting standards, claims that the phases could be divided into four stages: policy object formation, object elaboration, activity orchestration and practice stabilization in infrastructure. The first two of Power’s (2015) stages could be viewed as the institutionalization stages that take place in the institutional environment,

whereas the latter two could be viewed as stages taking place when the idea enters an organization.

Most studies done on the institutionalization process explain how this happens with processes of mimesis (Boxenbaum and Jonsson 2008; Lawrence 2008). In these studies, *imitation* is seen as the basic mechanism with regards to how ideas are circulated in the organizational environment. It is argued that organizations tend to compare themselves to other organizations defined as similar (Sahlin-Andersson 1996). It is then said that organizations imitate those considered successful; the kind of organizations they want to resemble. In organizational institutionalism, the typical view is that ideas may become “myths” taken for granted as they circulate and that they are then adopted and used in organizations (Sahlin and Wedlin 2008).

However, the gap between the model organization and the one that follows the model opens up a gap for translations and interpretations (Sahlin-Andersson 1996). This is the process during which ideas may then be translated or edited to fit the organization. So, the term *translation*, a concept originally used by Latour (1986) and Callon (1986) has been “translated” by organization scholars (Czarniawska and Joerges 1996; Czarniawska and Sevón 1996; Furusten 2013; Røvik 2007; Røvik et al. 2008; Sahlin-Andersson 1996) in order to make sense of the way ideas concerning practices and organization travel between organizations in a field. The translation or institutionalization process is thus typically seen in organizational institutionalism as a step-by-step process where an idea is successively changed as it moves all the way from the idea stage to a new action in a particular organization (Furusten 2013). In translation, an original is transformed into something else.

Røvik et al. (2008) explain that when an idea is translated, the process first involves a stage when the idea is decontextualized; a process when “something” is “picked out” from its context. Thereafter, the idea is contextualized; this “something” is “placed into” a new context. In Røvik et al.’s (2008) reasoning, translation is carried out by the “translators”: bodies such as the UN, think tanks or certifiers, which are assumed to act as intermediaries that identify, process, quality assure and then disseminate, for example, “best practices” or how to do something successfully. In the development aid field, these could be bodies such as the Brookings Institute, the Center for Global Development, Oxfam’s Blog and the OECD/DAC, as these bodies disseminate things like studies and research findings to various actors within the development aid community.

Røvik et al. (2008) explains that the process of translation, or the decontextualization and contextualization process, is typically hierarchical;

that ideas concerning, for example, organizational practices come from the outside and are then taken in. Typically, the ideas that become popular at a certain point of time are ideas identified as solutions to some locally perceived problems in the organization. The ideas may initially be abstract, but once they enter the organization, they are concretized into certain decisions. In the process of how ideas are translated into a new organization, it is argued that actors first tell stories concerning the appearance of the idea in the organization, about its current status and how it will contribute to future organizational activities (Røvik 2007). New or old ideas are typically presented as “the future” and examples are included of other organizations that have successfully used these ideas (Sahlin-Andersson 1996). The institutionalization process explained by Røvik (2007) is thus similar to the process when organizations adopt fashions. The adoption of a fashion is declared to be based on kicks of enthusiasm (Røvik 2011), a multitude of plans, in addition to high expectations and a generally high level of activity (Gill and Whittle 1993), where the adopters view the management models as the best alternatives for solving the problem (Brunsson 2006).

In order for an idea to gain a foothold in an organization, it has been argued that it should be given a label that makes it sound relevant and attractive to the present members of the organization (Sahlin-Andersson 1996). Czarniawska and Sevón (1996) argue that in order for an idea to sound attractive, it may be labeled a solution to a local problem. Ideas are said to attract more attention if they are presented in a way that makes them seem new and extraordinary (Czarniawska and Sevón 1996). The ideas are thus edited and changed, which might for example be done in order for the idea to become consistent with the history and traditions of the local organizational context (Sahlin-Andersson 1996). However, according to Sahlin-Andersson (1996), the ideas should not be too different from prevailing assumptions concerning the order of things in the specific organization. Røvik (2007) argues that during adoption, a new local label might, for example, be important for the idea to be perceived as a local invention, rather than a fashion imposed from the outside (Røvik 2007). For an organization such as Sida, this might be naming a results initiative in such a way that it includes the name of Sida in its title.

It is thus typically assumed that organizational ideas spread just like fashions. Czarniawska (2005) argues that fashion functions as a “steering wheel” of translation and imitation, since it guides the attention of actors toward specific ideas, models and practices (Czarniawska 2005). Fashion creates what is appropriate and desirable at a given time and place. Prior to the initiation of, for example, a management model that could be fashionable at the time, organizations are said to act in accordance with a “logic of

appropriateness” in order to gain or maintain legitimacy (March 1991). In other words, when initiating changes and adopting new ideas, organizations reason as follows: “Who am I? What situation is this? What is a person such as I to do in a situation like this?” It has thus been declared that organizations and individuals always act and choose according to a logic of what is appropriate to do at that moment.

The following of management fashions, however, has been explained as being a practice driven not only by the need for conformity with expectations, but also the need for differentiation (Røvik 1996). Just like people, organizations want to be considered exclusive and different, and they do not want to be exactly the same as someone else. These needs lead to organizations both adapting the ideas, and also translating and changing them in accordance with their own needs. Røvik (1996), for example, explains that early adoption of a fashion (such as a new technology) could thus be explained by the fact that organizations want to differentiate themselves. Adopting a new technology could give actors a “snob effect”. However, late adoption of a fashion can, rather, be explained by imitation; that organizations do the same as others in order to avoid a “mob effect”. Adopting fashions has thus been explained as a strategy for giving organizations legitimacy.

Røvik (1996) argues that when the fashionable idea has been internalized, it affects both values and habits. Fashions take root in individuals as a rule-like fact, a prescription of the way things are and ought to be, which is gradually taken for granted. When a fashion has been adopted, it influences the individual’s perceptions of what is authentic and right. When something is fashionable, people and organizations believe more or less fully that this is the right thing to do right now. Complete institutionalization of an idea or a technology can thus be understood as having taken place when every individual in the organization has internalized the fashion as a rule-like fact. Czarniawska (2005:37) argues that a way of measuring when something has become institutionalized is when the idea or the practice “remains unaffected after one fashion has changed into another”. The idea, practice or technology is resistant to other ideas, and it is no longer viewed as a fashion but something given.

As said above, the typical explanation among scholars within organizational institutionalism is that ideas are developed primarily in an organization’s external environment and then through various processes internalized within the organization. Røvik et al. (2008), however, argue that the process of how ideas circulate can also be time-bound, that certain ideas come and go as a “spiral”; meaning that the ideas may circulate around an organization for a while, but, in cases where the ideas are not sufficiently mature, they are

simultaneously developed in an *interaction* with needs coming from the organization. Finally, when they are sufficiently developed, they are taken on board and adopted by the organization (Røvik et al. 2008). So, Røvik et al. (2008) suggest that the process might be an *interaction* with the organizational environment.

Something I believe is problematic in the way in which the institutionalization process has typically been described is that the institutionalization process has been described as following a similar pattern regardless of whether it is an idea, a technology or a practice that is to be institutionalized. I will now turn to discussing a framework developed by Miller and Rose (2008) which proposes a way in which more coercively proposed institutionalization processes can be looked upon, a framework which also distinguishes between ideas and technologies.

2.2.2 Political Programmes and Technologies

Whereas most studies carried out on organizational institutionalism have focused on the mechanisms of mimesis, literature within governance has to a larger extent tried to understand how coercive and normative forces influence public sector organizations. Below, I provide an account of how Miller and Rose (2008) in their framework have explained how ideas pass on to organizations.

Miller and Rose (2008) have tried to understand why and how governments “shape citizens” and the mechanisms they use for governing, for example, public organizations. Their perspective on how ideas are adopted by public organizations could thus be perceived as explaining a more top-down or coercive perspective on institutionalization. In their framework, they argue that governing is carried out through three distinct aspects: through political “rationalities,” through political “programmes” of government and through “technologies” of government. According to Miller and Rose (2008), the political “rationalities” and “programmes” of government are ways of representing and having knowledge about a phenomenon, whereas “technologies” are a way of acting upon this phenomenon in order to transform it. Their framework thus implies that governments explicitly act and make ideas operable by using technologies, such as accounting standards or results measurement and management tools.

In Miller and Rose’s (2008) view, political rationalities are the underlying subjective values and collective beliefs regarding *existing problems* (Miller and Rose 2008:16). Political rationalities are often voiced as ethical or moral imperatives (Radcliffe 1998). They may be opinions or statements made by the public such as, “we do not know the effects of aid”; in other words,

statements that in themselves come with an inherent problem. Radcliffe (1998) argues that collectively perceived problems, disseminated through isolated or individual statements, may often be inconsistent. However, since they are beliefs held by many, the inconsistencies may not be visible. Clemente and Roulet (2015), who have studied how public opinion is created, have argued that public opinion often comes as a “spiral effect”. That is to say that when something appears problematic, by talking and by “rallying allies” toward the “problem,” it can come to be seen as more serious than it actually is.

However, Miller and Rose (2008) argue that political rationalities and perceived problems on their own are rather vague. They argue that the rationalities have to be linked to political programmes that detail how these political ambitions might be accomplished (Miller and Rose 1990). Radcliffe (1998:380) argues that “while political rationalities present general representations of the world, programmes set out the frameworks for action”. So, while rationalities are concerned with the ideas, programs are concerned with the details (Radcliffe 1998). And, while political rationalities can be viewed as dealing with the problems, political programmes can be viewed as dealing with the “solutions”. Similarly, Boxenbaum and Jonsson (2008), who write within organizational institutionalism, argue that the “myths” in an organization’s environment emerge as solutions to some widely perceived problems, for example in public opinion, and these become rationalized when they are popularly believed to constitute the proper solutions to these problems (Boxenbaum and Jonsson 2008).

In Miller and Rose’s (2008) framework, the rationalities and programmes are then finally enacted through “technologies” of government. They argue that technologies are the actual mechanisms through which “authorities of various sorts have sought to shape, normalize and instrumentalize the conduct, thought, decisions and aspirations of others in order to achieve the objects they consider desirable” (Miller and Rose 1990:8). In their view, the technologies are the means that enable the government to “govern at a distance”. In other words, it is through the technologies that the perceived problems and solutions are finally enacted upon the people. In their framework, technologies are seen as tools, devices and techniques that enable the government to act upon the conduct of individuals and the whole. The technologies are thus seen as devices, which transform or translate political programmes into practices and operations (Miller and Rose 2008). The power and possibility to enact a political idea lie in the technology that is to translate the idea into operations. Miller and O’Leary (1987:240) argue that: “A discursive programme [...] only fulfills its programme when it has its counterpart in an adequate technology”. So, in their view, technologies

are always needed in order to operationalize vague ideas and beliefs. They argue that the technologies are what actually “establish a conception of an organization as rational, responsible and modern” (Miller and O’Leary 1987:240). The technologies can be seen as mediators for how organizations gain legitimacy.

The concepts of Programme and Technology are used in several studies to explain how we can understand what happens in contemporary society. The audit explosion, for example, was according to Power (1997) driven by programmatic commitments to greater accountability which in turn has institutionalized the use of auditing and results measurement technologies. According to Power (1997) the institutionalization of the technologies has implied that organizations typically continue to consider them bound to the maintenance of institutional credibility, even though they might not fulfill their role for that purpose.

Miller and Rose’s (2008) framework is applied and referred to in several studies that have tried to follow the institutionalization process of technologies. In accounting studies, technologies have been seen as intermediaries that can facilitate the mobilization, support and implementation of systems and concepts for management control (Christiansen and Varnes 2009), as well as having the function to make solid and complex objects and people manageable (Czarniawska and Mouritsen 2009). For purposes of intervention and control, information from reality is translated into something malleable, moldable and simple (Czarniawska and Mouritsen 2009). Cooper (1992:255) argues that technologies are used by organizations to “make transparent what is opaque, make present what is remote and manipulate what is resistant”. Cooper (1992) thus argues that through the use of the technologies, administrators may work with representations made in the technologies – such as maps and numbers – but they do not need to involve themselves with the complex environment and the complex problems per se. Technologies have thus been seen as having a crucial role in reducing distance among actors.

However, it is also a widely accepted phenomenon that technologies, when in place, may also shape and influence organizational actors (Ahrens and Chapman 2007; Qu and Cooper 2011; Robson 1992). It is, for example, argued that technologies act not merely as privileged spokespersons “representing” organizations (Quattrone 2009) but also – and by doing so – as “generating entities” that mobilize particular actions and move people in certain directions (Ahrens and Chapman 2007; Qu and Cooper 2011; Robson 1992). It is, in other words, argued that technologies have a transformative character that may both provide visibility to events and processes but also help to change them (Miller and O’leary 1987). So,

technologies should not only be seen as passive representations, but also as actors that represent and actively construct particular realities. Technologies may be used by governments to shape organizations; however, they may also shape the political programmes of governments.

Miller and Rose's (2008) framework provides a vocabulary for distinguishing between ideas and technologies and demonstrates that, in order to say something about an institutionalization process one would need to distinguish between whether it is an idea or a technology that meets problems in an institutionalization process. Organizational members might, for example, fully accept an idea, and only resist the technology. However, the act of resisting the technology could be perceived as an act of resistance with regard to the idea. In this vein Kurunmäki et al. (2011) argue that it is important to distinguish the "ideas" from the "instruments", that is, between the ideas and the technologies, and therefore argues that it is important to study the link, or the interaction, between ideas and technologies.

Miller and O'Leary (1987) argue that there is only a "loose link" between ideas and technologies or what happens with regard to the technologies in daily practices. There is thus no absolute fit between political and programmatic ambitions and the technologies that may be taken for granted. A similar perspective was earlier adopted by Meyer and Rowan (1977), as they argue that organizational structures are only "loosely linked" to activities and it is a rule rather than an exception that "rules are often violated, decisions are often unimplemented, or if implemented have uncertain consequences, technologies are of problematic efficiency, and evaluation and inspection systems are subverted or rendered so vague as to provide little coordination" (Meyer and Rowan 1977:342). So, according to both perspectives, political ideas are rarely, if ever, operationalized in organizations as stipulated in the theories behind the ideas. This loose link is often argued to be the reason why results measurement and management ideas fail to be operationalized in practice (see for example Brunsson 2009; Sundström 2003).

Kurunmäki et al. (2011) have argued that studying this "loose link" is particularly important to gain a clearer picture of how power and pressure operate. They argue that power dimensions in governance need to be analyzed in the interaction and the relations between the ideas and the technologies. When studying the *interaction* between these two, we may learn how the ideas and instruments travel, how they then come into contact with other ideas and instruments, and that new ideas are shaped in this contact. According to Kurunmäki et al., both new ideas and new political programmes, as well as technologies, are shaped in the interaction between the ideas in the institutional environment and the organization. In their

perspective, the ideas could thus be shaped by the everyday doings of practitioners (Kurunmäki et al. 2011). I believe that this distinction between ideas and technologies is important for establishing why, for example, a staff member at Sida refuses to live up to a requirement in a results matrix. Is it because he/she does not believe in the ideas of results measurement and management, or is it merely a response toward the requirements introduced for how to measure results (i.e. the technology)?

I have so far discussed two perspectives on how ideas become adopted by organizations, one of them being a perspective more inclined to see the process as influenced by mimetic pressures and the other a perspective more inclined to see the process as influenced by coercive pressures. Both of these perspectives could explain mechanisms that contribute to the rise of reforms such as the results initiatives within Sida. However, it is widely known that ideas, practices or technologies frequently face difficulties becoming institutionalized (Oliver 1992; Dacin et al. 2008); difficulties which in turn could lead to the fall of reforms, to ideas or technologies not sticking, i.e. that they become de-institutionalized.

I now turn to discussing how previous literature has explained mechanisms contributing to de-institutionalization, i.e. mechanisms that describe the fall of reforms.

2.3 The De-institutionalization Process

In general, there is less literature available discussing the de-institutionalization process, i.e. the process when and why ideas or technologies fall or do not stick in organizations. Despite calls made by scholars since the early 1990s on the need to study these processes it has been argued that we still know relatively little about the mechanisms whereby ideas, technologies or practices fade away or find it difficult to be accepted in organizations (Dacin et al. 2008; Greenwood 2008; Abrahamson and Fairchild 1999; Røvik 1996; Oliver 1992; Clemens and Cook 1999).

Some have argued that the institutionalization of an idea, technology or practice is only a matter of time, that institutionalization may require more time to take root in an organization (Barley and Kunda 1992; Røvik 2007; Tomson 2008). Therefore, it has been argued that when studying institutionalization processes, one also needs to study these over a longer period of time (Røvik 2007; Tomson 2008). Others have argued there are *degrees* in the institutionalization process (Clark 2004; Røvik 2011) and argued ideas, technologies or concepts might take root in organizations to a greater or lesser degree. Yet others have argued that some practices or technologies never become institutionalized. Brunsson and Jacobsson

(2000), for example, have argued that many standards belong to the category of never becoming institutionalized in organizations. Similarly, Abrahamsson and Fairchild (1999) have argued that most fashionable management technologies “out there” do not become adopted at all by organizations. Abrahamsson and Fairchild (1999) have labeled the fashions that never take root in organizations as “un-institutionalization”.

So, whereas un-institutionalization can be viewed as something not “sticking” at all, de-institutionalization has been described as “the process by which the legitimacy of an established or institutionalized organizational practice erodes or discontinues” (Oliver 1992:456) or the “process of when something becomes unfashionable” (Røvik 1996:156). In other words, de-institutionalization is the process when something first becomes institutionalized but later erodes.

Due to the lack of studies on un-institutionalization, I here mainly discuss the de-institutionalization processes as proposed by two scholars (Røvik 1996; Oliver 1992). The first explanation, provided by Røvik (1996), explains that the de-institutionalization process happens in much the same way as institutionalization. He proposes that ideas become unfashionable after a while. It is, in other words, an explanation based mainly on the mechanisms of mimesis. The other explanation, provided by Oliver (1992), sees de-institutionalization as occurring as a consequence of conflicts between the organization and its environment, i.e. a proposal based mainly on coercive pressure and power. Below, I discuss the main ideas in these two “schools”.

2.3.1 Becoming Unfashionable

The first explanation as to why ideas, practices or technologies fall in organizations is that they eventually become unfashionable. Røvik (1996) argues that during the roll-back process of an idea or a technology, the same mechanisms come into play as when an institutionalized standard is disseminated. This means that the process is driven by the tension between social differentiation and the imitation processes. Røvik (1996:146) argues that during this process, the organization wants to rid itself of unfashionable ideas in order to recover a “snob effect”. This is due to the fact that “opinions about what has just become outmoded, spread just as contagiously within a group of organizations as ideas about what is new and modern” (Røvik 1996:146). According to this view, old and poorly adopted ideas and technologies are discarded and new ones adopted when organizations need them. That means that something new is now needed to solve the current problems. During the roll-back process it is no longer trendy to discuss the

idea or the technology. Røvik (1996:146) has argued that this is because “actors decline in enthusiasm, fewer and fewer conferences and meetings are held, the technique is discussed less and less, and among those who discuss it, it is usually the critical voices that dominate”.

A recurring theme in studies and research on results management is that despite vast production of results information, this information is not used by decision-makers in organizations or by political leaders. It has been claimed to be a general phenomenon among public officials (Moynihan 2005), in internal organizational procedures (Saliterer and Korac 2013). Low use of the information might, of course, also be a mechanism that leads to organizations perceiving the idea or the technology as an ineffective solution to the problems in the organization.

According to Sundström (2006:413) the problems are typically seen as “implementation problems”. According to Sundström (2006) organizations now try four main solutions to further enhance the reform. The first solution is that they try to improve the methods and techniques. According to Sundström (2006:413) the perceived problem behind this solution is that the “steering model is not yet ready”. The second solution has been to educate and inform actors about how they should use and understand information from the model, i.e. the perceived problem declared has been that there is a “lack of understanding” among the users. The third solution has been to try to increase the commitment by users, i.e. the perceived problem has been that there is a “lack of interest” among users. The fourth solution has been to show patience, i.e. the perceived problem has been that “it takes time” before the model is adopted. According to Sundström (2006:413) trying out these four solution and claiming that the difficulties are due to an “implementation problem” is a way for organizations to hide from the fact that the real problem when, for example, results measurement and management models do not stick is the fact that there is an inherent “model problem”.

A common argument posed in organizational institutionalism is that technologies, or reform ideas, frequently land in organizations as nothing but abstract ideas dissociated from a complex reality (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Røvik 1996). Ideas may have been picked from another organizational context, where, for example, they have been particularly well-suited for improving efficiency. These may be ideas concerning results measurement and management techniques, which have typically been said to have been taken from the private sector and therefore difficult to use with regard to the purposes and realities of the public sector (Hvidman and Andersen 2014). When they spread, they may, however, be disengaged from their original context and become simplified standard prescriptions and thus only abstract

representations of the original ideas. Røvik (1996) argues that as such, they simply threaten the organizations and do not fit their reality. They simply cannot solve the tasks they are meant to solve, as the complex organizational tasks also require complex solutions. Subsequently, the technology is then simply thrown out by a mechanism of “natural rejection” (Røvik 1996).

The process of de-institutionalization and throwing out “old and outdated technologies” might not be so simple for organizations (Røvik 1996). Røvik (1996) argues that since organizations are also subject to norms of efficiency and rationality, they can be affected by inertia factors during this process when they are discarding technologies that have been developed over a number of years. In order to counteract the inertia that may be caused by abandoning the technology, Røvik (1996) argues that organizations use the mechanism of “storing” (i.e. they make sure that they store a certain technology). They might, for example, make a decision that the technology will be taken care of by another process or in a study within the organization at a later stage. This type of “storing” provides the organization with a way of diminishing the inertia caused, since the technology might then undergo a “revival process” and be taken up again later (Røvik 1996).

In the end, the explanation that de-institutionalization is becoming unfashionable implies that like fashions, which are viewed as mainly passing through and not having a lasting impact, fashionable ideas are primarily viewed as affecting surface and being “decorations” without affecting an organization’s internal activities or influencing organizational praxis (Cox and Minahan 2006). The reforms simply die “when the novelty wears off” (Gill and Whittle 1993:286). Abrahamsson and Eisenman (2008), for example, argue that it is merely the vocabulary or the way people talk about the reforms that changes when a new wave comes. New words and new titles for the reforms are used, which create a sense of novelty and progress from the previous fashion to the current. Brunsson (2006) has argued that when a fashionable management model fades away, it often does so without even “leaving a trace” (Brunsson 2006). However, as stated above, since the ideas are “stored,” they remain in the organization and may be picked up later.

However, Dacin et al. (2008) have, for example, argued that there might not be an either-or answer as to whether “a practice” is ever fully de-institutionalized. Dacin et al. (2008) argue that:

Institutional practices are commonly slow to become extinguished. Elements of these practices often continue in residual forms that serve as reminders of prior strategies and/or as raw material for the construction of new ones (Dacin et al. 2008:348).

In Dacin et al.'s (2008) view, institutionalized practices thus always continue, albeit perhaps weaker in terms of scope or potency during certain times. Practices are, in their view, "institutionalized organizational behaviours" which in turn are "stable, repetitive and enduring activities" (Dacin 2008:331). Practices could thus be considered to be what staff do in their day-to-day work. In my view, practices can be influenced by ideas and, for example, technologies setting up working requirements for staff in an organization such as Sida.

I claim it is important, when analyzing what potentially has been de-institutionalized or un-institutionalized, to also distinguish whether it is the broad ideas of, for example, effectiveness, the working practices connected to what staff do in their day-to-day work, or the technologies, such as results matrixes, that contribute to de-institutionalization or fall of reforms. I furthermore believe that it is important to analyze more openly how actors, and in particular actors within organizations, contribute de-institutionalization.

I will now turn to discussing how previous literature has described how organizations and organizational members respond to conflicting demands in their organizational environment.

2.3.2 Responding to Conflicting Demands

According to Oliver (1992), de-institutionalization can be understood as something spurred by the organization's conflicts with demands in its external environment; it is thus a perspective which takes in aspects of coercive power and resistance to it. Oliver (1992) identifies a set of organizational and environmental factors that are hypothesized to determine the likelihood that institutionalized organizational behaviors will be vulnerable to erosion or rejection over time. It is suggested that under certain conditions, these behaviors will lead to the de-institutionalization of an idea or a practice. Oliver's (1992) explanation is connected to the perspectives that power disputes and conflicting demands lead to ideas, technologies or practices not "sticking" in organizations after a while. Oliver's (1992) view on why ideas, technologies or practices do not "stick" is that organizations and organizational members may, in cases of extensive pressure, come into conflict with demands from their institutional environment. In these cases, organizations or organizational members might react with resistance or different strategies and mechanisms. Resistance is thus seen as a factor leading to de-institutionalization. Typically, literature on resistance to change has argued that the reasons for the failure of many change initiatives

can be found in resistance to change, since resistance introduces costs and delays into the change process (Pardo del Val and Martínez Fuentes 2003).

According to Oliver (1992), the dissipation or rejection of an institutionalized practice can be seen as a result of political, functional and/or social pressures. *Political pressures* might be the result of questioning the utility or legitimacy of an already institutionalized organizational practice. *Functional pressures* are the result of questioning a technical instrumentality of a practice, or when there is a redistribution of organizational power. And *social pressures* might occur when the public demands greater clarity with regard to what the organization is doing. These three types of pressure can exist in an organization's environment simultaneously.

Oliver (1992), in her framework, introduces the terms “entropy pressures” and “inertial pressures” as things that moderate the rate of when and if a certain organizational process or technology either continues its process of institutionalization or is de-institutionalized. She thus argues that on certain occasions, political, functional and/or social pressures cause either *entropy* or *inertia* in organizations. The notion of entropy suggests that organizational members tend to move toward disorganizing and disrupting established values and rules, whereas the notion of inertia suggests that organizational members will exhibit inevitable resistance to changes of some institutionalized values and activities. During occasions of conflict with external types of pressure, the organization thus has to make a decision on which way to go: to further institutionalize or to de-institutionalize a practice. Whereas *entropy* consists of pressure that accelerates the process of de-institutionalization, *inertia* consists of pressure that impedes it and subsequently supports institutionalization. Entropy processes are thus seen as the actions taken to abandon a practice, whereas inertial processes are seen as actions taken to retain the institutionalization of a new practice.

Later scholars who have applied Oliver's (1992) framework in empirical studies have similarly to Oliver (1992) proposed that de-institutionalization is a process inherent in conflicts (Clemente and Roulet 2015; Dacin et al. 2008; Maguire and Hardy 2009). Maguire and Hardy (2009) have, for example, analyzed conflicts when insiders in an organization have a strong interest in maintaining and defending institutionalized practices from outside attacks. Clemente and Roulet (2015) have in turn analyzed conflicts both inside and outside and how they create different discursive struggles. In these studies, analyses are carried out on how the conflicts create certain groups of actors, where some are in favor of an idea or a certain way of doing things, whereas others oppose it.

The most common explanation for how organizations respond to inconsistent demands or pressure from their environment is that they *decouple* (e.g. Meyer and Rowan 1977). When decoupling, organizations may only superficially abide to the institutional pressure and adopt new structures without necessarily implementing the related practices (Boxenbaum and Jonsson 2008). An organization may, for example, buy into a certain management technology “on the surface” without using it in practice. Decoupling has been explained as a way for organizations to seek the legitimacy provided by the adaptation of rationalized myths while still engaging in technical “business as usual”. In studies of how decoupling could affect organizations in the long run it has, however, been argued that decoupling might not be a practice that is sustainable over time (Scott 2001).

In Oliver’s article from 1991 she expands the decoupling concept by arguing that organizational actors should not only be perceived as passive followers (on the surface or in reality) to institutional demands, but that they also, depending on the nature and context of the pressure itself, actively resist in response to institutional pressure. Oliver (1991:145) argues that what the institutional literature was lacking up to that point was an “explicit attention to the strategic behaviors that organizations employ in direct response to the institutional processes that affect them”. Oliver (1991) subsequently proposed that organizations use five strategic responses to institutional pressures: a) acquiesce; b) compromise; c) avoid; d) defy and e) manipulate (Oliver 1991). She proposed that these responses signaled different levels of resistance.

Acquiesce, according to Oliver (1991), is the most passive response strategy and may take three forms: it may result from “habit” (i.e. the unconscious adherence to taken-for-granted norms), from the conscious or unconscious “imitation” of institutional models, or from the voluntary “compliance” with institutional requirements. When using *compromise*, organizations aim to at least partially satisfy all demands. They may try to “balance” competing expectations through the negotiation of a compromise: they may conform only to the minimal institutional requirements and devote resources and energy to “pacify” the constituents exhibiting resistance or they may attempt to actively “bargain” alterations of the demands with actors placing demands on them in their institutional environment. This might be by using a strategy that Sahlin-Andersson (2002) calls viewing the organization as *extraordinary*, i.e. declaring that the organization is different from other organizations in order to claim support for the organization to not follow rules.

Avoidance refers to the attempt by organizations to preclude the necessity for conforming to institutional pressures or to circumvent the conditions that

make this conformity necessary. Organizational actors may then try to “conceal” nonconformity behind a facade of acquiescence through purely symbolic compliance, “buffer” institutional processes by decoupling technical activities from external contact, or “escape” institutional influence by exiting the domain within which the pressure is exerted. *Defiance* refers to the explicit rejection of the institutional demand in an attempt to actively remove the source of contradiction. Organizations may then “dismiss” or ignore institutional prescriptions, “challenge” or contest the norms imposed, or directly “attack” or denounce them. Finally, *manipulation* refers to the active attempt to alter the contents of institutional requirements and to influence those promoting these requirements. When manipulating, organizations may attempt to “co-opt” the sources of the institutional pressure to neutralize institutional divergences, to “influence” the definition of norms through active lobbying, or, more radically, to “control” the source of pressure.

What is interesting with regard to Oliver’s (1991) framework is that even though she argues that using these resistance strategies may lead to organizations becoming somewhat less popular and possibly losing legitimacy when not conforming to demands in their environment, she also argues that using these strategies can, in spite of this, be positive for the organizations’ survival. In her view, organizations that actually respond in cases of inconsistencies “are likely to be more flexible, innovative, catalytic and adaptive” (Oliver 1991:175). She thus argues that these strategies permit the organizations to retain some autonomy or discretion for future use and that these strategies support organizations when it comes to adapting and responding to future unforeseen contingencies as they arise in the environment. One could say that she argues that using the strategies can actually give organizational members a feeling of being in control.

A criticism of Oliver’s (1991) model by, for example, Pache and Santos (2010:456) is that it treats the organization as a “unitary actor” who develops strategic responses to outside pressures. Pache and Santos (2010) argue that previous research has largely ignored intraorganizational processes and dynamics in filtering and resolving conflict in institutional demands. Similarly, Clark (2004) has argued that when analyzing rise and fall of reforms account has to be taken of all those people whose collective actions constitute the final product.

The criticism expressed by Pache and Santos (2010) and Clark (2004) holds true when analyzing some previous studies discussing the continuous existence of management. In Brunsson’s (2006) view there are, for example, only *two* main actors that contribute to both the rise and the fall of reforms: the “reformers” and the “reformees”. Brunsson’s (2006) proposal is that the

reforms are always planned and designed by the “reformers” (which most often seem to be employees at Government offices). The reforms encounter difficulties in implementation when the “reformees” (who most often seem to be public agencies with a unitary voice), do not accept the ideas of rational reforms. Similarly, it is also assumed in Sundström’s (2003, 2007) studies that Management By Result reforms always are planned by Government offices together with some core agencies that have been tasked with implementing these reforms, such as the National Audit Office. A continuous failure is thus expected since the models used in the reform do not fit public agency reporting. Similarly, studies analyzing management fashion have frequently analyzed the reasons for rise and fall of management reforms using the supply and demand model; i.e. from an assumption that the game is only played between one actor who “supplies” and another actor who “demands” management reforms (see for example Abrahamsson 1996; Abrahamsson and Eisenman 2008; Røvik 2011; Gill and Whittle 1993).

As a consequence of the lack of a multiple perspective in previous studies, Pache and Santos (2010) have further developed Oliver’s (1991) framework by adding aspects of predictive power as well as multiplicity in both demands and organizational responses. In Pache and Santos’ (2010) proposal, however, the power aspects only come into play at an intraorganizational level, and depending on whether pressure is imposed on the organization at a goals level or at a means level; and depending on whether the field is a centralized or a fragmented field. In their framework they have developed a relatively complex picture of the when and the how of intraorganizational power relations, for example by forming different actor groups who respond to different types of pressure. Their main point is that organizations are “complex entities composed of various groups promoting different values, goals, and interests who also shape the institutional pressures” (Pache and Santos 2010:469). Subsequently, they argue that different organizational members may respond differently to a demand. In organizations, there may for example be groups that would want to use a strategy of manipulation to resist an external pressure. However, if this strategy is not favored by another group or by the organizational leadership, it will lead to the failure of this manipulation strategy. So, according to Pache and Santos (2010), the strategies finally adopted by organizational members depend not only on the nature and demand of the institutional environment, but also on intra-organizational processes and set-ups. Actions done by organizational members in order, for example, to gain legitimacy, may also be explained due to existing internal pressures.

Studies that have in fact taken into account a more multiple perspective have also found other outcomes. Kraatz and Block (2008), for example, argue that

organizations may frequently attempt to eliminate the sources of conflicting institutional demands, and respond to them in multiple ways by, for example, compartmentalizing them and dealing with them independently. However, instead of leading to more resistance, this process may in fact lead to a positive outcome. They argue that the “same institutional pressures that threaten to divide the organization may, at least in some circumstances, hold it together instead” (Kraatz and Block 2008:245). They thus argue that complementary pressures and conflicting pressures might lead to organizations learning to adapt to respond to the different demands.

In sum, previous studies have to a limited extent explained how power and coercive forces of pressure might contribute to de-institutionalization. Furthermore, previous studies have mainly looked upon organizations as responding in “unitary” manner to demands from their external environment and seen the main conflict as having only two main actors.

Mechanisms discussed so far on what contributes to rise and fall of results initiatives all derive from a notion that action emerges from a conscious decision by organizational members. People act or react when, for example, they believe that a new organizational practice is conflicting with the way things have been done before. I would argue that human, and subsequently organizational, actions may not or should not be explained only by cognitive and conscious thought, but also as explained in Chapter 1 in the solidarity rationale; action can also be driven by emotions. I now turn to discussing how feelings or desires such as “hope” have been proposed as a factor that drives rise and fall of results initiatives.

2.3.3 Hope and/or Despair

An alternative perspective to understand why something is or is not institutionalized is to use the concepts of hope and despair, which to some extent explain how emotions and feelings can also shape action, i.e. contribute to the rise and fall of reforms, in organizations. Typically, management reforms, and specifically the introductory phase of reforms, are declared to be surrounded by “optimism” (Miller and Rose 2008) or a continuous “hope” for a better future, despite continuous failures to achieve this (Brunsson 2006). Brunsson (2006:1), for example, argue that despite continuous failures to achieve rational administrative reforms, organizations “maintain the dream of the rational organization”. Gill and Whittle (1993:284) similarly argue that adopting fashionable management technologies is viewed by organizations as a “panacea and as utopian hopes that the ideas in them will provide salvation”.

To hope or to be optimistic is typically described as something positive that does not presently apply to one's life, but could still materialize, and so we yearn for it (Lazarus 1999). Hope helps us assume that we can change things in the desired way, as it predicts consistency between the desired and the real (Brunsson 2006). But because the future is uncertain, we cannot know what is going to happen with any certainty. Continuing to hope requires a belief in the possibility of a favorable outcome in the future (Lazarus 1999). Light (2006) has, for example, argued that one reason new reforms rise is that they are spurred by the "field of dreams" and people's perceptions of whether organizations need reform in the future, and not on the outcome of past reforms. Since hope is such a strong driving force both in people and in organizations, we act accordingly.

So, the positive emotions connected to hope have also been documented as factors that support the rise of management fashions. Abrahamsson and Fairchild (1999:735) have, for example, shown that the upswing of management fashions has been characterized by an "emotionally charged and largely uncritical discourse vaunting the quasi-magical potency of management technique". Hence, it was perceived that during the rise of management reforms, the hope and optimism made people "blind" with regard to other alternatives and potential difficulties. Similarly, Gill and Whittle (1993:284) have shown that the birth of a management fashion was characterized by "hectic activity, a period of high emotional commitment and uncritical euphoria"; something that is labeled the "honeymoon" phase. So, typically, the first phase of the rise of management reforms has been said to be a phase spurred with a great deal of hope.

Brunsson (2006) has categorized some so-called "mechanisms of hope" that may explain the continuous rise of management reforms. These are:

- a) *Avoiding practice by failing to consider practical experiences and consequences.* This implies, for example, "forgetting" or avoiding experiences from other organizations or past experiences indicating that previous reforms have not succeeded.
- b) *Selecting a practice by addressing only those types of practice that do not threaten hope.* This implies, for example, adopting the perspective that "it is the others, which we are reforming, and not ourselves who need the reforms" (Brunsson 2006:157).
- c) *Interpreting practices in such a way that hope is not threatened.* This implies, for example, interpreting experiences from others as positive and believing in the assumption that "if others have succeeded, we should be able to succeed as well" (Brunsson 2006:157).

- d) *Keep history and the future apart.* This implies, for example, not learning from previous attempts, since these are perceived as relatively modest attempts. It might imply that previous failures are acknowledged, but that the causes of the failures are seen as unstable and based on previous resistance. The current attempt is described as a more dramatic change.

According to Brunsson (2006), the mechanisms of hope come into play in people and organizations when designing and introducing new management reforms. Brunsson (2006) argues that rational reforms, such as the pursuit of results management reforms, is an abstract idea. Abstract ideas are merely “talked about” and have, according to Brunsson (2006), a “higher status” than the practical world. An abstract idea might be that everyone is in favor of “results,” but that a discussion concerning the consequences of results management reforms in organizations is avoided. According to Brunsson (2006), this abstract nature, around which it is easy to build a consensus, makes it possible for the reformers to edit the idea into something concrete. This suits them as something decreasing the risk of criticism. The abstract nature also enables keeping the idea separate from the knowledge and experience that the same idea has previously failed. People and organizations thus believe that the reform, this time, is something different than previously in history (Brunsson 2006).

Moreover, Brunsson (2006:26) argues that the continuous failure of reforms can be explained by the fact that the reforms are “unrealistic or impractical” for the organization. Brunsson thus points out that since reality is not rational and people within organizations do not always act rationally, a continuous failure and a rejection of rational management technologies is the norm rather than the exception.

Both Brunsson (2006) and management fashions scholars such as Abrahamsson (1996) and Gill and Whittle (1992) have argued that hope and optimism are driving forces in individuals and organizations. Organizations and individuals generally tend to avoid their opposite (i.e. negative feelings). Brunsson (2006) for example argues that *despair* is something that individuals and organizations avoid:

... it appears meaningless to organize and to mobilize organizational action if there is no hope of future success. It is difficult to organize on the basis of despair or apathy. A certain degree of hopefulness would seem to form part of our role as members of organizations (Brunsson 2006:232).

Despair or pessimistic ideas, according to Brunsson (2006), would not drive action in organizations. Despair would thus be a mechanism impeding institutionalization. According to Brunsson (2006:232), despair in the organizational world would imply “considering practical experiences rather

than avoiding them, considering negative experiences from practice and interpreting everything for the worst". Similarly, Abrahamsson (1996) has argued that "organisational inertia" is something that organizations try to avoid. Abrahamsson (1996:7) also argues that "organizations will adopt any apparently new and neatly packaged management technique, regardless of its effectiveness, because it impels, at a minimum, a burst of activity in an organization". Gill and Whittle (1993:291) have also argued that the decline phase of a management fashion consists of a "period of disillusionment"; something that organizations automatically try to combat. These reasonings are in line with earlier literature on how and when organizations use mimetic processes as a response to "uncertainty", for example when organizations face a problem with ambiguous causes or unclear solutions. Organizations have then been explained as acting by, for example, imitating other organizations, to reduce this uncertainty (see for example DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

Adding to Brunsson's (2006) studies where the main focus has been on studying "reformers", i.e. actors such as staff at government offices, or politicians, Catasús et al. (2016) have in their study on what happens inside an organization argued that an actor group which they call "technicians", i.e. staff in charge of developing indicators in a public agency, rarely have an unquestioning belief in the reforms. They have therefore suggested that individuals within organizations rather have a "reflective hope" towards the initiatives, i.e. a:

... positive attitude towards the future characterized by an acceptance that the ideal outcome of an act may not be reached and by the acknowledgement that there is, nevertheless, an array of favourable outcomes within the reality of possibilities. (Catasús et al. 2016:4)

In their study they argue that this group of people had a "reflective hope" and did not "blindly" adopt the management technologies. They were fully aware of the fact that, when implemented in practice, the technologies might not always lead to the intended outcome. However, Catasús et al. (2016) also argue that during adoption people tend to have a "positive attitude".

As declared, most literature has argued that the positive attitudes and optimism toward reforms drive the rise of reforms. In contrast, Gill and Whittle (1993:286) argue that an explanation as to why organizations adopt management technologies could be situations when organizations become afraid of pressure from someone outside the organization, someone they perceive as an "enemy who threatens it". Similarly, Baniel (2012) argues that criticism from outside, typically could lead to fear, worry and confusion. This fear often tends to imply that humans need to adapt more rigid goals. Having set goals and having a clear picture of the process ahead to those

goals could give us a “sense of safety” (Baniel 2012). And, according to Sundström (2011), fear of, for example, how information will be used might mobilize action when organizations are, for example, to report on results. So, according to these scholars, action in organizations could also be spurred by negative emotions and feelings such as fear.

2.4 A Springboard into the Study

Since organizations are influenced and affected by ideas and other actors in their environment, they seek legitimacy by acting in line with what they believe is demanded from them. In this way, they gain legitimacy and increase their chances of survival. I have argued that the organizational environment surrounding an organization such as Sida could be viewed as constituting a variety of actors influencing the organization in different ways. I declared that organizations may be viewed as being influenced by mimetic, normative or coercive pressures. The mechanisms of mimesis have been the most studied and are the most common for explaining organizational action. Since Sida is a public organization, acting under a government mandate and under pressure from international bodies, such as the OECD/DAC, as well other development aid agencies, one may also expect Sida to experience a high level of normative and coercive pressure. The explanation given in the framework provided by Miller and Rose (2008) explains how institutionalization can be viewed as occurring through more coercive mechanisms within a public sector setting.

In general there is more literature that discusses why management reforms continuously tend to rise and less literature that discusses why management reforms fall. Mechanisms explaining rise have, however, also indicated in their frameworks that when organizational members resist these reforms, it could subsequently lead to their fall. However, there are few studies that have actually analyzed how and if power and coercive pressure affects sustainability of reforms as well as how and if it affects the rise and fall of reforms.

Literature on institutionalization and de-institutionalization seldom distinguishes between *what* is institutionalized or de-institutionalized; is it the ideas, technologies or certain practices? I believe that making this distinction between ideas, technologies and organizational practices is important for understanding what organizational members are actually reacting against. Depending on what they react against one might expect alternative mechanisms explaining the reasons for rise and fall of management reforms.

Often literature has pointed towards the fact that hope and other positive emotions are mechanisms that drive the continuous rise of management reforms. The role of negative emotions such as fear has not yet been so widely examined as a mechanism that could also be a driver for the rise and fall of management reforms. Moreover, studies have primarily looked upon organizations as responding in a “unitary” manner to demands from their external environment and seen the main conflict as having only two main actors. I believe it important to look at intraorganizational processes and multiple responses from organizations and how these contribute to the rise and fall of reforms. The process of the institutionalization of an idea, practice or technology may be seen as an ongoing process characterized by interaction between what goes on in the organization’s environment and actions taken within the organization. Moreover, in line with calls made by Tomson (2008) and Røvik (2007), institutionalization and de-institutionalization processes need to be studied during longer periods of time.

With these additional aspects in mind, I will now turn towards explaining how I have gone about conducting the study.

3 Research Method

In this chapter, I discuss how I have gone about methodologically when gathering and analyzing the empirical material for the four case studies in this thesis (i.e. the four “results initiatives” at Sida). In the first part I describe the organizational setting of this study: Development Aid and Sida. Second, I describe how the topic of this thesis came about. Third, I describe how I have gathered empirical material for the case stories. Fourth, since I myself have a background within the field of development aid and also since this study is financed by Sida, I reflect on my own distance/closeness to the field studied. And finally, I describe how I have compared the cases.

3.1 Organizational Setting: Development Aid and Sida

The empirical interest of this thesis is public development aid, and primarily bilateral public aid. This means aid provided from a donor country to an aid recipient country. This is in contrast to multilateral aid, where flows are channeled via an international organization (e.g. the World Bank, and United Nations).⁴ It is also distinguished from humanitarian aid by focusing on alleviating poverty in the long term, rather than short-term responses. Since the 1960s, when public development aid was established, it has evolved into a large and complex enterprise reaching all corners of the globe. Every country in the world is part of the aid system, either as an aid donor or as an aid recipient, and a still small though growing number both give and receive aid (Riddell 2007). There were in 2008 an estimated 197 bilateral donors and 263 multilateral donors and a large number of private actors, non-governmental organizations, philanthropic organizations etc. that provide aid (Kharas et al. 2010).

Aid can either be provided as grants, credits or guarantees. The main focus of this thesis is bilateral aid provided in the form of grants, which is also the most common financing mode for Sida (approximately 90 percent of Sida’s aid contributions are in the form of grants). Grants are transfers made from the donor to the recipient in cash, goods or services for which no repayment is required.⁵ Two main financing forms exist for grants: project aid and programme aid. Project aid refers to a general modality where support is provided by the donor for specific activities in the recipient country within short to medium-term interventions. Project funds cover expenses such as

⁴ Definitions are based on those of the OECD/DAC. See: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-glossary.htm>

⁵ Ibid.

capital investments, recurrent costs and training courses. The interventions and activities are relatively well-defined and the purpose is to set in place physical and human capital inputs that the recipient is otherwise not willing or able to procure or fund. In contrast, program aid focuses on supporting the recipient country's overall policy objectives and macroeconomic goals. Program aid can be provided in the form of sector program support (support to a recipient country's sector plan), budget support (support to a recipient country's overall poverty reduction plan or budget) or as core support to an organization. Thus, in contrast to project aid, program aid has broader aims with regard to policy or organizational reform.⁶

The organization studied in this thesis is Sida (Swedish International Development Agency). The organization SIDA (Swedish International Development Authority) was formed in 1965. In 1995, four development organisations, including SIDA, merged to form Sida. During the period 1965-1995 SIDA was governed by a Board. After the merger in 1995, the agency had an oversight council (Insynsråd) until 2010. After 2010 the agency has again been governed by a Board. Although SIDA and Sida have had different organizational set ups, I have only used the term Sida in my general conclusions and discussions about the organization.

Sida is a governmental organization under the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Sida has over the years administered about 50-75% of Sweden's aid budget. In 2014 this amounted to 38.4 billion SEK or 5.7 billion USD. Sida's role is to manage aid projects and programs and to make Swedish resources (knowledge exchange, personnel and money) available for achieving agency objectives. Sida also monitors results produced and checks for proper use of resources. Sida is mainly governed through Government guidelines (Instruktion) and the Government Annual Letter of Appropriation (Regleringsbrev). The guidelines describe how Sida should perform its work and the Letter of Appropriation sets out Sida's objectives, total budget and allocations. Follow-up occurs through annual reports from Sida to the government, which detail costs, revenues and results. Swedish aid operations in specific countries, organizations or thematic areas are decided upon through strategies, which are guided by specific government guidelines.

3.2 Defining the Topic

Generally, two different approaches are described as options for theorizing and conducting research. The first is to start with the theoretical "problem"

⁶ Descriptions taken from Ostrom (2001).

and then engage with an empirical case. The second is to begin with the empirical case and proceed with the theoretical discussion (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2008). This study has, at least from the inception, mainly followed the second approach. I explain below how the topic of this research came about.

As declared in the introduction, I was myself a member of staff at Sida between the years 1998–2011, and at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 2012. In 2011, when Sida needed to make cuts in their administrative budget, I decided to choose a so-called “voluntary departure” from Sida. At that time, the demonstration of “results” was the hottest topic on the development aid policy agenda. It was a concern for every person involved in aid, and it was discussed daily. For me it seemed that management values, perhaps influenced by what has been referred to as New Public Management had “taken over” some of the fundamental values of solidarity and humanity that were more at the forefront of the development aid practices when I started to work at Sida. A lot of the focus had shifted to management, reporting and communication about “results.” The result was that very little time and effort was left to focus on relations with the beneficiaries of aid or to discuss policy or thematic questions in aid work.

My decision to leave Sida in 2011 thus came from doubts as to whether the agency could actually deliver on what was requested by the government. It also came from a feeling that I was not sure that my knowledge and way of working was valued within the new type of profession that seemed to be demanded by the new “results agenda.” The focus of the new reforms was first and foremost intended to increase the control of details, which I feared would only create more distrust and hamper Sida’s relations with the recipients. I mention this since my own action in leaving Sida, as well as my own background and all relations with people from the aid administration that I have had throughout writing this thesis, have definitely influenced both the choice of the topic of this research, and also the whole research process and my methodological choices. Since the subject of my research is partly a lived experience, neither the choice of my research field nor my main research questions can be seen as blank, objective questions. I reflect more on this later in this methodology chapter.

Initially, my research question and my interest in writing this thesis came mainly from “problems” I had encountered in my previous work experience. This approach can be labeled a “problem-based approach”, meaning an approach that begins with a practical problem and then chooses a theory, or several theories, that seem to fit this problem (Hoque and Hopper 1994). According to Humphrey and Scapens (1996), theorizing in this way is more relevant both for practitioners and academic research, since research is then

driven by problems and issues relating to accounting practice, rather than by the concerns of social theories.

The concern and interest for how to solve the equation of demonstrating results of aid at the time when this thesis was formed was, however, not only my concern. As said, the delivery of results was perhaps the most frequent topic debated in the aid policy agenda at that time. However, since the agenda also created conflicts between the minister and Sida staff, it was also a very sensitive agenda to discuss. However, in discussions with some previous Sida colleagues, as well as some researchers at Stockholm Center for Organizational Research (SCORE), a research project labeled “The results agenda in development cooperation” (SCORE 2012) was formed. The project was financed by Sida in 2012. The two agreed overall questions to be answered within that project were: What drives the results agenda? And what are the consequences of the results agenda? These two questions have formed the overarching topic of this thesis.

The four results initiatives studied in this thesis were identified from my own knowledge of the plans for launching the 2012 Results Summary Initiative and from my own knowledge and experience of the 1998 Sida Rating Initiative. In 2010, in the planning of the 2012 initiative, I was still working within Sida and was then in a position where I was partly responsible for the results-based management regulations in relation Sida’s recipients. I was concerned by the bold plans for the 2012 initiative which seemed to be driven predominantly by the accountability relation to Swedish citizens and less so by the relation with the recipients of aid. I also had the feeling that “we have done this before.” I knew that Sida had abandoned another results initiative, the Sida Rating Initiative, only two years previously due to staff resistance and various difficulties in implementing the different results requirements in practice. However, at this period in time, it felt as if there was no space left to further question the feasibility of the reforms. Action, and not least quick action, was what was valued.

From discussions and interviews with staff members who had worked for Sida since its inception in 1965, I could see that it seemed that the quest for results had been a quest that always had been apparent in development aid. I could see that Sida had previously, in 1971 and 1981, initiated results initiatives, which had tried to systematize agency-wide results through the introduction of a results technology similar to the Logical Framework. I started to gather information about these four initiatives, since I thought that these four seemingly similar initiatives could provide answers to the question of what had driven the results agenda since the 1960s, since the inception of public development aid.

In the following table, I describe the main characteristics of each of the four initiatives:

| Results initiative | Main characteristics |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1971 Results Valuation Initiative | An initiative that aimed to systematize and establish routines for planning and follow-up of “results” |
| 1981 Program Project Follow-Up | An initiative that aimed to systematize and produce an annual manual catalogue with “results” |
| 1998 Sida Rating Initiative | An initiative that aimed to systematize and produce subjective rating information about “results” in a database |
| 2012 Results Summary Initiative | An initiative that aimed to systematize and produce a summary of “results” in a database |

Table 1: The four results initiatives

As seen in the table, the initiatives have all aimed at collecting and systematizing “results” produced in aid projects and programs across the agency as a whole. This is a common denominator within the initiatives. Moreover, they have all been major initiatives initiated by the Director General and not only by, for example, an individual department director. Since I have also reviewed documents produced in the periods between these initiatives in my archive search, I know that Sida has not launched yet more results initiatives that fit these two criteria. However, it is important to note that these initiatives are additional to Sida’s normal contribution management procedures. Sida has always, throughout the years, had routines for how to measure and manage results within aid projects, routines which have, for example, been introduced in Sida’s Method Handbooks. Although I have mentioned the contribution management procedures in some parts of the case descriptions, the evolvement of these is not a focus of this study. As declared, the interest of this study is rather on why Sida has, during certain occasions, felt a need to also introduce an additional results initiative.

My ambition has been to, as far as possible, use the “same” type of methodology when analyzing all four cases. However, due to the distance in

time and space, and depending on the way in which Sida has archived documents from these initiatives, this has not always been possible.

As declared in the analytical framework, the following perspectives and questions have guided my search for empirical data for the cases.

1. *What influences public sector aid organizations to initiate results initiatives?*
2. *What happens when the results initiatives are launched, and what happens thereafter? How do different groups of people act and react?*
3. *And, what happens when the initiatives fall out of favor?*

In the following, I describe how I have gone about finding information about the cases.

3.3 Empirical Material

In this section I will first how I have collected empirical material for the cases. In the first part I describe whom I have interviewed and in the second part I describe other documents I have used for the study.

3.3.1 Interviews

I have in all four cases interviewed the same “set” of people around the initiative. These have been:

- a. the Project Leader or the person responsible for the design and running of the initiative at Sida
- b. the Director General who took the decision for the initiative
- c. the Director General under whose time the initiative was abandoned
- d. some staff members who have been subject to the requests made in the initiative (i.e. Programme Officers or heads of units who have needed to fill in the requested results technology within the initiative)

This means that I have interviewed all Sida Director Generals (with the exception of the first Director General in 1965 and who died in 2007). In addition to these individuals, I have interviewed people who have been closely connected to initiatives, either as designers or as users. I have only chosen to interview “other” people surrounding the initiative when I have felt that I did not have sufficient knowledge from other documentation of what happened within the case or if I needed to discuss and obtain reflections on the organizational culture in Sida at the time.

I have mainly interviewed staff at Sida, but I have also done some interviews with staff at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the OECD/DAC, NGOs receiving grants from Sida and consultancy companies working for Sida with results management. Since my main focus has been to understand how Sida has interpreted policy decisions, and not to “judge” whether their perspective is a “correct perspective” announced by political leaders, I have not felt the need to conduct official interviews with any development aid ministers or people in political positions, such as Parliamentary representatives. I have, however, discussed the topic with Parliamentary representatives for development aid.

In general, I have had very open access to people within the aid administration. Several have even approached me with their own wish to be interviewed. All but one person, a consultant who worked for one of the initiatives, have accepted my request to be interviewed.

In total, I have conducted 41 interviews, of which 7 were group interviews (interviews involving more than one person). 36 of these interviews were recorded and transcribed.⁷ The majority of these interviews (around 25) were with people who work within the aid administration today; that is to say that I have done more interviews to document the 2012 initiative. I have also chosen to interview the designers of the 2012 initiative three times, in intervals of about one year during the time period 2012–2016, implying that the empirical data I have for the 2012 initiative is different from the others. For this case, I have also interviews done in “real-time,” when the initiative was running.

All the interviews have been semi-structured. In all interviews I have tried to keep the overall structure of asking questions about:

- a. how and why the initiative arose
- b. the choice and the nature of the technology
- c. how people/the person interviewed were affected and how they reacted to the technology and the initiative
- d. how and why the initiative fell

The interviews have all been 1–2 hours. All interviews were done between 2012 and 2016.

In addition to the formal interviews, I have also kept a research journal after talking with people in different situations. However, this research journal

⁷ One person did not want the interview to be recorded and transcribed. In the other four non-transcribed cases, my recorder was broken so the recording had disappeared.

has mainly been a way for me to remember the discussions. I have not used material from this journal as empirical data when writing the case stories.

3.3.2 Documents

a. Sida Files

When searching for information about the initiatives, I have first tried to search for the file for the initiative. It has been possible to find a full file for the 1981 initiative and the 1998 initiative. As for the 1971 initiative, I have not found a specific file for how the initiative was run between the years 1971–1974. This since all archived material until 1974 is in principle stored but not sorted in Sida’s archives. In the overall Sida files, however, I found documents relating to how the 1971 initiative was run between 1971–1974. When the initiative was relaunched in 1974, a file called “Resultvärdering” was opened in which earlier documents have also been filed. Between the years 1971–1974, I have not, however, been able to follow the 1971 initiative with the same precision and details as the other three. However, in addition to the officially archived files, I have been able to access a lot of privately archived documents from former Sida employees at that time. A lot of these documents are also saved at bistandsdebatten.se.⁸

Documents and decisions about the 2012 Initiative are archived in different files (e.g. in files for decision-making committees or specific Sida departments or units). However, since the 2012 initiative has been run in “real-time,” in parallel with my own research, I have been able to trace a lot of documents by simply asking staff to send these to me. Some of these documents are officially archived and others are not.

Until 1995, Sida documents were only archived manually, whereas documents can also be found in electronic form after 1995. With regard to the manually archived documents, I have first photocopied the documents and then read them electronically.

I have initially read through every archived document saying something about the initiatives. In the documents, I have been searching for:

- a) How the initiatives have been motivated and justified
- b) Changes made during the life-time of the initiatives, for example changes in the reporting requirements

⁸ This is all thanks to Lennart Wohlgemuth who has kept and scanned a lot of Sida documents for public use.

- c) How staff members have reacted or discussed the initiatives or the reporting requirements

The possibility to find information about the initiatives has varied depending on the way the designer of the initiative has archived documents. Both the number and the type of documents archived varies. For example, the Sida 1998 Rating Initiative was run in four phases and had four different project leaders/designers responsible for the initiative. During the third phase of the Sida Rating (2002–2004) Initiative, 58 documents were archived. These included everything from relatively personal e-mail conversations, minutes of meetings and official decisions. During the fourth phase (2006–2008), only five documents, all official decisions, were archived.

I have the smallest number of archived documents about what has happened during the life-time of the initiative for the 2012 initiative. Hardly any archived documents can be found on how individual staff members react to or reason about the initiative. I have not found any archived e-mail conversations between staff members about the initiative. However, as declared, since the 2012 initiative has been run in “real-time,” I have more interviews as empirical data. When doing this research, I have, however, found it interesting from the viewpoint that even though Sida, in common with other public agencies during this time period, was subject to transparency reforms, the consequence seems to have been that staff members became more reluctant to archive or declare individual opinions about something.

b. Documents by Actors outside Sida

In addition to the Sida files, I have also systematically searched through the files of the Swedish National Audit Bureau (RRV), the Parliamentary Audits (Riksdagens Revisorer), the Swedish National Audit Office (Riksrevisionen) and Swedish Agency for Public Management (Statskontoret) for audits and reviews about the topic of results with regard to aid. Reports on results with regard to aid from external audits seem to have come in three major waves since 1965. The main wave of audits, specifically addressing results measurement and management, was from 1966 to 1974. During this time period seven major audits were done: by Parliamentary Auditors in 1966, 1973 and 1974 and by the National Audit Bureau in 1969, 1971 and two in 1974, all of which thoroughly discussed the topic. The other wave occurred between 1991 and 1999.⁹ And, finally, there was a third wave 2004–2011.¹⁰

⁹ During the 1990s three audits were produced that discussed the topic: RRV (1991), RRV (1998), RR (1999).

I have also systematically read through the four main Development Aid Bills (Gov 1962:100; Gov 1968:101, Gov 1978/79:135 and Gov 2002/2003:122). Prior to these four bills, commissions of enquiries have been launched and published. I have read through both the commissions of enquiries and the bills, and searched for how they discuss the topic of results measurement and management.

In addition, I have read through various government documents, such as the annual budget bills, separate government decisions, appropriation letters to Sida, government studies as well as Parliamentary discussions. In cases where documents within the Sida results initiative have referred to these documents, I have also searched and read through how the document discusses results. I have thus not followed and read every government budget bill, but since my main interest has been to follow how and when Sida has been influenced by pressure, I have rather traced the document in cases when it seemed to have influenced Sida's perceptions and actions with regard to results.

When reading through the different external documents, I have been searching for comments and ways in which the reports have reasoned about:

- a) Why Sida needs to demonstrate results (i.e. what they have perceived to be the "problem" as well as how and what type of "solution" they have proposed)
- b) How the documents have argued that Sida should demonstrate results, at which steering level (project, organization, country strategy) and with what type of precision (quantitative/qualitative; output, outcome or impact)
- c) How the documents have argued that Sida should be able to demonstrate and prove causality (i.e. if and how they have argued that Sida should attribute Swedish financing to achieved outcomes)

I have also followed Sida's responses to the audits or reports and searched for:

- d) How Sida has responded to the requirements from, for example, an audit report or a government bill; has Sida declared that it is possible to fulfill the requirements or has it argued against them?

¹⁰ During this period seven performance audits were done by the Swedish National Audit Office on aid: RiR 2004, 2007, 2007, 2009, 2009, 2011, 2011. Many of them received much attention in the media.

First, I copied and pasted all the statements into a document and I then analyzed the statements and tried to find similarities and differences in the statements.

In addition to the more detailed pro-active methodological approach used when searching for archived material from the Sida files and the external audit files, I have also been open to everything I have seen on the topic, something that Gellner and Hirsch (2001:1) label as “methodological holism,” meaning that anything in the research context can be relevant and could potentially be taken into account. Specifically when writing the empirical chapters, I have been open to seeing anything from the decade I have been writing about that could shed some light on what society looked like and how people thought at the time. I have read through books, newspaper articles, internal Sida papers etc. and to the extent possible tried to “live” and see what happened during this time period.

3.4 Reflections on My Own Distance/Closeness to the Field

As declared, the ways in which I have been able to gather empirical data for the different cases differ. They differ in the way in which material has been archived during the different time periods, but they also differ in relation to my own closeness or distance to the empirical field at the time.¹¹ Since my research has been financed by Sida and since I am a former Sida employee myself, I have most often during my research process found it necessary to reflect on my own closeness to the field and the relation I have had to the persons interviewed.

¹¹ For the cases from 1971 and 1981, I have only relied on archived documents and interviews. For the 1998 initiative, I was myself working within the organization; however, not in a driver’s seat of the initiative as such, but I was one of the staff members who were supposed to comply with the rule to fill in the form. During the years 2008–2011, I worked for the Department of Methodology at Sida, first as an advisor and then as Acting Head, implying that I was partly responsible for the implementation of results management at Sida. After leaving Sida, I worked as a consultant in Kenya, supporting the Ministry of Agriculture with their results-based management work. I also conducted a study on results-based management in development aid with financing from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond. From April to September 2012, I worked for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs with international aid effectiveness negotiations, in a position where I was involved in discussions on management of aid, steering of Sida and the results agenda as such. When working at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, I was simultaneously already connected to the Stockholm Business School and SCORE, where I started my full-time PhD studies in September 2012.

As in so-called self-ethnographies, I have most often had a “natural access” to the field (Alvesson 2003). Many of my former colleagues have been relatively open about most things that happen within the agency. I may therefore have had access to stories and material that would otherwise have been hidden to researchers. According to Ellis et al. (2011), it is important for researchers writing so-called auto-ethnographies (i.e. writing about their previous experiences) to acknowledge and accommodate subjectivity, emotionality and the researcher’s influence on research, “rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t exist” (Ellis et al. 2011:280). So, instead of trying to hide from these experiences and claim that this research has been done from a neutral, impersonal and objective stance, I have tried to make use of so-called epiphanies; that is, remembered moments that could have significantly impacted the trajectory of the organization’s life (Bochner and Ellis 1992).

Auto-ethnographies, according to Ellis et al. (2011) and Zaner (2004), are made possible by being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity, and are often written about moments of crisis or intense situations that force a person to attend to and analyze lived experiences (Ellis et al. 2011; Zaner 2004). For me, some of the things that happened in the case stories told, such as when staff resisted fulfilling the requirements in the 1998 Sida Rating Initiative or when I decided to leave Sida in 2011, are still moments and experiences I remember as intense or emotional moments in my working life.

Jaggar (1989) claims that emotions are often shared between people and are an important element in research work. Since I believe that, for example, the two moments mentioned are also moments that were not only emotional for myself, but moments that affected the organization, I have thus tried during the whole research process to be as open as possible about my own intentions and past experiences. I have, for example, always opened the interviews by declaring how we (myself and the interviewee) know each other from the past, declaring with as much honesty as possible my own intentions for doing the research. Ellis et al. (2011) claim that even though the researcher’s experience is not the main focus, personal reflection adds context and layers to the story being told about participants.

Many of the interviews have therefore rather been discussions where both the interviewee and I have jointly tried to remember what happened. Even though this research approach could be labeled more subjective, my wish is that the approach supported realness and honesty. Fontana and Frey (1994) argue that this type of interview, where the respondent is treated as equal and the conversations are “real”, is often more honest and reliable.

However, at the same time as doing research in a context that is known by the researcher can be valuable and provide useful insights, it has been claimed that auto-ethnographic research might also be “politically more risky and possibly emotionally more stressful” (Alvesson 2003:187). Mosse (2005) argues that researchers doing research on former colleagues have a dual role of both being a “participant-insider” and an outsider, which, according to Mosse (2005:163), is “problematic, blurring the lines between ‘social investigation and lived experience’”.

A concern for me has thus been to also find a distance to my research subject (Baszanger and Dodier 1997). My endeavor has been to be as objective as possible, but to simultaneously deal with all situations and emotions that might have arisen both within myself and with other persons by the fact that I am doing this research. However, in contrast to other ethnographic studies, which according to Irvine and Gaffikin (2006) first strive “to get in” (getting access), then “get on” (doing the research) and then “get out” (finalizing), my approach has been to “get out” first. I have, for example, tried to organize things so that I conducted a number of interviews during some periods, and after that had a long period without any more inputs, as I only read the transcripts and reflect on the interviews.

Van Maanen (2011:3) claims that ethnographies are about “a sort of documentary status by the fact that somebody actually goes out beyond the ivory towers of employment and comfort to live with and live like those who are studied”. For me, my research has been the opposite of Van Maanen’s (2011) statement. I have often reflected on the fact that I perhaps left the “ivory towers of employment” for a much more vulnerable position as a PhD candidate with occasional funding in order to study the very same practices from the outside.

However, although I have explicitly tried *not* to be so involved in discussions in the development aid sector, *not* to provide advice and *not* be normative when discussing the topic with former colleagues, I am fully aware that my choice of research subject and the fact that I have chosen to present my PhD topic and preliminary findings for different audiences¹² may be perceived as a “political act” and that my own presence in the field might inevitably have provoked, informed or changed practices within the field. This, however, is something Billo and Hiemstra (2013) argue is inevitable when doing research. Researchers always influence the environment they are

¹² During my PhD studies I have made around 20–30 presentations on my PhD topic for audiences such as Sida, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Sweden, Finland and Switzerland, OECD/DAC, EC, consultancy firms, seminars at Almedalen, other researchers, Akademien för Ekonomistyrning i Staten, etc.

researching. Since my wish with this research is certainly similar to the one that Bartunek et al. (2006:10) claims most PhD candidates aim for – “to contribute to some relevant knowledge that might change the world of organisations” – I have, however, found it helpful and supporting to, during the various discussions, also gain a sense of how people perceive my research topic.

Apart from the fact that the case studies can partly be considered an ethnography of life within an aid agency, this thesis is also a historical comparative analysis of four initiatives in which I have tried to capture and analyze how staff members react to the requirements. Below, I discuss and reflect on how I have gone about analyzing the cases with the support of literature on historical analyses and research on emotions.

3.5 Analyzing and Comparing the Cases

Below I will discuss how I have gone about analyzing and comparing the cases. I will first reflect on my main methodological approach when categorizing the information and when doing the analysis; i.e. process tracing and grounded theory. Thereafter I will explain how I have gone about writing up the case stories as well as comparing the four cases. I will finally explain who the main actors studied are, and how I have named them in the case studies.

3.5.1 Process Tracing and Grounded Theory

When analyzing and comparing the cases I have mainly been inspired by the methodological approaches of *grounded theory* and *process tracing*. In grounded theory the research process typically begins with a question or with the collection of qualitative data (Martin and Turner 1986). Researchers thereafter review the data collected and analyse whether repeated ideas, concepts or elements become apparent. Thereafter repeated ideas of phenomena are divided into concepts and categories (Martin and Turner 1986). The main question that has guided me in my search for empirical material has been the reason for the rise and the fall of the four results initiatives. When gathering and analyzing empirical material I have tried to gather as much empirical data as possible relating to the four cases. When I had the material at hand I tried to understand what actually happened when the initiatives arose, and what happened within them. In the next section I will describe how I tried to categorize the material.

However, when I had the material at hand, I found I could not always understand the reasons why, for example, changes were constantly made in

the initiatives. In the method of *process tracing*, it is declared that researchers first observe and describe a specific moment and only then does the researcher try to follow what led to that specific moment (Collier 2011). Collier (2011:284) argues that process tracing focuses on the “unfolding of events or situations over time” meaning the researcher tries (often by testing different hypotheses) to trace why it seems as if a specific moment actually happened. What I have done is that when I had the main bulk of material at hand, I first categorized and marked down when decisions of changes had been made within the initiatives, for example if the reporting requirements were changed. Thereafter I tried to trace how and why that decision was made. If the decision for example mentioned that the reporting category had been changed since there had been a discussion in Parliament about results measurement and management, I tried to trace the discussion in Parliament, and follow through if it was true that Parliament had put pressure on Sida to change the reporting categories.

According to Sundström (2003), this type of tracing of documents and actions can imply that the “traces” lead to an explanation of why organizational changes, for example, take place. However, sometimes the traces might also lead to nothing. Similarly, I have found that whereas my search for traces has sometimes led to explanations that have broadened the understanding of why an action is taken, at other times I have found nothing when searching for an explanation for a change. I have, however, found both answers interesting, since in the latter case, the reason for change might be assumed to be something other than, for example, an external pressure that explains why the change was made.

Since I have mainly applied process tracing when searching for external factors that could have contributed to what happened internally within the results initiatives, this means that I have *not* systematically gone through, for example, all the discussions in Parliament about results measurement and management from the 1960s and onwards. As I have said, during the implementation process of the results initiatives I have only traced and followed external discussions when these have been mentioned in internal discussions as being a factor as to why something happened within the results initiatives.

3.5.2 The Stories *within* the Four Results Initiatives

When analyzing what happened within the four results initiatives I have first analyzed what happened throughout the life-time of each of the initiatives. In Chapters 4-7 I describe each of the four cases. My ambition has been to write the empirical chapters as stories which demonstrate the organizational

culture as well as the political environment at the time when the results initiative was implemented within the organization.

Initially, I tried to follow the pattern of a reform process in accordance with a framework developed by Pollit and Bouckaerd (2011). In their framework, a reform process typically goes through four phases: 1) talk, 2) decision, 3) implementation and 4) results. However, since I was studying both what happened outside Sida as well as what happened internally, I found these phases misleading. I could not always find that a decision, for example, was taken as a consequence of “talk.”

When writing down the stories I have followed the following pattern:

The first part of the case story is always devoted to the environmental demand or the external pressure. It is devoted to describing the context in which Sida operated during the time before the initiative was launched. I have to the extent possible tried to include the most important happenings in both international and domestic debate during the time period before the initiative. It thus describes the overall opinion, problems and solutions, as stated by external actors at the time. So, the first part of the empirical stories mainly concerns my first research question: *What influences public sector aid organizations to initiate results initiatives?*

When conducting the analysis of the first part I have followed:

- a) the type of pressure and who applied pressure; were the demands, for example, expressed in an official government regulation, was it a recommendation by, for example, an external auditor or an informal call
- b) how different actors expressed the perceived problems and what the suggested solutions to the problems were
- c) how Sida officially reacted to the pressure, for example in official responses signed by the Director General
- d) whether there were any unofficial responses to the pressure from other actors within Sida, and if so in what way.

The second part of the case story is written as a chronology describing what happened, sometimes daily, sometimes less frequently, within the initiative from preparations, during its launch, during implementation and when it fell out of favor. The second part thus predominantly describes the intraorganizational processes. However, in cases when something that happened outside Sida seems to have affected the initiative, I have described the external incident/s. The second part responds to the second and third research question: *What happens when the results initiatives are launched, and what happens thereafter? How do different groups of people act and react? And, what happens when the initiatives fall out of favor?*

When gathering empirical material on how the initiatives have been run, I have written down ideas, statements and concerns from actors outside Sida and also what simultaneously happened internally. First, I have sorted all information into a chronological time line. When writing the second part I have chosen to present:

- a) the decisions or when changes in decisions have been made within the results initiatives (for example decisions on the reporting categories in the results matrix)
- b) the reactions and actions preceding a decision
- c) the reactions and actions following a decision

I have, for example, noted whether a situation that was emotionally loaded preceded a decision. This might be a letter expressing frustration sent by a staff member to the persons in charge of the initiative. When analyzing the initiatives, I have thus specifically been interested in noting how and when people express their emotions and how the expression of their emotions might have affected what happens in the initiatives.

Flam and Kleres (2015) distinguish between six different types of research methods for how a researcher can explain action from emotions:

1. The researcher can observe/note which emotions an actor expresses and where expressions of emotions are treated as data
2. The researcher can observe/note which emotions are attributed to an actor/actors by other actors
3. The researcher can note their own concurrent emotions as well as when relevant circulating and shared emotions emerge
4. The researcher can try to reveal the obligatory feeling rules in a certain setting
5. The researcher can try to check against theory to tease out under which conditions ambivalent emotions are generated and transformed
6. The researcher can try to find out the underlying affect and taboo emotions of a person.

In this study, I have mainly applied the first method (i.e. I have noted when people have expressed emotions). I have thus not had the ambition to know or detect people's "real feelings or emotions", which it is probably impossible to do.

However, when following the initiatives, I have also partly been influenced by Flam and Kleres (2015) second and third points; in other words, the fact that my own emotions, as well as the collective emotions arising in different situations, could be used to understand what happens throughout the reform process. Agar (1986) has argued that the researcher's emotions may contain

information that provides information that resolves breakdowns in previous understanding, which could lead to reaching new coherences. Similarly, it has been argued that the researcher's emotions shape creative ideas, manage skepticism and are vital to an analytical research process (Barbalet 2011). Kleinman and Copp (1993) have also argued that it is crucial for the researcher to be aware of emotions, since a lack of awareness often results in bias and the effort to suppress them takes energy and focus from the work.

3.5.3 Comparing the Four Cases Over Time

When comparing the cases I initially inserted all the information into tables. I had tables for the different types of statements made during different phases of the initiatives. I also had tables for the typical reactions and tables for all categories in the technologies. After analyzing these tables, I was able to find patterns of similarities and differences. When writing the empirical analysis, I have tried to write it as a story, where I only reflect on the main similarities or differences in the patterns I have found.

However, since both the 1998 and the 2012 initiatives are lived experiences for me I have, specifically during the life time of the 2012 initiative, been interested in comparing whether the pattern today is similar to in the previous initiatives. Anderson (2009:78) argues that there are certain "affective atmospheres" in organizations, which are the "shared ground from which subjective states and their attendant feelings and emotions emerge". Anderson (2009) argues that the atmosphere in a given social setting affects people's emotions, feelings and doings in a certain circumstance. Moreover, Matheny and Smollan (2005) have argued that change events, even nominal ones such as changes in physical setting, policy, social interaction and technology in an organization may be associated with an intense experience of emotions. Wiesenfeld et al. (1999) have for example shown that affective reactions of people who have, for example, witnessed another person being laid off in a fair or unfair manner have an effect on self-conscious negative emotions such as guilt and shame. Since I have observed that Sida, specifically during the implementation of the "real-time" case, the 2012 initiative, has been more "open" during some periods of time and more "closed" at other times to discussions on the results agenda, I have observed and written down my own observations.

Path dependency is typically used as a concept to demonstrate stability or similarity; in other words, it is viewed as a phenomenon that events occurring at an earlier point in time will affect events occurring at a later point in time (Djelic and Quack 2007). It is argued that, in essence, the same events happen again. In research analyzing why path dependency occurs,

attention is paid to the issue of entrenchment and the reproduction mechanism. Moments of innovation, openness, beginnings and reorientation, as well as longer phases of stabilization and institutional reproduction, are identified (Deeg 2001; Mahoney 2000). Scholars have analyzed moments of “openness” and argued that moments of openness break long periods of stasis or “lock in” (Krasner 1988). As stated earlier, in line with Krasner’s (1988) argument, I have in my analysis found periods when the organization and staff were more “open”, and more “locked in” periods, which I have used in my analysis.

3.5.4 The Main Actors

I have first and foremost followed the pressure and ideas concerning results measurement and management from five external actor groups: (a) international actors, including OECD/DAC, the World Bank and other donor groups, such as the Nordic donor group; (b) the Swedish government including the Ministry for Foreign Affairs; (c) the Swedish Parliament; (d) audits conducted by, for example, the Swedish Agency for Public Management, the Swedish National Audit Office or its predecessors, the Swedish National Audit Bureau and the Parliamentary Auditors; and (e) the media.

As stated earlier, I have not for any of these actor groups followed everything that they have done and said about results measurement and management at Sida, but have only traced actions or comments made by them in cases when the actors have been referred to in the four “results initiatives”.

When it comes to the internal actors, the titles of staff members and positions have changed officially over years. However, I have used the following terms as labels for positions at Sida:

| Position | Title | Main duties |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Top Management | Director General (DG) | Director General of the agency; that is, the director in charge of the agency. |
| | Sida Management Committee | Consists of Department Directors. Responsible for internal agency wide decisions. |
| | Sidas Board | Consists of members selected by the Government. |
| Designer | Designer of the results initiative | A staff member or a group of staff members who are in charge of the designing and running the results initiative. |
| Staff | Programme Officer at Field Office | A staff member who is in charge of handling aid projects and programs in a Sida field office and in charge of filling in the required results technology within the results initiative. |
| | Programme Officer at Head quarters | See above. But a staff member located at the Head quarters. |
| | Director (of a Unit or a Department) at Sida Head quarters | The directors of units are typically in charge of the direct running and control of aid projects and programs. |
| | Director at Field Office | The directors at field offices are in charge of the aid projects and programs in their respective countries. In some countries, the field offices are part of the Swedish Embassy, and in other countries they are their own operational units. |

Table 2. Positions at Sida

This table shows that I have mainly been interested in following actions taken by three positions: 1. Top Management (which consists of the DG, Sida’s Management Committee and Sida’s Board or Advisory Council); 2. The designers, who can be perceived as the staff members who are in charge of the results initiative. During the implementation process it is mainly the designers who manage and lead the initiatives; and 3. Staff members, who may be Programme Officers and Directors at Headquarters as well as in the Field Offices or Swedish Embassies.

When writing the cases I have renamed the Director Generals and the designers (i.e. the actors I have interviewed systematically) with the following:

| Interviews | Name in the text | Operational in |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Director Generals (6) | DG1 | 1979-1985 |
| | DG2 | 1985-1994 |
| | DG3 | 1995-2003 |
| | DG4 | 2003-2007 |
| | DG5 | 2008-2010 |
| | DG6 | 2010-2016 |
| Designers (13) | D1-1 | 1971 Initiative designer |
| | D1-2 | 1974 Head of Evaluation |
| | D2 | 1981 Initiative designer |
| | D2-2 | 1981 Head of Evaluation |
| | D3-1 | 1998 1st Project Leader |
| | D3-2 | 1998 2nd Project Leader |
| | D3-3 | 1998 3rd Project Leader |
| | D3-4 | 1998 4th Project Leader |
| | D4-1 | 2012 initiative |
| | D4-2 | 2012 initiative |
| | D4-3 | 2012 initiative |
| | D4-4 | 2012 initiative |
| | D4-5 | 2012 initiative |
| | D4-6 | 2012 initiative |
| Other (34) | Their position (see table 2) | |

Table 3 Interview persons

I said earlier that I have conducted 41 interviews with a total of 53 persons. This table shows that 19 of those interviewed were either Director Generals or designers. Some of these have been interviewed individually, others in a group. All the Director Generals have been interviewed individually.

When citing staff and other actors in Sida's surroundings I have described them in the text with their position. The people interviewed have frequently been operational in different positions during the different initiatives. A person who was a Programme Officer during the 1971 initiative might later have become the designer and thereafter a Manager and a member of Sida's Management Committee. I have been mainly interested in what the people

say and do depending on their *position* at the time point studied, and not who they are as individuals. Most reactions and citations used to show how staff reacted are taken from written documents, for example letters or e-mails.

Over the years Sida has made frequent organizational changes. However, up until 2008 Sida predominantly had an organization consisting of thematic and geographical departments. In 2008 a larger organizational change was made; work was now organized in three pillars (Policy, Operations and Management). In 2012 a new organizational change implied that a more traditional hierarchical organizational model was used again. However, this revision also implied the introduction of aid production into processes, which also implied the introduction of several new specialized functions (such as controllers, legal counsels etc.) responsible for assuring the quality of a *specific part* of the contribution management process. Up until 2012 the management of an aid contribution was basically the responsibility of *one* person (a Programme Officer specializing in a thematic field of expertise such as education or health). This implies that in the descriptions of the 2012 initiative the responsibility of the designer is also spread out among different persons.

I have not found a reliable source from where I could easily trace when these were carried out and what exactly changed. The number of units, departments and countries in which Sida has field offices has varied over the years. The number of field offices over the years, however, is between 10 and 30. The number of Sida staff has grown from around 50 staff members in 1965 to around 600 in 2012.¹³ In each case story, I will not provide detailed descriptions of the organizational structure at the time but only reflect upon when the changes have influenced the case stories.

When writing about the cases I have predominantly tried to use citations taken from documents at the time when the initiatives were in place. When I have used citations from interviews conducted from 2012 and onwards I have explicitly made clear that this is a citation from a *recent* interview.

I will now turn to describing my four empirical case stories. The following chapter deals with the 1971 initiative.

¹³ Prior to the 1971 initiative SIDA had 165 staff members (RR 1974:2), prior to the 1981 initiative the number of SIDA staff had increased to 355 staff members at Headquarters with an additional 125 who were employed at SIDA's field units. SIDA's field offices numbered 14 (SOU 1978:61:84). In 1998, the agency had 771 staff members (RR 1998/99:2:17).

4 SIDA's Results Valuation Initiative (1971-1974)

In this chapter, I describe the context in which Sida's first results initiative – SIDA's Results Valuation Initiative 1971 – was implemented. The initiative aimed to systematize and establish routines for planning and follow-up of “results” at SIDA. The first part examines the external environment prior to the launch of the initiative. The second part of the chapter deals with what happened within the organization and in its environment when the initiative was launched and implemented.

4.1 Environmental Demand

4.1.1 A New Public Sector and a New Public Agency

The fact that governments in wealthier parts of the world started providing economic aid to less developed countries during the decade has been described as an “unimagined idea” (Lancaster 2008) or the birth of an “entirely new concept” in world politics (Myrdal 1970). Lancaster (2008) argued that the idea had since become an idea taken for granted in international politics. However, it was not the aid provision and giving as such that was new. Humans have always shared food and other basic resources with each other and supporting others has been seen as a phenomenon embedded in human behavior (Martens 2005). However, what was new in the 1960s was that developed governments deliberately chose to use tax payers' money to support people in other nations. One could say that in the 1960s something new happened in world politics.

Public development aid was born in the aftermath of the Second World War, a time period labeled as the “Golden Age of Capitalism” (Marglin and Schor 1990). Development aid was born during a time period when the world economy was on the rise. Development aid was seen as a way to support the newly independent states in economic growth in the same direction as the industrialized European countries. The main international discussions within development aid that took place during the decade focused on the need to increase volumes, and the difficulties that increased volumes of aid created in terms of assuring their efficiency. There was at this time both considerable internal pressure (not only among Sida staff but also, for example, youth protesting outside the Parliament) as well as international pressure and demands to increase the amounts of aid disbursements. During

the decade, what was probably the most dominant goal ever in development aid, the disbursement goal, was formulated. First, in 1960, the UN General Assembly expressed the hope that:

...the flow of international assistance and capital should be increased substantially so as to reach as soon as possible approximately 1% of the combined national incomes of the economically advanced countries. (Resolution 1522 (XV), 1960)

The 1% goal was thus declared as a wish in 1960. However, the Pearson Commission (1969:144) declared that some countries found it very “difficult to act on a commitment that a fixed amount or share of national product should be provided for any particular purpose”. In 1970, a 0.7% target was agreed upon in a UN resolution (UN 1970). The 0.7 % target has ever since been a goal that has repeatedly been endorsed (OECD/DAC 2016b). Sweden, however, had already endorsed the 1% goal in 1968 (Gov 1968:101). The amount of disbursement and how to handle the increased volumes of aid was in fact the main rationale for the 1968 Aid Bill. Ever since, Sweden has been among the donor countries providing the largest share of its GDP to aid. As a consequence, during the decade, amounts disbursed to public aid increased rapidly.¹⁴ One could say that ever since the agreements on the 1% goal were reached, there has been a so-called “disbursement goal” in development aid. One could say that the “disbursement goal” has been the only quantifiable goal which has been possible to aggregate ever since.

One could say that Swedish public aid was born with the Development Aid Bill (Prop 100:1962), which in popular speech has been referred to as the Aid Bible (Wohlgemuth 2012). In 1968, yet another Aid Bill (Prop 1968:135) was approved which, jointly with the Aid Bill from 1962, set up foundations for ideas and norms for development aid which have been institutionalized ever since as basic values. Previous aid was seen to have been dominated by non-profit and religious motives (Markensten 1967). The new motives of aid were based on the feelings of “moral obligation and international solidarity” (Gov 1962:100:5) and one of the means to fulfill the goal of raising the living standards of poor people was the “realization of effects of aid interventions” (Gov 1962:100:8). The Bill and the main thinking concerning aid at this time was that reaching the objective of aid

¹⁴ Until 1961, Sweden had disbursed 120 MSEK, which was less than aid disbursed by voluntary agencies during the same period (Markensten 1967). After approval of the 1962 bill, there was a rapid expansion of aid from 50 MSEK to 131 MSEK between the budget years 1962/63–1965/66. At the end of the decade, 590 MSEK was disbursed, implying that the amount was over ten times more during a budget year than in the beginning of the decade (OECD/DAC 2016a).

(i.e. “raise the living standards of poor people”) was a joint task between Sweden and the recipient country. The achievement of effects of aid was subsequently to be done in a “mutual cooperation between the donor and the recipient” (Gov 1962:100:8).¹⁵

During 1962–1965, Swedish public aid was handled by NIB –Nämnden för Internationellt Bistånd (Board for International Assistance). A major difficulty for NIB was to administer all incoming applications, and in principle, all applications that were reasonable were approved (SOU 1977/78:13). Subsequently, in 1965, the government took a decision to form SIDA – the Swedish International Development Authority (Gov 1965:63) with the mandate to execute government decisions in public aid; to follow the development in countries receiving aid; to compile, organize and provide information; to exercise oversight of aid contributions as well as to promote coordination and consistency in Swedish aid operations in general (SFS 1965:666). SIDA handled a major part of Sweden’s bilateral aid, whereas aid to multilateral organizations was handled by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and/or the Ministry of Finance. SIDA was thus given a broad mandate to build up and formulate a new public policy field. This role was further strengthened by decisions taken in the 1968 Aid Bill, which legitimized SIDA’s role as the main policy/knowledge organization for international development.

It was already from the inception of public development aid argued that staff that applied to SIDA were highly motivated by the values of solidarity and helping people in need (see for example Forsse 1999). This was from inception seen as in conflict with what a public state agency was supposed to do. Forsse for example (1999) reflected on aid politics from the 1960-70’s with that:

It is part of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs’ routines to keep a distance to things. For SIDA people, this was much more difficult. Few of them had any experience of state administration and what it means to have the Swedish government as an employer. Most had a strong ideological motivation and rather considered themselves politically active than civil servants (Forsse 1999:63)

Similarly, Kalderén (1971:14) argued that a problem when establishing administrative regulations was that staff members tended to have “feelings of connectedness” with the recipients they were working with. Claims were

¹⁵ The 1968 bill mainly codified these propositions and declared that decisions taken in the 1962 bill “are still valid” (Prop 1968:135:83). The bill also declared that aid interventions were to be formulated mutually with the partner country; i.e. it placed more emphasis also on the mutuality during planning.

therefore made that SIDA staff had difficulties adjusting to the required civil service routines.

There were also other problems; the aid portfolio that SIDA took over from NIB was unorganized and fragmented. Aid funding mainly went to several smaller technical assistance projects in different countries. Since aid from other donors was on the rise simultaneously, the recipient countries received uncoordinated requests from donors. Kalderén (1971) described the problem as follows:

Each donor tended to build up their own system for aid provision, a developing country could therefore have to do with dozens of bureaucratic machineries, all with different, and for the developing country's own development often irrelevant, requirements on accounting and control. (Kalderén 1971:15)

In order to reduce the fragmented requirements, it was seen that aid required collaboration and dialogue with other donors as well as with the governments in developing countries. Attempts to harmonize donor efforts were, for example, carried out by the Nordic countries, which agreed to harmonize their aid methods as far as possible (Kalderén 1971:15).

All bilateral aid was mainly administered at SIDA Headquarters. Projects received funding annually, and all control and audits were carried out in Sweden. Project information was gathered in a joint chart of accounts, irrespective of their character. It was thus not possible to trace any information on, for example, all education projects in the accounts. Bookkeeping was done manually. Original versions of verifications for items bought for a development project in, for example, Tanzania were sent to SIDA Stockholm for bookkeeping. Follow-up was done in quarterly reports (Markensten 1967). According to Markensten (1967:42), the cumbersome and slow administration led to "feelings of frustration and misunderstandings in-between staff." Forsse (1999:20), who at the time was the Deputy Director General for SIDA, described how working routines at SIDA at the time were characterized by "hard, at times very hard, and sometimes unrewarding work and an extensive pressure to deliver in a complex environment," which led to staff being inclined to think in a short-sighted manner. Forsse (1999) declared that:

For the employee, the acute small problems were so awkward and numerous that many were living based on a One Damned Thing After Another menu, without managing to think in a long term perspective [...] We felt that we were often surrounded by a hostile press and averse, suspicious and interventionist politicians and high officials. (Forsse 1999:62)

It was thus claimed that SIDA was under much pressure to deliver quickly, which led to difficulties organizing planning. It was claimed that a

consequence of this way of working was many small, costly and badly planned projects, “which were mostly inspired and created after someone’s personal judgment of what was good for the developing countries” (Kalderén 1971:15). The heavy administration and fragmentation led to the agency seeking improved administrative routines that could ensure more long-term thinking. These were seen as the means for combating a certain emotional and activism culture among SIDA staff.

4.1.2 Ideas and Pressure for Effectiveness and “Results”

Solutions to the problems were found in techniques and ideas of results measurement and management; ideas that were not new, but that became extremely popular and reached a peak of acceptance in the late 1960s. Very similar ideas arose during the decade, both within the public sector, and within business, science and international development. Ideas, earlier tried out in Ford Management in the 1950s, then during the Vietnam War in the 1960s, rapidly spread to be used in the entire American public administration (Ramalingam 2013; Sundström 2006).

Within the development aid community high hopes were placed on evaluations as a method to merge science and public policy making, and scientists were increasingly invited to the arenas of public policy making (Patton 2008). Within international development, guidelines for evaluation were developed early on both within UNESCO (1959) and USAID (1965). Evaluations were to be used to improve the donors’ ability to choose the most efficient projects or fund adequate financing gaps in developing countries’ development plans. Implementing the task, according to the UNESCO document, was viewed as something that could be “done simply, without additional staff or funds” and the process was seen as “a relatively simple one – dictated by logic and demanding only the time and effort to think them through and reach agreement” (UNESCO 1959:18). Like the earlier ideas of McNamara in the Vietnam War, the USAID evaluation guidelines, for example, compared “victory” in military operations with success in the battle toward “results” in aid. A prompt and efficient execution of evaluations would give a much higher chance of success and greater insurance against failure in development projects (USAID 1965:11).

In practice, however, evaluations of aid projects were carried out by most aid agencies in a fragmented way and on an ad-hoc basis. At the time, none of the international aid donors had a systematic evaluation system, a topic raised as a concern in international discussions on aid and evaluation (Markensten 1967). In international forums, such as in the newly created

OECD/Development Assistance Group¹⁶, concern was raised about the lack of evaluations of aid projects in general and qualitative evaluations in particular (SOU 1962:12).

It was also in this environment that the Logical Framework was developed by a USAID-contracted consulting firm, Practical Concepts Inc. (Inc. 1970). The original Logical Framework aimed to support Project Managers in conducting their two main tasks: 1) to manage inputs to produce outputs – i.e. concrete and objectively verifiable results, and 2) to test the hypothesis that producing those results will achieve some larger purpose¹⁷. The ideas proposed that aid managers needed to act more as a “scientist” by “hypothesizing that providing certain outputs will result in a project purpose and by gathering evidence to establish whether it appears more or less likely that the hypothesis is correct” (USAID 1970:IV-4). Measurement of outputs and achievement of purpose was seen as objectively verifiable data which would provide aid managers with “a common frame for evaluation of projects” (USAID 1970:111-I) and “help reduce management preoccupation with inputs” (USAID 1970: IV-4). Since the 1960s the Logical Framework, and different varieties thereof, had been disseminated and used widely within development aid agencies as a tool required by donors in order to make an organization’s activities and projected “results” visible (Coleman 1987; Earle 2002; Martinez 2013).

In Sweden, the ideas were tested in the Programme Budgeting Initiative (PBI). The rationale and motives for the Swedish PBI reform was that Swedish state agencies were to be given more freedom to utilize their budget allocations within a given framework. The government was to a larger extent to have the task of formulating goals and leave the means for how to achieve the goals to the agencies. The agencies were to account for their resources, in terms of achieved performances and effects, and use more rational

¹⁶ In 1960, the DAG – Development Assistance Group – was created as a forum for consultations among donors on assistance to developing countries. Following the OECD’s entry into operations in 1961, the DAG became the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Sweden entered the OECD/DAC in 1965. In the 1960s, several normative international regulations, such as the Directives for Reporting Aid and Resource Flows to Developing Countries on a Comparable Basis, Terms and Conditions, Standards for ODA (Official Development Assistance) were created and came into force. In 1962, Aid Reviews (now known as Peer Reviews) were launched (OECD 1993:7).

¹⁷ First the consultancy company submitted a detailed work plan including a proposal for a project design and evaluation tool – the Logical Framework – in 1969. In 1970 the consultancy company submitted a proposal for a full Project Appraisal system and methods to enhance project analysis and monitoring.

bookkeeping. These ideas were to provide more transparency into how public resources were used and provide improved background information for the Parliamentary and government decisions (Sundström 2006). The attempts at programme budgeting resulted in questions on how to concretize goals into operational means, which operational level to measure, etc. Problems had also arisen concerning what was needed for success. It was declared that systems needed to be introduced successively and during a long period of time and that succeeding with the efforts required the right attitudes and adequate knowledge of the methods by staff in state agencies as well as how to “think in an economically rational way” (SOU 1967:13:14).

In 1967 SIDA was chosen as one of the pilot agencies in the government’s Programme Budgeting Initiative. The Programme Budgeting Initiative mainly put pressure on SIDA’s results measurement efforts at the agency level. However, results measurement was mainly seen by SIDA in 1968 as a way to improve planning and also to save costs (SIDA 1967). This narrow view on “results” as no more than organizational outputs was criticized internally at the time, since it did not put the focus on real “results” achieved on the recipient partner’s side, which it was claimed was needed for improved planning and decision-making (Markensten 1967:172).

During this period there appear to have been increased calls both from the public and in particular from external audits and Parliament to improve the ways in which SIDA reported results. Lindberg (1969:61) echoed the voice of the public in an anthology declaring that “Public opinion has long called for an evaluation of development politics. This requirement has not been met.” As far back as 1966, a Parliamentary Audit had pointed out that insufficient measures had been taken toward a focus on results in development aid. It stated that:

A key issue in assessing aid operations must be the results achieved ... Parliament has on several occasions called for a continuous performance measurement – a so-called evaluation of the aid interventions. The measures taken so far to achieve such control have been of a very limited character ... Financing should not be provided to different aid projects unless it can be expected that they will realize benefits and lead to the intended development effects (RR 1966:10).

This claim was echoed in 1967 by the Parliamentary Committee (Statsutskottet), which declared that it attached “the highest importance that performance valuation of aid projects come about” (SS 1967:15) as well as by the National Audit Bureau, which in 1969 recommended SIDA “give the highest priority to the task of developing a monitoring system at the agency”

(referred to in RRV 1971:9). The National Audit Bureau furthermore declared that it “finds it remarkable that there are not yet any significant improvement in this respect” (RRV 1971:9). In SIDA’s response to the National Audit Bureau, the agency declared itself “aware of its shortcomings” (RRV 1971:9).

In 1969, SIDA was requested by the government to include “quantitative and qualitative results information from the different aid projects and programs” (RRV 1971:9) in its yearly account (verksamhetsberättelse). SIDA was thus requested in 1969 for the first time to demonstrate results from its operations at an agency level. SIDA now set up an internal working group, which had the task of working with internal organization and effectiveness (RRV 1971). An effort was launched to organize the competence and routines for how to set up SIDA’s results measurement efforts.

It is thus clear that SIDA was under pressure, at the turn of the decennium, to improve its ways of demonstrating results. At the time there existed a broad range of ideas in regard to techniques for how to measure and manage results. The ideas were often seen as a way to improve rational economic thinking and introduce more science-oriented ways of managing public resources. It is clear that prior to the 1971 initiative SIDA had shown very little resistance to the external pressure to improve the way the agency demonstrated results measurement. The ideas were at this time mainly seen as purely attractive for the organization.

4.2 The 1971 Initiative

4.2.1 Preparations

In 1969, SIDA hired a specialist with a previous background in result measurement and cost benefit analyses from the United states and UNITAR (United Nations Institute for Training and Research) to lead, or to become what in this study is called the Designer, of a newly established function at SIDA for results valuation (resultatvärdering). The main task for the new function was to establish management routines and SIDA requirements for contribution management within aid projects and programs, which was the level from where SIDA’s agency “results” needed to be taken.

At first, SIDA felt it needed to recruit experienced staff to the function. An advertisement with the title “SIDA seeks results valuator with a background in social sciences and with experience from the public sector” was published in major Swedish newspapers (SIDA, 1974b:1). A major concern during the

recruitment was to find staff with the right knowledge for the post. Although many of the applicants had a background in planning from the public sector, SIDA had difficulty finding applicants who knew something about results measurement and evaluation. The designer for the 1971 initiative wrote in 1974 that:

All of the applicants responded “no” to the question whether they had studied the fulfillment of public goals and intentions; had, for example, the health sector plans led to increased possibilities to become healthy? (Statement by D1-1 in SIDA 1974b:1)

It was thus difficult to find people with knowledge of aid in general and results measurement or results valuation in particular. This seemed to be a general difficulty for SIDA. Forsse (1999:67) wrote that “It was difficult to recruit qualified staff, with combined professional knowledge and experience and with a ‘reasonable engagement for aid’ to the agency.” The designer stated in a recent interview that:

We felt that we were at the forefront in thinking on results and evaluation. However, we had no idea of how this was done in other sectors. SIDA was formed by a bunch of young people who had no experience of how performance measurements were carried out in other sectors. The experts employed at the agency were mainly thematic specialists, like engineers. No one had an evaluation mindset or a background within that area. (D1-1)

The task of working with results valuation within SIDA was thus a task to be invented and tried out. In 1971, three more staff members were nevertheless hired to the function. In 1971, SIDA also established two new economic and results advisor posts at two of SIDA’s field offices.

In order to develop adequate methods for SIDA, the function investigated how other agencies, specifically USAID, the UN and the World Bank, had set up their results measurement systems (Forsse 1999). As a result of these enquiries, the World Bank’s system, for example, was said to be not sufficiently focused on recipient countries, since their system, the “interest method” (internräntemetoden), in practice required detailed calculations (RRV 1971:47).

During the first year, the unit also conducted an assessment of 60 projects to find out how staff were currently fulfilling the requirements for planning and reporting when managing aid projects. The assessment showed that only half of the projects contained a paragraph about reporting in the agreement and that some form of reporting was handed in by 75% of the projects. The contents of the reporting were mainly focused on costs and activities. About half of the studied projects contained production reporting and only in a few cases was there a reference to goals of the initiative (SIDA 1971:16).

Improving the administrative routines for results measurement was thus seen as a matter of urgency.

4.2.2 The Decision

In 1971, the Initiative for Results Valuation (SIDAs Program för Resultatvärdering)¹⁸ was decided upon by the SIDAs Director General. The initiative was described in a 70-page programme document. In the document, the rationale for the initiative was declared thus:

Knowledge of actual results and effects of development cooperation is of major importance both for a rational public administration and for a knowledge-based planning of new development programmes. This knowledge is important for the building of a goal-oriented society, both in developing and developed countries. (SIDA 1971:1)

In the document, it was stated that “many times when knowledge is not used, this emptiness of knowledge is filled with something else, like grand opinions [...] or prejudices” (SIDA 1971:3); prejudices that were then used for action by individuals and organizations. The need for “results valuation” was thus placed in contrast to merely “guessing and hoping that goals are fulfilled” (SIDA 1971:3), an approach that could lead to negative effects in that aid resources, for example, were only provided to the middle-class and not to the poorest. Results measurement was thus seen as something scientific and objective, in contrast to subjective imagining.

The main purpose of the work was declared as “to systematize already ongoing work with planning within the organization,” and, interestingly, the proposal stated that it “does not in fact imply a new way of thinking” (SIDA 1971:4). The designers of the initiative thus did not believe during the time of its drafting that the results management approach in fact implied a new way of thinking or a “change in mindset,” which is commonly declared a necessity in the original results management ideas.

The aim of the initiative was mainly justified to counteract subjectivism and replace it with objective knowledge of what happens in reality. The main aim was declared as:

To assist developing countries in their follow-up and evaluation of results and effects of their development work and thereby contribute toward a more

¹⁸ The term “resultatvärdering” was not fully described in the 1971 program document. In 1974, the term was described when SIDA launched a new program for results valuation. See section 4.2.4.

effective administration of ongoing operations and to a planning based on reality of new development programmes (SIDA 1971:5).

The main 'users' of the results information were thus declared to be the recipient countries. Results information was seen as beneficial for the recipient countries in their support in planning, remembering, improving, learning, analyzing, observing, acting and decision-making (SIDA 1971:5). A clear focus of the 1971 initiative was that recipients of aid were seen as the main beneficiaries of the initiative. The Manual declared that it believed that since it:

...disapproved a donor oriented way of looking at results, it also reduced the possibility that scarce resources were used to unrealistic and for the recipient's perspective unnessesary monitoring systems. (SIDA 1971:3)

However, although the main aim of the system was that the system would benefit recipients, the Manual also declared that SIDA "as a consequence will benefit from improved access to information for its decisions" (SIDA 1971:4). The following "model" demonstrated the whole working process of results valuation for SIDA as an agency:

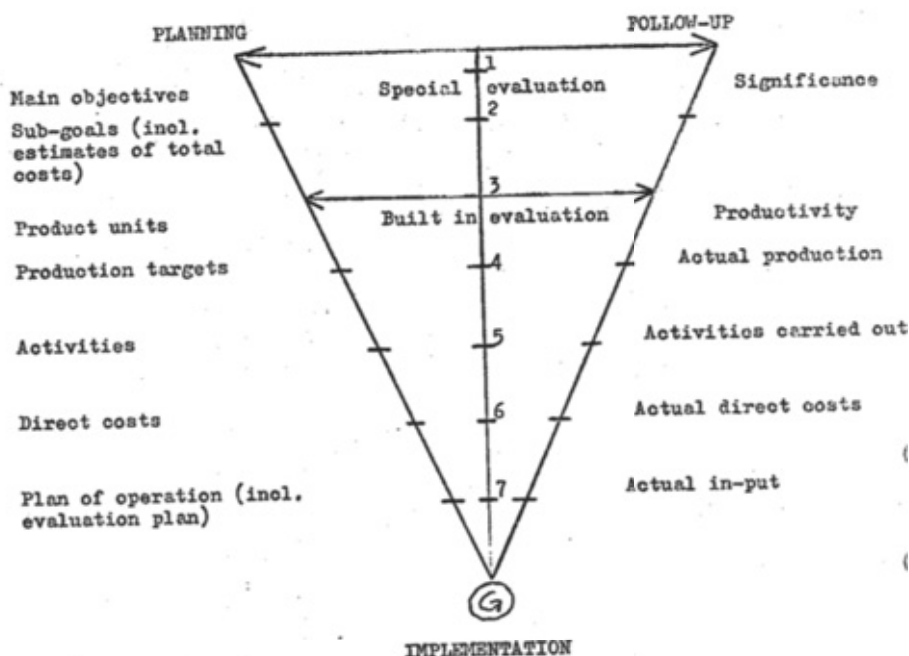


Figure 3: "Systematic approach to evaluation". From SIDA 1971:4 (in Swedish). This English version is from SIDA (1974b:96)

This picture was to demonstrate what a SIDA Programme Officer should do when planning, evaluating and following up results in a development aid project. During the planning part, a hypothesis of the main goal, partial goals, planned production goals, planned activities and planned costs for the project was to be produced. The document declared that the task of filling in the hypothesis was the responsibility of the recipient and that all information was to be based on the recipient's needs (SIDA 1971:9); a perspective that was dominant in Swedish aid during the 1970s (Suneson, Wohlgemuth et al. 1976). When a Programme Officer then needed to process what was stated in the project application, it was said that SIDA was not allowed to make any Swedish adjustments that were not accepted by the recipient (SIDA 1971). The initiative thus had a high level of trust that the "results" and the chain of production toward the results were known by the recipients.

The task of the SIDA Programme Officers was to conduct a so-called "Results Valuation Plan" (i.e. a plan for how to organize the work of gathering results information). The Results Valuation Plan was to declare whether there was a need to do a "special valuation" or whether a "built-in valuation" – in other words, a regular follow-up, quarterly report tied to SIDA's budget and reporting routines – was sufficient to value "results" or effects produced within the project. If a special valuation was decided upon, this was to be done by external parties, for example local research institutes, whereas the task of built-in valuations was to be carried out by the SIDA Programme Officer (SIDA 1971:52).

The planned hypothesis required indicators for the different goal hierarchy levels. During follow-up or when doing the valuation, a calculation was to be done between what was planned and what actually happened. Within the initiative the following guidance was given as to how to calculate the planned and real significance and productivity (SIDA 1971:29)¹⁹:

An assessment of the project's goal fulfillment or benefit must be related to the costs in order to become meaningful for choice, planning, administration and evaluation of a certain activity area. During the planning phase, the following calculation should be done:

$$\text{Planned significance} = \frac{\text{Planned fulfillment of main goals}}{\text{Estimated total costs}}$$

$$\text{Planned productivity} = \frac{\text{Planned production targets}}{\text{Estimated direct costs}}$$

¹⁹ The terms were translated by Dahlgren in 1972 in a memo entitled "A systematic approach to goal analysis and evaluation of socio-economic effects (with special reference to educational programmes)"

During and after the implementation phase, the planned significance and planned productivity could then be compared with the:

$$\text{Real productivity} = \frac{\text{Real production}}{\text{Real direct costs}}$$

$$\text{Real significance} = \frac{\text{Real fulfillment of main/sub goals goal-fulfillment}}{\text{Real direct costs}}$$

The document stated that “It is important to be aware of how these concepts relate to each other and their possibilities and limitations in the practical implementation. One must therefore know that high productivity is typically a precondition for high effectivity”. (SIDA 1971:29)

There was no exact definition in the programme document of what a “result” was, but the technology introduced a goal hierarchy with quantitative indicators for “the main goals,” “partial goals,” “planned production goals,” “planned activities” and “planned costs.” The idea of “results” was thus something that could be calculated by dividing planned goals with real outcomes. The guideline demonstrated that there was a belief that aid production was easily measurable and that recipients, if asked, would be able to provide the statistical data for SIDA’s demonstration of “results” achieved by the project.

However, although the requirements in the documents were quite clear on what was requested during the contribution management process, the programme document for the initiative also raised concerns that numbers and calculations of effectiveness alone could be misleading. The document stated that:

...the main risk with productivity and effectiveness assessments is that the planners’ wish to get numerical calculations might lead to a narrow-minded illustration of the easily quantifiable figures, which might lead to a misleading productivity – and effectiveness description. (SIDA 1971:30)

The document also raised concerns about the possibility of analyzing effects in development cooperation:

It is often very difficult to analyze the effects of a development project, especially when it is difficult to know the cause and effects of a project. (SIDA 1971:57)

Concerns were also raised with regard to the possibility of isolating effects

of Swedish aid interventions:

...this ought to be impossible, since this does not correlate with the above-mentioned “development country focus” (u-landscentrering). The interesting part is to gain knowledge of the effects of the whole project. (SIDA 1971:3)

One might conclude that although the programme document for the initiative in writing declared that it was difficult or even impossible to isolate effects of aid, the actual requirements for information from the recipient organization, as well as the calculations that were requested by the SIDA Programme Officer, were very specific and detailed in nature. One might conclude that the rhetoric in the document contradicted the actual requests to be implemented in practice.

4.2.3 Implementation

The first step of the implementation of the initiative was an internal training course on cost-benefit calculations for all staff members. All experts sent out were also given an orientation on the term “results valuation” (RRV 1974:44). The designers of the initiative were represented in so-called “contribution groups” (insatsgrupper); that is, groups put together at SIDA Headquarters that were to support the handling of a development project/program. In the groups, the designers were to, for example, ensure that a results valuation plan was included in all project assessments. The results valuation function also produced a separate compilation report of a more popular character on results achieved in some projects and programs. Work was also done to integrate the results thinking from the 1971 initiative into an overall methods handbook for SIDA (SIDA 1972).

a. Reactions from Staff

A discussion that arose early within the organization concerned what was actually considered “results” in aid. One of the designers who worked at SIDA Headquarters in 1971 stated in a recent interview that:

There was a constant discussion between [...] precisely this “how will you be able to measure?”, “how will you see the results?” And the whole time, the discussion returned to the abstraction level for the targets being too high to be able to measure. There was a constant discussion concerning the very same issues. (D1-2)

It seemed that staff members often found difficulties with the requirements made in the initiative when they left for work in the field and when they were in direct contact with recipients of aid. Difficulties were then found when trying to apply the theories in the results valuation initiative in

practice. A Programme Officer in a SIDA field office in 1972 for example declared the following:

Less than a year at a post where, according to the job description, I, was partly to engage myself with results valuation has mainly taught me one thing: You have to come down from the thin layer of air of the evaluation theories and engage in hands-on things [...] Very few people have the energy to settle into a new way of thinking when they are trapped in an existence of keeping their heads above the water of current data. This is the case in Tanzania, but also in Sweden. Often, results valuation implies a new way of thinking, which includes more components than previously ... most people realize the importance of this – in principle. The difficulty is to translate this knowledge into practice. (Programme Officer in field (SIDA 1974b:10)).

Another discussion that arose focused on what to do with results that were in fact produced in evaluation reports. A Programme Officer in a SIDA field office in 1971 for example stated, after having read an evaluation report on aid to projects he was managing, that:

I have tried to sift and clean out all “results” in the report and sift out the more reliable ones. I think one can summarily assess them as follows: The report contains little of value for the analysis of the Indian Capacity Development program. It contains little of value that is not already known (Programme Officer in Field (SIDA 1974b:11)).

The Programme Officer thus claimed that, since the “results” were of such a meager character, it was not possible to use the results information to improve the actual implementation of the aid projects. Similarly, another Programme Officer claimed that “searching for ‘results’ is like searching for a needle in a haystack. The best that may be found are trivialities, which at best lead only to more studies” (L1 1974). The comments demonstrate that staff members found it difficult to know what was a “result” and what they were to do with results information.

A common feeling among staff members was that the “results” were mainly produced since SIDA Headquarters required their production. The production of “results” was thus mainly seen as task which would improve accountability for tax payers, and it was seen as leading to a conflict with the solidarity values of aid and hampering the relations with recipients. A Programme Officer in the field, for example, stated the following in a letter to the results valuation function:

Well, I have got two copies of the result valuation instructions. However, SIDA Stockholm produces so many memos that we in the field offices do not have time to read them all. It is the aid work that unfortunately takes some time for us [...] Myself, I administer papers. It feels a bit stale with all these

telexes, letters, memos, etc. when there is so much development work that needs to be done. However, such is the bureaucrat's lot. (L2 1974)

The citation demonstrates that the Programme Officer felt that the requirements within the Results Valuation Initiative were seen as "administration," whereas "aid work" was seen as something else. The regulations were also seen as being difficult to implement due to the political situation in the recipient countries. The following was written in a letter to the designer:

Here in the field, we wonder what they say in Stockholm. So far, we have not received any reaction to our reports; so far, we have not heard anything of interest from Stockholm. How much should we take? I still do not know. But one thing I do know: In this country, there is a systematic mass murder going on. How do the Swedish projects work out, someone might ask. If I am honest, they generally work out very badly. What we are doing here is a sort of artificial respiration – the military service devour almost all the domestic money, but in terms of development projects, the foreign donors volunteer with artificial respiration [...] You in Stockholm are so damn Stockholm-centered. (L3 1977)

The citation shows that actual aid work, for many SIDA employees, was a difficult task and that the reality in the developing countries on many occasions contrasted heavily with the proposed requirements. It also shows that the task of filling in requirements led to conflicts between staff at the Headquarters and in the field.

A few years into implementation, staff members started to claim that the extensive requirements were counterproductive to SIDA's overall goal and the recipient-oriented perspective it tried to apply in the initiative. A director for a SIDA field office wrote the following in a letter to the results valuation function:

Observations on how results valuations affect the Kenyans have given me goose bumps over my whole body. I believe that we ought to master our curiosity, if we are not to participate in a massive "perversion of intelligence" in this part of the world [...] From the Kenyan perspectives, these laboratory experiments are rather uninteresting [...] and [...] the costs of these perversions are great, even though the donors are always more than happy to pay for the costs [...] They also involve large psychological costs, when people who sweat and toil in the fields with scarce resources see how large amounts of money flood into purposeless activities that are not operational. Other costs that should be mentioned are that usually nothing operational can be done until the studies have been conducted (despite the fact that the results in general are so trivial that we could have written the conclusions before even conducting the study). (L4 1974)

It was thus argued that results information seldom, in the end, provided much more information for improved decision-making, but that the studies could in fact in the end be counterproductive and involve different types of costs. It was furthermore claimed that the exercise had led to some unintended consequences:

Due to the search for effects and the need for proving causal relations between A and B, i.e. when aid financing is seen as A and the effects are seen as B, an unproportionally large part of the research and investigation capacity in Kenya is taken up with resolving preposterous questions that only relate to aid. All of this has led to an evaluation fatigue in the Kenyan administration. (L4 1974)

The SIDA director thus claimed that due to the impossibility of actually clarifying and explaining the causal relations in what had led to what, the exercise had led to an “evaluation fatigue” among recipients.

Another internal debate considered that politicians did not in the end show interest in results information. The designer for the 1971 initiative wrote an article in SIDA’s internal paper RAPPORT, where he claimed that there was a general lack of interest in Sweden concerning “results” and that much more time was devoted only to planning. He asked:

Do the politicians know that there are differences between plans and outcomes? Are they really interested in finding out the actual results and the effects of past societal efforts? Or do they live in the comfortable – albeit naive – belief that one can equate the plan and the actual outcome? (Statement by D1-1 in SIDA 1974b:116)

However, in the same article, the designer of the initiative thus claimed that it was as yet far too early to rule out results measurement as an idea, since it had not yet been tried out.

At later stages of implementation of the initiative, staff members also proposed solutions as to how the difficulties could be combated. A Programme Officer in a field office, for example, proposed that the staff needed to change perspectives; result valuation should be done primarily to support the recipients. The Programme Officer thus recommended other staff members to follow some practical tips:

- a) Do not go all out when talking about how to break down goals to results; rather, ask “normal” questions, such as what the kids will do after they finish school.
- b) Use the word “valuation” as little as possible; rather, ask questions such as “how is it going in the project?”
- c) Discuss what the report says (i.e. its contents) rather than check whether the reports have been provided in time.

d) Talk with people, both the implementers and at SIDA, about the project so that both become more interested in knowing the results of the project (Programme Officer in Field (SIDA 1974b:10)).

A few years into implementation, one could say that some staff members had become more positive towards the exercise and tried to find solutions for how to improve the implementation of the exercise.

b. Critique from External Audits

During 1971–1974, several audits were performed on SIDA (RRV 1971, 1974a, 1974b; RR 1973). The *raison d'être* for the great interest from external auditors in examining SIDA's operations at this time might have been that external auditors at this time saw a need to understand and develop knowledge regarding how development cooperation worked in practice. In addition, a SIDA internal follow-up was carried out in 1974 with regard to the initiative. The SIDA internal follow-up (1974) showed that the routines for SIDA internal methods and instruments for planning, assessment and implementation of contributions had improved and that education of SIDA's Programme Officers had taken place.

Whereas the reports declared that the initiative had led to improvements such as that results thinking was now incorporated in project planning to a larger extent (SIDA 1974a Annex 1:3) and that key documents were now in place to a larger extent (RR 1973) most of the findings indicate low fulfillment of the programme requirements as well as low compliance with the task. In 1974, for example, the National Audit Bureau found that during 1971–1973, SIDA had only conducted 43 special valuations and that less than 10% of Sida's project portfolio had in fact followed the rule to conduct special valuations (which was a rule that SIDA Programme Officers needed to follow if effects were not traceable in the ordinary reporting) (RRV 1974:39). The audit also claimed that the contents of the special valuations were difficult to understand (RRV 1974). It was thus concluded that the information in the incoming reports, in the end, was difficult to use for decision-making purposes (SIDA 1974a: Annex 1:3). Due to the inadequacy of results information, it was claimed that it was not possible to assess whether budget control and reporting actually occurred in reality (RRV 1974:39).

A common discussion topic raised in the audits was SIDA's notion that results valuation should primarily benefit the recipients. In general, the audits pointed out that this was a good approach. The Parliamentary Audit in 1973, for example, states that "It is an established principle in the aid sector that results valuation is carried out in cooperation with the recipient

countries” (RR 1973:50). However, it was claimed that the initiative so far had not focused sufficiently on supporting the recipient countries in their results measurement and evaluation efforts (SIDA 1977:2; RRV 1974). However, the Parliamentary Audit Report (RR 1973) claimed that the recipient-oriented view could be a factor explaining why SIDA staff were not complying with the requests in the initiative. The audit declared that:

The principle is fulfilled to such an extent that also results valuation is seen to be the responsibility of the recipient. (RR 1973:50).

A common denominator in the auditors’ criticism was that they proposed that SIDA should place more value on *SIDA’s contribution* to the aid interventions (RRV 1974). It was claimed that goal fulfillment toward the recipients’ needs was not to be considered the same as fulfilling the Swedish development policy goals (RRV 1971). A common recommendation was that SIDA was not adequately monitoring the agency’s outputs (RRV 1974: 0:15; RR 1973:49; RRV 1974: 0:2). The National Audit Bureau (1974) for example stated that:

There still remains, however, the need to monitor exactly what SIDA does. The 1971 Initiative does not differ sufficiently clear between the monitoring of the development project/programme and follow-up of SIDA’s results. There is a tendency to follow up the last (or the one contributing to it) but not the latter [...] At present, virtually no serious follow-up of this kind is conducted. (RRV 1974:74)

In general, the audits noted that the task of results management was complex and difficult for the public sector (see for example RR 1973:13). Also, in general, every audit also declared that SIDA was surrounded by even more difficult circumstances. In 1974, for example, the National Audit Bureau stated that:

The National Audit Bureau is fully aware of the specific difficult circumstances surrounding SIDA. A rapidly increasing aid budget of course creates problems in a complicated policy area as this, in which there is no previous experience of in the public sector. (RRV 1974:1)

In both the National Audit Bureau Report from 1971 and the National Audit Bureau Report from 1974 proclamations were made regarding the difficulty and inconsistency of breaking down results from the government’s goals for development cooperation. Similarly, the Parliamentary Audit (1973) also claimed that that at least for some parts of SIDA’s portfolio it might therefore not be possible to attribute or isolate effects of Swedish funding (RR 1973).

However, despite the typical comment made in audit reports that it was difficult to trace results or effects of aid, a common recommendation to

SIDA was still that SIDA should calculate and report on results. The National Audit Bureau (RRV 1974:9) for example noted that in its project documents SIDA had “sketchily formulated, inadequately defined and documented goal formulations” and therefore stated that:

The National Audit Bureau has previously on various occasions brought up the flawed reporting system at SIDA and finds it remarkable that there are not yet any tangible improvements in this respect (RRV 1974:9).

Generally, the audits criticized SIDA for inadequate implementation of its results valuation program. Reasons for this were said to be the way SIDA *interpreted* the political intentions in government goals (RRV 1974:0:2), staff knowledge about the rules and regulations agreed upon (RR 1973:48), that SIDA did not have a functional evaluation and alternative planning system for its programs (RRV 1974b:0:9) and that the evaluation function had not been sufficiently valued within the agency (RR 1973).

In general, the audits thus expressed the view that the reason the results initiative encountered difficulties was difficulties in the “implementation”. The Parliamentary Audit (1973) for example argued that SIDA’s results valuation system had a “sound theoretical foundation” (RR 1973:48) but that the problems could mainly be blamed on its application within the agency. The audit stated that:

As shown in the audit, results valuation at SIDA has several shortcomings. These, however, do not apply to the system design, but its application (RR 1973:28).

All the audits also recommended that SIDA develop more systematic methods (RRV 1974b: 0:15), a system (RR 1973:0:2; RRV 1971:12) or a strategy (RRV 1974:0:2)²⁰ for results measurement. The common recommendation was thus to be more specific and increase control with regard to the task.

c. SIDA’s Official Response

When analyzing SIDA’s responses to the different audits, one can note that SIDA in general provided answers concerning three topics: a) quantitative measurements, b) the recipient-oriented perspective, and c) that more resources were needed for the task. I exemplify the type of comments that SIDA responds with below.

²⁰ The strategy was to be based on an investigation of the relationship between the donor’s actions and how these actions affect change processes in developing countries.

In SIDA's answers concerning how it saw the audit recommendations to deliver quantitative measurements, it is possible to note that the agency officially strongly retained the opinion that it was not possible to deliver quantitative measurements of "results" and effects produced. As a response to the National Audit Bureau in 1971, SIDA for example declared that it was "unrealistic to expect a quantitative effectiveness assessment" (RRV 1972:43 PM8). Similarly, as a comment to the National Audit Bureau 1974, the agency stated that:

In its analysis of effects of aid, the National Audit Bureau argues that it should be possible to trace the effects of what Sweden has contributed toward in the development projects supported by Sweden. The Board believes that this is hardly possible. (SIDA 1975:4)

A viewpoint put forward by SIDA was that the auditors had not sufficiently understood the political reality and the environment in which the agency operated. As a response to the National Audit Bureau 1974, SIDA for example declared that:

The role of the National Audit Bureau as an auditor of the effectiveness of governmental activities has led to a particular perspective in its analysis of SIDA: The National Audit Bureau has come to see its primary objective as evaluating the effectiveness and rationality of the activities, and the National Audit Bureau has come to believe that it may more or less entirely disregard the political environment and reality in which SIDA works (SIDA 1975:2).

SIDA thus claimed that the auditors had not understood the political reality in which SIDA operated. In SIDA's comments, SIDA thus very strongly held on to the solidarity rationale and that its main role was the accountability relations with recipient. It is possible to note that SIDA also "knew" that the agency had the political support of the government for this perspective. As a response to the National Audit Bureau's 1974 audit on Tanzania, SIDA for example declared that:

SIDA and the National Audit Bureau have made different judgments regarding the government's intentions with their policies concerning what could be expected in terms of the recipient country's ability to plan, to report and to know the effects of Swedish aid (SIDA 1975:2).

This comment demonstrates that SIDA seemed to be quite sure that the agency had the government's support in regards to the number of regulations that SIDA could and should impose on recipient organisations.

However, one aspect that SIDA agreed with in the comments provided by the audits is that the agency should be better at reporting outputs at the agency level. SIDA declared the following in its response:

What would be possible and desirable is to determine the expected and actual results of SIDA's work and then seek to assess for example the speed in handling resources, the quality of the staff or the integration of Swedish aid in the recipient country's own efforts. (SIDA 1974d:1)

One can thus conclude that, after a few years of implementation of the first results initiative, SIDA changed its position toward arguing more directly that it was difficult to report on "results" and "effects" in development aid projects. The agency strongly argued against quantitative results reporting and the possibility to isolate effects of aid projects. However, the agency agreed with the audits' comments that the agency should report more on the agency's own outputs.

4.2.4 A New Programme Document for Results Valuation in 1974

As a consequence of both the difficulties in implementation and the external critique received during 1971–1974, foremost by external audits, and the introduction of the country programming system which more than before emphasized the ownership question, SIDA launched a new Programme for Results Valuation in 1974 (SIDA 1974a). The 1974 program, however, was said to be an addition, while still forming part of the 1971 initiative. It was noted that the ideas from the 1971 initiative "have essentially been incorporated into the SIDA methods handbook and been in use for almost three years" (SIDA 1974a:3). The programme was formulated in a 20-page document.

The declared aim of the new programme was to: a) support the partner countries with their result measurement ambitions, b) contribute toward a more effective aid through SIDA, and c) contribute toward improved knowledge among the Swedish public and Parliament of the long-term effects of aid as well as the effectiveness and results of aid. In comparison to the 1971 initiative, the latter two aims were new. The following picture illustrated the different aims:²¹

²¹ The English translation of the concepts in this picture: Mottagarlandet = Recipient Country. Sverige = Sweden. Mål = Goal. Mottagarlandets hela utvecklingssamarbete = the recipient country's whole development aid support. Delområde som stöds av svenskt bistånd = partial area supported by Swedish Aid. Bistånd genom Sida = Aid through Sida. Statsmakter, myndigheter, allmänhet = the state, public agencies, public.

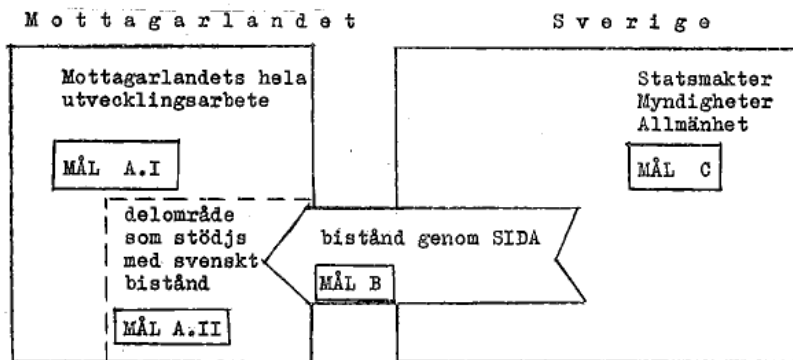


Figure 3. The goals in SIDA's results valuation programme 1974. Source: SIDA (1974a:5)

This picture demonstrates that in 1974 SIDA had added and made a distinction between what results measurement meant for them in Sweden and what it meant in recipient countries. There was now a goal both for the aid delivery process and also for the communication of results to the Swedish public. It was declared that results information was to be used both for management but also for reporting purposes (SIDA 1974a:1). Another difference from the programme document from 1971 was that SIDA had now removed all requirements for quantitative “results” assessment. A requirement in the 1974 programme document was that a narrative description of the goal hierarchy (i.e. the guidance) no longer required a certain logical framework or quantitative indicators on how to calculate production and effectiveness in aid interventions.

The programme document also included a description of the word “resultatvärdering.” It stated that “värdering” or “valuation” was different from the English word “evaluation,” since it focused specifically on the valuation of “results”.

In 1974 a new director was appointed to the Evaluation Unit. During the years 1974–1978, the Evaluation Division’s attention moved from results measurement per se to a focus on evaluation and qualitative reporting.²² The division also produced other documents to inform on results in narrative text. It seems that the routines and principles established in the 1974 Programme became institutionalized. It seems that there was no longer much

²² A specific reporting series “Meddelande från Utredningsbyrån” was, for example, produced to inform about specific results and evaluations in aid projects/programmes. During the period 1972–1976, 27 evaluation reports were produced. All reports can be found at www.bistandsdebatten.se.

resistance against the approach. In the archives I find no comments from staff on the initiative. In a recent interview with the then new director, he reflected on this time, declaring that “when there was nagging from journalists or the Foreign Affairs Committee that aid did not produce any result, I came with my bundle of narrative documents and gave these to them” (D1-2). It is thus clear that the focus on the quantitative had moved to the qualitative and that there was now a greater interest in narrative evaluations rather than performance measurement per se.

Time and effort was thus now put into building trust and relations with politicians and journalists, where the focus was to inform more generally about aid work. It could thus be stated that after 1974 the main discussion concerned aid work in the field rather than the development of systematic results measurement tools (SIDA 1977). It is clear that the focus was now rather on recipient relations. In a recent interview, the director of SIDA’s Evaluation Unit in 1974 reflected on how SIDA considered its use and adaptation:

We sent one of the evaluators to the U.S. to participate in the first course on “logical framework” ... and he came home, we went through if we were to use the method and deliberately chose **not** to do that because it was not WE who should do it. If anyone was to use the method, it was the aid recipients. It was completely crazy; if we were to introduce some kind of “logical framework” for someone else [...] it did not match up with the view that development takes place in the beneficiary countries and not in Sweden. (D1-2)

So, it is possible to note that SIDA at this time believed that the Logical Framework was a tool to be used not by donors, but by the recipients. One could thus say that the solidarity rationale was used by the agency as an argument not to adopt a technology such as the Logical Framework.

However, a new discussion that arose during this time period was also in regard to the cost efficiency of results valuations per se. In a SIDA publication, a rule of thumb (tumregel) declared that projects of an “experimental character” could allocate 5-10% of the project budget to evaluations. In other, more normal, project cases, perhaps 1-2% of the project budget was “more than sufficient” (SIDA 1976:32). It is thus clear that SIDA saw that aid funding should be allocated to implementation of aid programmes rather than to control activities.

4.3 Summary of the 1971 Initiative

I have in this chapter described how, during the 1960s, in the aftermath of the Second World War, both public development aid as well as results measurement and management became institutionalized ideas within

Swedish public administration. Ever since then, it has been taken for granted that the Swedish government will provide official support to deprived countries. Also, ever since then, the ideas of results measurement and management have been the dominating ideas for how organizations should demonstrate their effectiveness. One might say that SIDA, from its formation in 1965, was required to respond to demands within both the so-called solidarity rationale and the effectiveness rationale. The agency was then given the government mandate to respond to the perception of Sweden as a country that conducted actions of solidarity for people in need in other deprived countries.

One could say that since development aid during the 1960s had focused primarily on the solidarity rationale, the main pressure on SIDA prior to the 1971 initiative was based on calls within the effectiveness rationale, and primarily on the need to improve reporting on “results”. The need to report results had already been raised in the first Government Aid Bill, which declared results measurement to be a “major task” (Gov 1962:100:5). Back in 1966, the Parliamentary Audit had commented that the measures taken so far within SIDA had been of a “very limited character” (RR 1966:10); the National Audit Bureau had stated in 1969 that it was “remarkable that there were not yet any significant improvements when it came to the development of a monitoring system within SIDA.” (RRV 1971:9) As a consequence, from 1969 SIDA was tasked in the Government Guidelines to provide quantitative and qualitative results information from different aid projects annually.

I have in this chapter shown that the need to demonstrate “results” prior to the 1971 initiative was echoed by many actors in SIDA’s external environment. However, the problem statement raised more than the need to demonstrate “results”. Problem statements also addressed questions about the fact that SIDA staff were seen as driven by a “strong ideological motivation and rather considered themselves politically active” (Forsse 1999:68). So the perceived problems that drove the initiation of the initiative concerned not only results measurement but also a suspicion of whether staff were driven primarily by solidarity motives and not sufficiently by their role as professional civil servants. Seen like this, it is easy to understand the attraction of the ideas of results measurement and management at this point in time with regard to SIDA’s needs to demonstrate effectiveness of its actions.

Prior to the 1971 initiative, SIDA did not officially resist the pressure to improve the way the agency demonstrated results measurement. This was probably so since the agency did not yet have any previous experience from implementing the ideas. SIDA’s action of employing a specialist with

experience from the United States and the UN to lead the initiative could be seen as positive action and which would increase its legitimacy. The United States and the UN were at this time seen as forerunners of knowledge of the ideas of results measurement and management.

The main aim of the programme was to “systematize and organize already ongoing work” within SIDA. This was expected on the first hand to “assist developing countries in their follow-up and evaluation of effects” (SIDA 1971:5). As a secondary purpose it was believed that the programme would also “contribute to a more effective administration within SIDA” (SIDA 1971:5). The recipients of aid were thus seen as the main beneficiaries of the initiative.

Although there is no exact definition in the programme document of what a “result” is, there was an idea that “results” was something that could be calculated by comparing planned goals with real outcomes. To pick up and know “results” from aid projects was seen as something relatively easy and something that just existed “out there”.

When the initiative was introduced and implemented in the organization, many practical problems arose, which were imposed by questions such as: a) what are “results” in development operations? b) at which level should the results be measured? c) in which of SIDA’s thematic areas is it easier or more difficult to measure results? d) whose results – the donor’s or the recipients? e) what to do with the results that are produced? The costs involved in the exercise were questioned and it was claimed that the exercise was counterproductive for the recipients.

During 1971–1974, SIDA’s results valuation approach was widely examined, first and foremost by external audits. It was found that there had been a very low compliance rate with regard to the regulations. Only 10% of the project portfolio had conducted the mandatory special results valuations and it was claimed that concrete support to the recipient countries was almost completely absent (SIDA 1974a; RRV 1974). Although all the audits supported the recipient-oriented perspective and declared results valuation to be a difficult task to undertake in the public sector, and specifically in a complex environment such as development cooperation, a repeated recommendation to SIDA was that the agency needed to do better in its reporting specifically on what SIDA was doing (i.e. outputs), and to a greater extent try to isolate how SIDA had contributed to effects in the development projects.

It is possible to note that it was only then, after having gained some experience from implementation, that SIDA, in its responses, officially contradicted the different claims made by the external audits. In its

responses SIDA strongly held on to and built its identity around the recipient-oriented approach and the solidarity rationale. SIDA was at this time confident that it also had the full support of the Government for this perspective. One could thus conclude that it was only after having tested the results measurement and management ideas in practice that the agency was actually able to define and defend its role and mandate as a public development aid agency.

The heavy regulations on quantitative calculations and proving causality were abolished in 1974, after only three years of operation of the 1971 initiative, when a new programme for results valuation was introduced. By then, very few staff members had in reality complied with the regulations (10% according to SIDA 1974a). The detailed requirements for calculations were replaced in 1974 by a greater focus on qualitative, narrative descriptions on how change is predicted to happen and how it has taken place in the SIDA-supported development projects. Another change in the 1974 programme was that the Swedish Parliament and public also were seen as beneficiaries of the programme. A further aim of the 1974 initiative was that SIDA was now to demonstrate outputs of its own agency-wide operations. This demonstrates that the agency had now taken on a role as a public agency that had two accountabilities: the recipients and the Swedish tax payers. In 1974 SIDA also established working routines within the contribution management process, which included an analysis of results during planning and follow-up. These working routines have remained as working practices within Sida ever since, i.e. one could say that a consequence of the 1971 initiative was the institutionalization of working practices for contribution management as well as the idea that results measurement should also be done for the Swedish public and not only benefit recipients of aid.

5 SIDA Project/Program Follow-Up System (1981–1987)

This chapter deals with SIDA's second results initiative: the "SIDA Project/Program Follow-Up System," which was launched in 1981. The initiative aimed to systematize and produce an annual manual Catalogue with agency-wide "results" to which SIDA had contributed. Catalogues were published in 1984 and 1987 whereafter the initiative died out. The chapter follows the same structure as the previous chapter. In other words, the first part examines the external environment prior to the launch of the initiative. The second part of the chapter deals with what happened within the organization and in its environment when the initiative was launched and implemented.

5.1 Environmental Demand

5.1.1 An Ambiguity between "Solidarity" and "Effectiveness"

With regards to Swedish aid, it could be said that the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s were surrounded by ambiguity in terms of which ideals to follow when handling aid. Both the Commission of Enquiry (SOU 1977:13) as well as the subsequent Aid Bill (Gov 1977/78:135) pursued programmatic aid instead of project aid, and promoted "ownership" by the recipients. The documents also pursued increased harmonization among donors since it was felt that recipient countries faced difficulties when they were required to implement "conflicting demands and requirements from several donors" (SOU 1977:13:149). There was also continuous support for and emphasis on "solidarity" as the main motive for Swedish public development aid. The Aid Bill (Gov 1977/78:135) declared that "the need for solidarity with poor countries constitutes a sufficient motive for Swedish aid. From this follows that this motive is superior to other motives which can be related to Sweden's aid efforts" (Gov 1977/78:135:20). Odén (1984) argues that during this time the so-called "Swedish model"²³ was codified.

²³ According to Odén (1984), the Swedish model implied that all aid was provided as grants and that country programming was the main technique. The Swedish model, according to Odén, was based on the values that donors and recipients were two equal states and that every recipient country plans its own development, including funding coming from aid.

However, simultaneously with the continuous strong support for the solidarity rationale and more recipient-oriented ways of handling aid, both public development aid and results measurement and management reforms had now been pursued for more than a decade, implying that the solidarity rationale was again being increasingly challenged. Throughout the 1980s, a neoliberal wave in politics, economics and management increasingly came to dominate not only aid politics but also society at large. The “ownership” imperative in aid, which was dominated by a view that politics was domestic and in principle the recipient state’s affair, was challenged by a view of a more supply-driven “donorship” view of aid (Best 2014). The role of international aid was now increasingly seen as a way to influence politics and economics by setting conditions and requirements for change. Within the aid community, it was also realized that individual aid projects seldom became sustainable in the long term if the macro-economic situation in the developing countries was not somewhat stable (Odén 1984).

As a consequence, there was now an “explosion of interest” in aid evaluation (Lancaster 2008). All the main donors now set up evaluation units and began amassing material that was used to “synthesize” findings from evaluations (Cracknell 1988). The OECD/DAC established an expert group on Aid Evaluation, which had the mandate to strengthen the evaluation activities of DAC members and recipient countries (Winkel 1993). Evaluation findings, but perhaps more so media reporting, had shown that some aid projects had led to “failures”. There was thus an increased pressure on donors to take responsibility for aid funding leading to “results” (Andersson et al. 1984). Calls were thus made for more effective methods and ways of managing aid. Attempts were made, for example, to push for economic stability in recipient countries through increasing conditionality and macro-economic dialogue, for example in the form of so-called Structural Adjustment Programmes (Odén 2006).

In the beginning of the 1980s the ideological pendulum had swung back to ideas of more donorship and control in aid. Odén (1984:17) claims that Sweden at this time became a donor in the “mainstream of OECD donors”, implying that Sweden now became more focused on control and donorship than on the ownership principles. As a consequence of this changed perspective, Edgren (1986) noted that:

There was a general tightening of rules, methods and stipulations in agreements, a development which many recipients viewed as a growing bureaucratic stranglehold on an aid flow, which up to then had been very smooth and flexible. (Edgren 1986:50)

So at the end of 1970s the solidarity rationale was being questioned and solutions for how to counteract it involved the introduction of stricter

management of aid. Results measurement and management ideas again became attractive solutions.

5.1.2 Reflections and Lessons Learned

A difference in comparison to the discussions that took place prior to the 1971 initiative is that there was now some experience to go back to regarding how implementation of results measurement and management had succeeded during the previous decade. As part of the preparations for the 1978 Aid Bill, reflections were made both by SIDA in a separate memo (SIDA 1977), as well as by the government, on “what went wrong” and what needed to be improved if taking on board results measurement and management reforms again.

Among reflections made by SIDA on why the 1971 initiative did not reach its full potential in implementation, one topic addressed was the internal deficiencies, such as that the agency did not sufficiently focus on and prioritize results valuation as such, which implied that the aims of the initiative never came to dominate SIDA’s operative work. It was noted that: “No other function except the results valuation function had had a responsibility for the fulfillment of the initiative on this point” (SIDA 1977:2).

It was also noted that the agency did not focus on measuring SIDA’s outputs and that the main focus was on “results” valuation on the part of the recipient. However, in contrast, it was also noted that the initiative was difficult to implement due to the fact that it had been evident that “recipient countries are not necessarily interested in receiving support for follow-up and evaluation work” (SIDA 1977:2) and that this fact was not sufficiently addressed in the discussions. The SIDA memo reasoned about the reasons for the lack of recipient interest in the following way:

Since the results of the follow-ups and evaluations often show a more realistic picture than planned, they are easily perceived as negative. This applies all the way through, from all the authorities in the recipient country to all authorities in Sweden. Everyone is talking about results valuation but nobody really wants to suffer from doing one. (SIDA 1977:2)

One of the reasons for the low interest was that results valuations could provide an unrealistic picture of reality and that this was something that the public administration in most cases wanted to avoid. It was furthermore stated that SIDA’s task was to maintain a positive public opinion for aid and that results valuation then automatically implied that there was an incentive only to provide the “success stories” of aid projects. The SIDA memo thus argued that if SIDA would also disseminate information about the real

difficulties in development, this could lead to a “catastrophic situation”, and in turn to a “confidence crisis,” since the Swedish public would then think that aid had only led to failures (SIDA 1977:3).

The memo stressed that the main practical goal in development aid was the continuous pressure to disburse funds at SIDA. It stated that:

As long as SIDA’s main problem is to get rid of the reservations and allocations, monitoring and evaluations are not what responsible officials prioritize. Evaluations do not draw any resources, which supports increased utilization of appropriations. In most cases, attention to goals, side effects and results “delay” the implementation of the projects. (SIDA 1977:2)

This citation shows that the unofficial “disbursement goal” is aid. The SIDA memo also brings up the encountered difficulties with results measurement and management as such. The memo stated that:

The term results valuation assumes that it is possible to identify the results of a particular activity, in this case Swedish aid. A first step in the process must thus be to define the causal relationships and the impact of aid in order to then put these effects in relation to the development goals indicated above. The big problem here is that results of aid are typically not what they appear to be. It is an exception rather than a rule that effects can be read in the precise area where aid was put in – if it is at all possible to know where aid was put in. (SIDA 1977:5)

So, in the official comments made by SIDA, the agency again raised the difficulty of actually knowing the causal sequence of events and measure “results” within development aid; i.e. it argued that there was a “model problem”.

The government’s position as well as the overall public debate during this period can be declared as being highly supportive of the view that results measurement is difficult. This viewpoint was also pursued by the government in the Commission of Enquiry (SOU 1977:13). The Commission of Enquiry stated for example that:

Swedish aid is typically combined with resources from other financiers. It is therefore neither possible nor necessary to separate the direct effects of Swedish aid (SOU 1977:13:218).

The Commission held the view that results valuation should to a greater extent be focused on the broader effects to which Swedish aid was contributing, rather than trying to value exactly what aid funding had resulted in (SOU 1977:13:218). Both the Commission of Enquiry and the Aid Bill (1977/78:135) provided broad moral support to SIDA’s efforts to work with results measurement and management. In the Commission of Enquiry it was, for example, noted that “SIDA had devoted sufficient efforts to measure results from SIDA’s own operations” (SOU 1977:13:270). SIDA

was, in comparison to other state agencies, perceived as an agency which had an “unusually good ability to adapt and change their operations and role” (SOU 1978:61:86).²⁴ During this period, SIDA, in comparison with other donor agencies, was seen as a flexible agency, with a planning system that was process-oriented, efficient and effective due to its design principles, planning style and organizational culture (Forsse 1985).

However, even though it is clear from the lessons learned and reflections made from the previous period that the discussions that took place prior to the 1981 initiative were reflectively critical towards results measurement and management ideas, it was also noted that there was a need to “find new and more adequate methods to assess the effects of aid” (SIDA 1977:4). However, as a solution to overcome the difficulties it was held to be important for SIDA to be “honest and self-critical” (SIDA 1977:4) when it came to demonstrating failures and difficulties with aid projects, although this was “less common in a Swedish public agency” (SIDA 1977:4). It was noted that this approach “could lead to increased trust in the future” (SIDA 1977:4). There was thus a continued hope and optimism that results measurement and management reforms would be beneficial for the agency in the future.

Sundström (2003) argued that the same picture, i.e the existence of both increased criticism but at the same time a continued optimism for results measurement and management reforms, can be found if analyzing the discussions that took place within public administration reforms in the beginning of the 1980s. The previous difficulties with implementing the reform led to a more careful approach being adopted when trying out new attempts within programme budgeting.

5.1.3 External Critique and Action

Edgren (1986) argued that there was, in the early 1980s, a hardening public opinion toward Swedish aid. Sweden had now provided support to development aid projects for over a decade and there was an increased scrutiny of whether funding had led to any effects. Andersson et al. (1984) reflected in the following way:

If one were to take a tour of Africa and Asia today and examine what had happened to the Swedish projects, the results would in many cases be depressing. Buildings have fallen into disrepair, there are no teachers in the schools, vehicles are broken, machines are all rusty. Swedish resources were

²⁴ SOU 1978:61:86 referring to a consultancy report written by the Scandinavian Institutes for Administrative Research (SIAR).

transferred, but short-term efficiency did not always lead to the desired long-term effects. (Andersson et al. 1984:55)

The statement shows that arguments of failures which were used to demonstrate “results” from the past decade put pressure on the need to do better this time. Andersson et al. (1984:13) declared that the result valuation exercises in the 1970s were presented as a “waste of time and energy” and an “unproductive intellectual exercise” and that there was at the beginning of the 1980s a common “disappointment that things did not really work out as planned”.

Odén (1984) described how, in the public debate, the ways of handling aid during the 1960s and 1970s were typically seen as “the ‘flower-power’ period of aid” – a period during which “blue-eyed aid enthusiasts threw around aid money in the form of cheques without any concern for where it ended up”. There was thus renewed criticism that aid bureaucrats were not controlling aid funds sufficiently well.

According to Edgren (1986), this hardening public opinion led to more control and an atmosphere of scared officials within the aid administration. Edgren (1986) noted that:

Politicians and mass media pinpointed a wide range of aspects of suspected inefficiency, including failure to attain such mutually inconsistent goals as reaching the poor, while giving Swedish firms an inside track in competitive bidding. As a result, SIDA’s technical staff became more and more wary, to the point that an endless series of technical missions were sent out to appraise a project when nobody dared make a final decision. (Edgren 1986:47)

So, according to Edgren (1986), the fear of not being able to show “results” also increased the demands for further results measurement efforts, as well as for aid administration for example using consultants to a greater extent.

The Aid Bill (1977/78:135) again emphasized that SIDA should place a larger focus on reporting on the agency’s “outputs”. It declared that:

In accordance with National Audit Bureau we would like to emphasize the importance that SIDA’s results valuation also includes an evaluation of SIDA’s own role in aid cooperation. SIDA is responsible for how Swedish aid funds are used. A system-oriented data collection would facilitate SIDA to implement a pure SIDA-oriented monitoring. At the same time this would facilitate the possibilities to provide comprehensive and meaningful information about Swedish aid utilization (1977/78:135:271).

The solution promoted by the Aid Bill was to establish a “system-oriented data collection” for “results.”

As a consequence of the Aid Bill (Gov 1977/78:135), a discussion on results valuation arose within the Parliamentary Subcommittee for Foreign Affairs.

In the next two Budget Bills,²⁵ results valuation was brought up as a topic. In both the 1979 Budget Bill and the 1980 Budget Bill, requests were made by Parliamentary representatives from the Conservative Party to do more with regard to result measurement in aid. The motions from 1979²⁶ requested that a special expert analysis be carried out on the effects and effectiveness of Swedish bilateral aid. In the 1980 Budget Bill, the topic was brought up in two different motions,²⁷ requesting that more information was provided to the Swedish public on the effects of aid and that a review was made concerning the possibilities of conducting an effective results valuation of Swedish aid.

However, it is clear that the Subcommittee for Foreign Affairs supported SIDA, since it answered both requests in a similar way; it declared that it believed that SIDA, in accordance with what was said in the 1978 Budget Bill, was already doing enough with regard to the topic. The motions were thus rejected in both years.

However, despite this support, SIDA made an attempt to operationalize the aid goals in its 1980 Country Overview (SIDA 1980). In a report to the government, SIDA tried to separate the results from aid projects and programmes from the 1970s in SIDA's programme countries and present alternative ways to work with aid in each country. However, during the exercise, numerous discussions arose on the practical difficulties of how to define the link between results valuation and an operative conclusion (Edgren 1984). In the Country Oversight, SIDA declared that the government's goals were not precise enough to allow for a full assessment of objective results of Swedish aid. Subsequently, SIDA requested precision in the government's goals (SIDA, 1980).

In the upcoming Budget Bill (UU 1980/81:20:32), the government commented on the critique raised by SIDA on the need for more precision in the government's goals. However, the government did not agree and stated that:

The current aid goals, in the eyes of the committee, provide sufficient guidance for the aid agencies, while also being flexible with regard to the contents of the aid. (UU 1980/81:20:32)

Birgegård (1984:29) argued that the main difficulties with the Country Oversight were within the Board of SIDA, where the political parties were

²⁵ UU 1978/79:27; UU 1979/1980:20.

²⁶ Motion 1978/1979:1774 by Joakim Ollén et al. (m).

²⁷ Motion 1979/1980:359 Mårten Werner et al. (m) and Motion 1127 Gunnar Oskarsson et al. (m).

represented and which during the exercise “turned into anarchy” ending in a “clear and conclusive fiasco,” due to its inability to present a unified front.

In sum, prior to the 1981 initiative, conclusions had been drawn on the reasons for the failure of the 1971 initiative. Whereas there was an increased awareness and criticism of results measurement and management techniques, one can also see that there was a hope that the ideas would be beneficial, this time and if better applied. Since aid programmes had by this time been up and running for a decade, there was a hardening public opinion against the need to demonstrate effects of these programmes. In 1980, SIDA made an attempt to demonstrate agency-wide results in the Country Oversight. One can assume that the failure of this attempt in combination with the hardening public opinion against aid triggered the agency to undertake further results measurement efforts.

5.2 The 1981 Initiative

5.2.1 Preparations

The need to do something bolder to be able to demonstrate “results” was first raised in SIDA’s 1980 Action Plan for Evaluation. It stated that “SIDA has an acute lack of systematically compiled information of results achieved in SIDA-supported projects and programmes” (SIDA 1980:10). It was noted that if, for example, the Director General were to receive a question from a journalist or a Parliamentary representative about results achieved within the agency, he/she would not be able to answer the question. The vision for what SIDA needed to develop in order to be able to answer this question included a system which would make it possible to provide answers both on results achieved in different sectors as well as in different countries supported by SIDA. Moreover, the system would need to be able to provide answers such as “of the 37 projects in which SIDA has participated, x number have fulfilled their objectives” (SIDA 1980:10). The memo noted that organizations such as IBRD and USAID had already developed these types of systems. It is thus clear that a solution identified by SIDA in order to be able to respond to external demands was to develop a system which would “systematize results” produced by the agency.

In 1981, SIDA’s Director General tasked a SIDA Programme Officer with becoming the lead designer for the enhancement of a results focus at SIDA. During the preparation phase, the Director General and the designer took a study trip to Washington DC to visit USAID and the World Bank. It is thus clear that the initiative was highly influenced by how the World Bank worked with performance management. The designer stayed there for two

weeks to “learn how they were using the Logical Framework in practice” (D2). In a recent interview with the lead designer, the following was said concerning the pressure to demonstrate “results” and how the initiative came about:

The Director General was furious that SIDA could never say what we had done. There was so much frustration and people wanted physical results ... The Foreign Affairs Committee on several occasions asked the DG for reporting [...] he himself felt that it was a great idea, of course [...] But the ideas originated from me, since I had worked with that [...] Because I would never have had the opportunity and the interest to pursue this unless they did not want this to be pursued. (D2)

What this citation demonstrates is that the pressure from an external actor, in this case the Foreign Affairs Committee, made it possible for the lead designer to also pursue and push for SIDA to initiate the SIDA Project/Programme Follow-Up initiative.

5.2.2 The Decision

In 1981, the SIDA Project/Program Follow-Up initiative was launched as a part of SIDA’s overall Evaluation Plan (SIDA 1981), which was decided upon by the Director General. The initiative was run within SIDA’s Evaluation Unit, consisting of three persons. The role of the unit was to serve as a support function to SIDA units and field offices in their planning and implementation of evaluations as well as formulating problems and goals, method choices and operationalization of goals, writing terms of references, education in evaluation methods, contracting consultants, etc. The main responsibility for evaluations and follow-up, however, was placed with the different units and field offices within SIDA.

The purpose of the 1981 initiative was to “set up a system for reporting of evaluation results as well as propose measures that aim toward a more effective utilization of results during the assessment phase of new aid contributions” (SIDA 1981:3). The format for this was expected to be a printed Catalogue which was to be updated annually and be handed out as a booklet/Catalogue to “anyone interested” in SIDA’s operations (SIDA 1981:3). The rationale as to why the initiative was undertaken was declared in the initial decision as:

The experiences from the past years show that great attention must be paid to questions concerning documentation and systematization of experiences also during the coming years. As has been said many times on different occasions, it is not the lack of evaluations but that the experiences from these evaluations are not systematically used. The evaluation group believes that a great number of short-sighted gains can be seen if documentation is done properly, that

experiences are systematized with continuous reporting from the field offices.
(SIDA 1981:3)

The purpose was thus more focused on the pure results reporting and making results visible, but also to use these experiences.

In comparison to the 1971 Results Valuation Program, the 1981 Project/Program Follow-up Initiative contained almost no descriptions or reasoning on how SIDA perceived results measurement and management. One could say that nothing of the reasonings and reflections made on the difficulties of applying results measurement and management in practice, made by SIDA as part of the preparations for the Budget Bill in 1977, were considered during the planning.

The initiative was mainly pursued in the form that a request on how to fill out information on “results” was sent out from the SIDA Evaluation Unit to field offices and units in SIDA who were to fill out the forms. The role of the Evaluation Unit was then to compile all this information into the Catalogue. All documents compiled were manual documents (i.e. papers).

As will be seen from the descriptions in this chapter, the aim and purpose of *why* this initiative was undertaken changed many times during the different “test rounds” and after comments and discussions within the agency. In the following I therefore describe what happened during each of the five test rounds, as well as some other actions that were important for the initiative, which took place between the test rounds.

5.2.3 Implementation

a. The First Test Round

The first test round started off with a letter sent out in April 1981 by SIDA’s Evaluation Unit with a proposed form for results reporting (L1 1981). SIDA units were not requested to actually fill out the form but simply to comment on the format and what they perceived could be reported as “results”. The letter stated that filling out the form would “facilitate control and follow-up as well as make the progress of the projects easy to understand for anyone interested” (L1 1981). It stated that results information was to be “used for picking up information to be used for the type of brief summary reporting requested by the Management Committee” (L1 1981).

A couple of weeks later, representatives from field offices started to reply with regard to the letter and the proposed form. Most of the comments were formal and responded strictly to the proposed categories in the form. Two of the field offices commented on the risk of the standardized reporting

becoming an additional reporting routine to the already existing quarterly reporting (L4; L11 1981). Most of the field offices, however, responded to the introduction of the form with “no objection” (L2; L3; L5; L7 1981). Some responded in a positive tone with statements such as: “We welcome your suggested follow-up form and will be glad to try it in practice” (L5 1981). “We want to express our gratitude with regard to the proposed follow-up sheet” (L9 1981).

However, several of the field offices commented on the possible risks and advised caution be exercised with regard to the proposed form. It was, for example, noted that:

There could possibly be a risk with the type of boundaries in the form; if an inexperienced Programme Officer only follows the degree of goal achievement in relation to the project documents, then he/she will not be able to see the real effects. (L2 1981)

A note of caution was thus sounded toward the fact that filling out the forms could imply that the reality was not seen. Another field office similarly declared that: “We do not quite see the usefulness of squeezing evaluation information into a few tables on one page” (L9 1981). “Attempts to introduce the form ‘Ajax’ (a detergent for all forms of dirt – my comment) have a tendency to fail” (L9 1981). Some field offices were thus outspokenly negative about the proposal and commented that implementing such initiatives might run into difficulties.

One of the field offices stated that filling out the form required a specific competency:

The proposal was not received with too much enthusiasm. The majority perceive it as too complicated and that only people who are “accounting minded” could actually fill it out ... (L5 1981)

This comment demonstrates that the task was perceived by some staff as requiring a specific sort of competency, which SIDA staff did not have.

One field office said that the form was too complicated and cumbersome and not “rooted in local conditions in the field” and that the design “has only been designed to satisfy information needs in Sweden” (L4 1981). There was a perceived problem that the purpose of the exercise was only the need for accountability in Sweden and that it did not take into account the reality in recipient countries. Another saw the problems that were specific only for their own country context. In their response, they stated that:

We again found that the projects in Vietnam are different from “normal projects” in other development countries. We have difficulties with the flow of information due to lack of necessary and supporting documents. We need

more time and moreover we need to coordinate the task with SIDA Headquarters. (L5 1981)

It was thus noted that the problems in Vietnam differed from other country contexts and that this was the reason the exercise could be difficult to implement in practice.

It should be noted that the response rate from the field offices during the first test round was high. All 14 field offices responded promptly to the letter from Headquarters. The responses were also quite “wordy,” some welcoming but most advising caution toward the proposed form.

After a couple of months, a letter was sent from the Evaluation Unit to advise of a coming request to fill out the results matrix and asking staff to prepare for the upcoming exercise. The letter clarified that the purpose of the exercise was to “get an overall picture of what has happened during 1980/81” (L12 1981) and that:

This proposal should be seen as a part of an improved systematic results reporting, whose purpose is not primarily to cater to the parliament and the government wishes, but that we ourselves within the aid administration can utilize information from experiences of what we have accomplished or what we have failed to accomplish. (L12 1981)

So, in comparison to the first request, in this letter of information both the purpose and the intended user of the exercise had changed.

b. Renewed Pressure from Parliament

At the end of 1981, a new discussion arose in Parliament on results reporting from SIDA. Just like the previous years, motions were submitted requesting that an external Parliamentary commission or working group be set up with the task of evaluating the effectiveness of Swedish aid,²⁸ and that more information on results be provided to the Swedish public of both difficulties and failures as well as on progress.²⁹ From the Parliamentary subcommittee’s response it is possible to note that the subcommittee was aware that SIDA had initiated the 1981 initiative. In their response they declared that:

The subcommittee has learned that SIDA has recently initiated a number of measures on its part in order to achieve a more effective results valuation...The subcommittee has been informed that SIDA *within a few months’ time* aims to start providing brief information sheets to the public containing information about each project activity with respect to production

²⁸ 1981 Motion 244 Knut Wachtmeister and Olle Aulin (m) motion 1595 Per Peterson et al. (m).

²⁹ 1981 Motion 695 Mårten Werner (m).

goals, the scale of the activity, duration and reviews of the projects [...] The subcommittee at this stage does not believe that a working group or parliamentary inquiry needs to be appointed for this purpose. The subcommittee wishes to await the experiences and points of view put forward in connection with the government's and SIDA's intensified attention in this area. (UU 1980/81:20:41)

This citation shows that the Parliamentary subcommittee already at this initial stage of implementation was clearly satisfied with the recent efforts made within SIDA for improved results measurement. It was satisfied that SIDA would provide improved information about "results" in aid in the very near future.

c. The Second Test Round

In August 1981, a new request was sent out from the SIDA Evaluation Unit to the field offices informing them about the Parliamentary discussion (L12 1981). In the request, a renewed reason for the exercise was given. It explained that:

The reason that we want to develop a system for quantitative reporting is partly since Parliament and the government now requires SIDA to provide such information. [...] It can often be difficult to quantify results, however, the requirement is not to get a full picture of results on this occasion. The field offices, however, should try to provide a picture on how these have evolved over the last year. This round should be seen as a first test. (L13 1981)

The following figure illustrates the type of information to be filled in:

| List for each level targets according to relevant documents* | (plan of operations, id6-pm, insats-pm, appraisal report, etc.) Specify time schedule | What has been achieved to date? | Comments, specify |
|--|---|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Inputs, activities | - Hire two expatriate engineers for period Z and 4 local assistants for period X. - Purchase the following equipment: X tons of cement, Y tons of locally produced iron rods, etc. | | |
| Outputs, production targets | - The completion of 4 school buildings by Nov. 1984. - Equipping school. - Contracting of 6 teachers by summer 1985. | | |
| Project goal/s | -Integrate the children of the poorest population segments in village X, Y and Z into the school system and provide them with Z functioning primary education. | | |

*If targets cannot be found in the documents, specify them yourself based on interviews and discussions with project staff and with authorities of the recipient country.

Figure 4. Requests for results information August 1981. Source: SIDA L13 1981

The request stated that:

One thus has to try to quantify the results of the contributions in terms of concluded activities and reached production goals. In terms of goal hierarchy

(Sweden's aid policy goals – sector goals – program/project goals – production goals/outputs – contributions/activities – disbursements), the latter part is the relevant one. (L13 1981:3)

"Results" were now defined as quantifiable information in the whole causal chain from Swedish development aid goals, to sector goals, program or output goals, activities and disbursements. However, interestingly the request explicitly asked that the focus should be on activities and inputs and not on outcomes or effects in the projects, which were typically defined as "results". So, the request made in this round meant that staff were actually requested to complete the forms, and not only, as in the previous round, to provide comments.

This time, staff also reacted to the formats. A critical letter was, for example, sent in by a SIDA Director in the Field where she argued that all SIDA Directors in Southern Africa "saw difficulties with completing the forms in a meaningful way" (L14 1981). However, it was also argued that the Directors were in agreement that it was important to participate in results valuation since they had seen a need for more adequate results reporting during external visits by "more or less serious or 'malicious' journalists" (L14 1981). However, due to the foreseen difficulties, it was proposed that results reporting rather be done in narrative stories in the quarterly reports and/or in one or two annual evaluations in different countries than in the formats proposed within the 1981 initiative (L14 1981).

In other responses from the field offices, staff reacted to the short time limits for the exercise (L15 1981). The Evaluation Unit responded to this request with the following:

Really regret the hefty job of filling out the forms and that this must be done in such a hurry. However, as you know, the Evaluation Unit is not the one putting pressure on this question. It is rather the Management Committees's baby. The idea of sending out an already filled out model form is excellent. Too bad we did not think of it before. We can only blame it on the general rush. (L17 1981)

So, in late 1981 both field offices and the Evaluation Unit seemed to be feeling the pressure with regard to the exercise but argued that it was SIDA's Management Committee that was driving the initiative.

In January 1982, two of the field offices finally submitted completed forms.³⁰ The information sheets typically contained short descriptions with information from the projects, but no narrative analysis. When the forms were submitted, field offices also commented on the exercise as such. A

³⁰ I have only found two responses in the archives

more positive tone can be noted among some of the field offices submitting information. One of the field offices, for example, declared that:

The work with results reporting has been rewarding. Important basic data is now collected in one place. It feels essential to annually produce a comprehensive written report about the physical results of aid funding. (L19 1982)

What this response demonstrates is that once the exercise had been done, staff felt that it had actually been rewarding. However, among the responses, there was also an expectation for feedback. A response from one field office for example, stated that:

It was not very easy to fill out the forms for some of the projects, since the relevant information is missing [...] Anyhow, I think the exercise was useful and hope that SIDA Stockholm will find the forms to be of value. We very much look forward to your comments. (L18 1982)

This response demonstrates that the field offices had completed the exercise despite difficulties, but that they saw the “user” of the information as being Headquarters and not themselves. Since they had completed the exercise they also expected to receive comments about how the information had been used.

During the second test round, the response rate to the Evaluation Unit’s request was lower, with only half of the field offices responding, this meaning that the actual compliance rate of staff who actually filled in the forms was low.

In the end of 1981, the Evaluation Unit tried to compile a report from the material. However, staff at the unit found it difficult to actually do anything systematic with the information in the forms, since the information was so scattered. The Administration Department was asked to check the figures in the incoming formats,³¹ but found that the figures over disbursements differed in different SIDA documents compiling information about projects.³² Difficulties were thus seen when actually using the information from the exercise since the data was incomplete.

In order to clarify that the work in progress was trying to do something more with the information from the forms, a letter was, however, sent out to the field offices in February 1982 (L20 1982). The letter stated that:

We have now begun a more systematic review of the reports to see how various different offices have used the form, if our instructions were

³¹ Internal memo “Project follow-up”. Sender: EKON (Economy Division), Recipient: Evaluation Unit. 1982-10-02.

³² SIDA’s statistics “Bistånd i siffror och diagram” 1982. Draft in archives.

inadequate or ambiguous, how the summaries of countries and sectors should be done and what conclusions may be drawn. We are expecting to get back with individual comments to each one of the field offices. (L20 1982)

The letter demonstrates that the Evaluation Unit had taken note of the wish to receive feed back and that it promised to do that.

d. Parliament Satisfied

In the beginning of 1982 SIDA's Director General made a presentation about the Results Initiative to the Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Affairs the previous week (L20 1982). In a letter to the SIDA's field offices it was stated that the Management Committee had "expressed their satisfaction" with the material. So, despite the fact that a Catalogue had not yet been produced, Parliament, the Parliamentary subcommittee and SIDA's Management Committee seemed to have been satisfied with the oral information given by SIDA's Director General in 1982.

As a consequence of the oral presentation, the heavy criticism and requests raised predominantly by Conservative Party members in Parliament seems to have ceased in the forthcoming discussions in Parliament. The topic of results valuation was not mentioned in either the Budget Bill (UU 1981/1982:20), or in the two subsequent Budget Bills (UU 1982/83:20 and UU 1983/84:20). Interestingly, although SIDA had not yet produced or demonstrated any real "results" from the 1981 initiative it appears that in 1982 SIDA managed to defuse the critique raised on SIDA's results reporting in Parliament in an oral presentation to the Parliamentary Subcommittee for Foreign Affairs. From 1982 up until the mid-1990s I find very little external questioning or pressure on the way SIDA reported results, from Parliament, external audits or government.

e. The Third Test Round

However, despite the decreased pressure from external actors, new attempts were made within the 1981 initiative to systematize results. In October 1982, a new request was sent out from the Evaluation Unit. This time the task consisted of filling out information for the budget year 1982/1983 (L20 1982). In the request, "results" were to be filled out on three levels of the goal hierarchy: "main objectives – production goals – activities/inputs". The request stated that:

...the goal should be to state the planned goals of the contribution and achieved results at every level of the goal hierarchy; in other words, both with regard to long-term goals as to short-term production goals and inputs. (L20 1982)

In comparison to the request during the second test round, the request was now that results information should be provided on all levels, not only on production goals and inputs. The letter, however, states nothing concerning whether information should be quantitative.

The letter also declared the reason for the exercise:

I remind you that the development of this result report is not an end in itself. It is necessary for us to be able to show the results of our work, both externally and to ourselves. We need to have a better overview of what has actually been done in the field. Also, I think it will increase our knowledge and understanding of the programs we are working with. Starting this year, the Project Follow-Up forms should also form the basis for the annual sector reports the sector offices are required to write. (L20 1982)

This new purpose description demonstrates that the purpose and the intended user of the results information had been changed again. Information was to be provided both in order to gain an overview of what SIDA had accomplished, and also to understand the projects. A new aspect was also the comment that the information was to be used for SIDA's annual reporting, i.e. the intention was that the exercise should be integrated with normal reporting requirements.

This time, too, comments were provided by staff members. Since both the reporting requirements in the request and the purpose had been changed again, without field offices having received any feed-back on the previous information submitted, it is possible to note that staff now reacted differently to the new request. A Programme Officer in the field declared in a private letter to the Evaluation Unit that:

The reason I am writing to you privately is that we have once again been required to fill out the Project/Program cards for 1982. I am very critical of these cards, and since my comments are not included in the official response from the field office, I send them in thus: During the course of a year, the field offices have been requested to fill out the forms on three different occasions. Each time, the field offices have filled them out, submitted them, reworked them, etc. However, none of the times have we actually understood how the Evaluation Unit has used the information. [...] I found this to be arrogant. (L22 1982)

The citation exemplifies a growing anger from the Programme Officer since it was not known how the information was actually used. The Programme Officer also saw difficulties in actually completing the task and declared that:

For me, not being a professional investigator/evaluator, it is difficult to choose and formulate concise and stringent answers to what should be the objectives and what should be the activities. To me, it seems that the answers

are often the same. But like I said, this is probably just due to my ignorance and laziness. (L22 1982)

From this citation, it is possible to note that the Programme Officer saw the task of choosing “results” as the task of a “professional evaluator” rather than a working task that belonged to aid workers.

In December 1982, all but two field offices submitted their forms. The compliance rate was now higher than previously. In the submissions, some comments were also made regarding the exercise as such. One field office declared that it was difficult to see how the exercise coincided with the financial year in the recipient country (L23 1982). Another field office pointed out the difficulty of using the forms in sector programs and the short time limit for the exercise (L24 1982). Another complained about the short time limit to fill out the forms (L23; L24 1982). In some of the responses, comments were again made that field offices hoped that the information was useful for Headquarters (L25 1982). However, as in the second round, some field offices were also positive with regard to the exercise and declared that the exercise had helped them to gain an overview of the outcomes of the projects (L19 1982).

f. Questions About Usefulness

In April 1983, a draft publication was put together with the information gathered so far. It was a document compiling information from 150 aid contributions. The draft publication was sent out internally within SIDA Headquarters and the field offices. The document was printed in 357 copies and distributed internally within SIDA as well as to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Subcommittee for Foreign Affairs.³³

It is clear that the designers of the initiative were at this stage unsure about the usefulness of the results information compiled in the document. In the enclosed letter to the draft publication, SIDA staff and field offices were asked to answer the following questions:

We would love to receive answers to questions like – is the form in the present form usable/useful to you? Would it be even more useful with any other design? (L22 1982)

Notably, only two field offices responded to the questions on the usefulness of the published Results Report. One of them said that the forms were not “valuable in terms of cost monitoring” (L25 1983) and the other, which had recently started to utilize the forms, declared that Programme Officers were “positive to the utilization” (L26 1983).

³³ Distribution list Project Follow-Up 1983 830325 Private archive.

The designers seem not to have been fully satisfied with either the answers regarding usefulness or with the actual results information in the 1983 draft. Information in the draft was never published officially. In October 1983, the Evaluation Unit instead wrote a new note (L27 1983) to all field offices to say that they would soon be sending out a new improved request to fill in results information.

g. The first Publication 1984

In January 1984, SIDA’s fourth set of new instructions for results reporting were sent out to the field offices. New elements in the 1984 instructions are that all text should be written in English, that all contributions should be incorporated and that a reason be given if not including a project. Strict guidelines are given with regard to the length of the narrative text. Results information is to be divided into and written on three levels: 1) main objectives 2) production goals 3) activities (i.e. the same as in the third test round).

A “novelty” in the 1984 instruction was also the introduction of “performance rating.” According to the designer of the 1981 initiative “performance rating” was introduced because staff had encountered difficulties when reporting “production results” (D2-1). Information was to be filled out in the following way and categories: The “novelty” of performance rating appeared thus:

| Project/Programme Performance Rating | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| STATUS | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem-free/Minor Problems |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moderate Problems |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Major Problems |
| TREND | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Improving |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Stationary |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorating |

Figure 5. Performance rating function in 1981-initiative. Source: SIDA (1984)

An assessment of project status was thus to be done on whether project progress was Problem-Free/Minor Problems, Moderate Problems or Major Problems. And, whether the Trend is Improving, Stationary or Deteriorating.

Interestingly, most field offices at this stage seem to have complied with the exercise. In the archives, it is not possible to find any comments nor any

resistance from field offices complaining or sending in comments as a consequence of the new reporting format.

Subsequently, in October 1984, the first official Project Program Follow-up Catalogue was published. The Catalogue covered 213 projects and programs.³⁴ The aim of the exercise was stated to be:

... important for SIDA and for our partners in development in order to correct errors and shortcomings, and to improve our performance. Equally important, however, is for us to show the public and our Government and Parliament what is achieved with taxpayer money. This is often requested. While we may say with some confidence that we have done a reasonable job monitoring and evaluating our programs, we cannot make any corresponding claims concerning storing and systematically retaining knowledge thus gained. (SIDA 1984:1)

So, the purpose description was this time both connected to accounting for results achieved in aid as well as that information was to be used for management. The purpose description also contains that information should be used for learning.

One could say that the Catalogue mainly contained short information about the projects on main objectives, production goals and activities, as in the following example from a rural electrification project:

| |
|--|
| <p>Main objectives of project. Intended target group(s). What has been achieved to date? Impact on target group?</p> <p>To promote development in the rural areas of Angola by provision of assistance to the electrification of the Dembos area, Kwanza-Norte Province.</p> <p>Target Groups: The population of the Dembos area, approximately 120,000 inhabitants.</p> |
| <p>Production goals: planned and achieved</p> <p>The production goal for the first phase of the project is to construct a 60 kilovolt transmissionline from the existing hydro-electric power plant in Mabubas, north-east of Luanda, with 30 kilovolt lines for local distribution as well as a transformer station.</p> |

³⁴ It is stated that: "virtually all of Sweden's ongoing regular bilateral projects are included. Missing are a few minor agreements and some sector support programs, which are not sufficiently well-defined as to constitute a 'project'. Also missing is the development support given in the form of 'import support' due to this following different project preparation procedures." (SIDA 1984:1)

The SIDA contribution will cover part of the credit costs as well as half of the amounts for advance payments and administration costs stipulated in the SONEFE/ASEA contract.

Figure 6. Example of a “results” description in 1984 Catalogue. Source: SIDA (1984:3)

The information in the Catalogue was essentially only about the plans for each project; it was a catalogue with brief information about the type of projects that SIDA was involved in. It is clear that when sending out the Catalogue there was already hesitancy in regards to its usefulness. In the foreword to the Catalogue the Director General writes: “I am obviously aware of limitations in this approach” (SIDA 1984:1). Similarly, in a note in SIDA’s internal paper it was noted that “an evaluation system like this has definite limitations”.³⁵

The Catalogue was sent out to participants in the OECD/DAC Evaluation Network as well as internally within SIDA. Further, a special letter expressing gratitude was sent to the World Bank’s Evaluation Director stating:

The project performance rating in the right hand top corner has more or less been directly copied from the Bank by us. We are of course very grateful for the help thus received from the Bank. (L29 1986)

What this citation demonstrates is that SIDA was very proud of having copied the new concept of “performance rating” from the World Bank.

The main use of the Catalogue seems to be that it was in fact sent out. There is no information available in SIDA’s archives on whether anyone actually used the information in the Catalogue. However, it is possible to note that the publication caused internal discussions, specifically about its usefulness. In late 1984 a discussion took place among SIDA’s Management Committee on whether to revise the Program Follow-Up Catalogue, in order to further improve the quality of the information. However, this proposal was resisted by one of the Directors who stated the following in a letter to the Evaluation Unit:

The proposal to revise Program Follow Up [...] has aroused violent resistance within the Industry Division. There are a lot of critical comments on the design of the forms (stopping square blocks into round holes). The strongest criticism comes from the Division feeling a strong pressure of all ongoing

³⁵ Copy of an article in Sida’s internal paper 8405050 Project Follow-Up. Private archive

work and feeling that we cannot give priority to such a task. We cannot cope with the current aid production in a decent way and then this kind of task feels like rubbing salt in the wounds. (L28 1984)

The citation demonstrates that the Director felt that the proposal to improve the quality of the information in the Catalogue even further was felt to be a task that would only take time from other, more prioritized, work tasks.

h. More Focus on “Qualitative Analysis“

It is possible to see some mobilization and discussions in development aid toward softer or more qualitative forms of evaluating aid between the years 1984-1987. In a government report on “A more effective aid administration” (Ds UD 1984:1), it was, for example, claimed that:

There is a shared view that the ambitions for aid, at least as they were framed in the 1970s (“the decade of goals and strategies”), have been too high and therefore also unrealistic. It is emphasized that the development process is a slow learning process and that it cannot be more than marginally hastened. (Ds UD 1984:1:vii)

The report thus recommended that evaluation work should be looked upon as a broad qualitative analytic task. It also recommended more clarity in government goals for development aid, since it was perceived as being difficult for SIDA to know which results to report. In the subsequent government bill, the government agreed that there was a need for more clarity in the government’s goals and ambitions (UU 1984/1985:12:35). It also declared that the development aid sector was more complex and vulnerable than other public administration sectors since “The activities are governed by what happens in other countries and by decisions and actions undertaken by other countries and international organizations” (UU 1984/85:12:35). It therefore argued that there was no need to “have overly harsh result measurement requirements” (UU 1984/85:12:30).

Internationally, too, there was in the mid-1980s a move back from the effectiveness and conditionality-driven aid forms. It was, for example, argued that the structural adjustment programs had left out the “human face” and that they lacked considerations of how the reforms worked out for people in practice. It was argued that the programs left out how other external factors affected development (Odén 1984:98).

Within SIDA, more focus was given to qualitative analyses and evaluations; for example, to the series of Sida Evaluation Report publications, of which 28 issues were published during the years 1986–1987. However, there was a problem in that results were not so easily identifiable in the evaluations either. The Head of Evaluation at the time commented in a recent interview that it was found at the time that evaluations were difficult to do since many

projects had not during the planning stage planned for which “results” to achieve (D2-2). As a consequence, in 1985, SIDA introduced a revised Method Handbook (the earlier one was from 1974). The handbook gave guidelines stating that all projects, optimally, were to use a goal hierarchy with predefined indicators during the planning stage; indicators that were then to be followed up (SIDA 1985:35), ideas as part of results measurement and management and the “logical framework”.

However, all the requirements were to be seen as recommendations and were not as such mandatory. In 1985, an attempt was made within SIDA to standardize monitoring, meaning that all projects and programs would use the same indicators set by SIDA.³⁶ However, this idea never materialized at Sida at this stage. All these discussions demonstrate that several new ways of reporting results were tried out in the mid-1980s.

i. The Fifth Test Round

Within SIDA the efforts with the Project Programme Follow-Up Catalogue continued. It seems, however, that these were put on hold in 1985 but resumed in 1986 when yet another request to fill out information was sent out. The information was intended to serve a new publication: the 1986 Project Follow-up Catalogue (L29 1986). The field offices were now requested to submit information within a month. We can see that even the Director General was uncertain whether he was to do something further with the exercise. In a note from the designer to the Director General (L31 1986) the following question was posed:

Does the Management Committee want to sign the letter regarding Project Follow-Up to field offices ?

An answer was given in the note from the Director General:

Yes, that might be good. ☹.

This short dialogue shows that the Director General was reluctant to send the letter to the field offices.

The request stated that “results” were generally requested “by users outside of the building, not least the media”. The tone of the letter was also somewhat harsher than before:

In order for the Catalogue to be truly useful, it is important that is as complete, current and of the best quality possible. In spite of the improvements in the latest editions, there is still quite a bit left to be done. There are white fields in many projects where information is missing. This

³⁶ Draft for discussion- “Towards a standardized monitoring system for SIDA projects.” 1985-10-25. Private archive.

must be obtained. When it comes to other projects, the current information may be too vague or insufficient. It is important that the information on long-term effects, and in particular the effects on the target groups, is made as concrete as possible [...] In all of these matters, we thus ask you to work hard to get the best information possible. (L30 1986)

The note includes a request for reporting on “effects and specifically effects on the target groups” (L30 1986). This shows that the reporting requirements had changed yet again.

It is not possible to note any resistance towards this request. Forms were sent in, albeit often after reminders from the Evaluation Division to a field office representative. At this stage the communication was often shorter and precise: “We have still not received field offices’s contribution to the rural development activity. Please send as soon as possible.”(L32 1986)

It is clear that the new Head of Evaluation did not see the value of the 1981 initiative. In a recent interview she stated that: “To be honest I never saw that the exercise was so successful” (D2-2). At the end of 1986, the Evaluation Unit no longer wanted to take responsibility for the Project Program Follow-Up Initiative. The Evaluation Plan for 1986/87–1988/89 declared that the Evaluation Unit “has scarce resources” and it was therefore proposed that the Program Follow-Up Catalogue be transferred from the Evaluation Unit to the Economy Unit (EKON) and that:

It may be mentioned that when the task of carrying out Project Follow-Up was delegated to the Evaluation Unit in 1981, it was clearly stated that the intention was that when the system was in place, it would no longer be the responsibility of the Evaluation Unit. (SIDA 1986a:8)

It seems, however, that no decision was made in regard of what to do with the initiative at this point.

j. A Parallel Initiative: “Concrete Results of Aid”

As said earlier, several other ideas for reporting results were tried out in the mid-1980s. An interesting example is an attempt made within SIDA at the same time as the instructions within the fifth round of the Project Program Follow-Up were sent out. A seemingly similar results initiative with the title “Concrete Results of 25 years of Swedish Aid” (SIDA 1986b) was then launched. According to the description of the initiative, “so far, there has been no systematic evaluation at SIDA of what has been achieved through Swedish aid, a deficiency that has become increasingly noticeable in recent years” (L33 1986). In other words, the purpose of the Concrete Results initiative was the same as the purpose for the Project Program Follow-Up. The similarities were also noted in the description of the Concrete Results initiative:

The contents of the two documents are similar. It is mainly the disposition used in the document that differs. The “Concrete results document” to a larger extent provides a *concrete* description on what actually has been achieved in terms of results, whereas Project Follow-Up strives to also make comparisons between what has been planned and what has actually been achieved in terms of results both in a short-term and long-term perspective. The “Concrete results document” also provides much more information than Project Follow-Up, which still has large gaps in its accounts; something that may hopefully be fixed during 1986. (L33 1986)

It is clear that the differences in what to report upon are not so large but that the main purpose of the Concrete Results initiative is to see whether (concrete) “results” information could be obtained through the introduction of a new name for an initiative.

In the request, SIDA field offices were asked to send in information in response to the questions: A. Which concrete (physically measurable) results have de facto been achieved in the Swedish-supported contribution? B. Is the Project “good,” “acceptable” or “bad”? (L33 1986). The request was thus very specific in that it wanted staff to value whether aid projects could be considered as good or bad.

It seems that information was sent in only by some of SIDA’s field offices. However, it is clear that despite this, the initiative was considered as “having high potential to meet SIDA’s information needs with regard to results”³⁷ and that information in the document might be interesting for the government.³⁸ However, in the end the decision was made not to submit the information to the government since it was decided that the information was not of sufficient quality (L33 1986).

No more information about the Concrete Results initiative can be found in SIDA’s archives, and it seems that it died out soon after. The draft report document containing some information was never archived, nor used officially by SIDA. According to a previous employee at Sida who was actively engaged in the discussions on the project, the report was rejected since the reporting format and the information in the document was not seen as useful for a presentation of Sidas “results”. The exercise was, moreover, not seen as benefitting recipients of aid.³⁹

³⁷ Protocol 19860611 Sector Department’s Tuesday meeting 10 June 1986. SIDA Planning Secretariat. Private archive 860611.

³⁸ Ibid. It was declared that information could be sent to the government in a letter consisting of 5–8 pages as early as 12 September 1986

³⁹ E-mail correspondence with a former employee, 24 August 2016

k. A Final Publication in 1987

Simultaneously, while the Concrete Results initiative failed to meet its purpose, it seems that sufficient “results” information was gathered to produce an updated version of the Project Programme Follow-up Catalogue. In June 1987, i.e. three years after the first publication, the second Catalogue, which was also to be the final one SIDA produced, was ready (SIDA 1987). The Catalogue consisted of 465 pages, containing 216 follow-up forms from SIDA-supported projects and programs. Information in the Catalogue was similar to the 1984 Catalogue. It contained brief information about the type of aid project SIDA supported, and very little information about actual “results”. Except for a one-page introduction, the Catalogue consisted of the completed follow-up forms. The Catalogue thus contained no analysis of the information. The limitations were stated in the “Note to the readers”:

...it is not possible to use the material for further analysis without some elaboration. Preparation of a database and various types of analysis of the material is, however, foreseen in the near future. This included the running of simple regressions and correlations for countries, sectors and subsectors involving, among others, the variables Performance Rating “status” and “trend”. (SIDA 1987)

This citation demonstrates that the designers were aware that there were difficulties in utilizing the information but that there was a hope that this would be possible in the future.

The Catalogue was printed and distributed to some agencies working with aid in Sweden⁴⁰ as well as to some international organizations,⁴¹ to the Swedish Radio and to the Parliament. Today, the Catalogue cannot be found among documents from 1987 on SIDA’s homepage, but it is available at, for example, the Stockholm University Library.

The only archived response that can be found after the Catalogue was sent out is a letter received by the Head of Service at the European Commission, who at first declared his optimism with regard to the Catalogue. He stated:

First, I must say that SIDA is setting an example worth imitating in publishing such a document at all. I have always felt that we should at long last treat the public as adults and not try to be on the defensive all the time, feeding them the success stories only. If we admit errors and weaknesses, we might make the public understand that we are dealing with an immensely difficult area and

⁴⁰ Distribution list from private archive. According to the distribution list the Catalogue was sent to Industriförbundet, SAREC, Samhällsrådet, Ministry of Finance.

⁴¹ Ibid. The World Bank, Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank.

that we are bound to partly fail in our endeavour. Then, we may have the chance to turn the public from critical and dispassionate on-lookers into accomplices and that would be a major achievement. The section on Project status and trend may serve just such purpose. So far, bravo.⁴²

The letter thus highlights the difficulties involved in making the public understand that there is a difficulty in reporting “results” of development aid. However, thereafter the letter comes to some “constructively critical remarks”.⁴³ Comments are made on the results information in the report mainly focusing on inputs and not on “achievements, benefits and their sustainability”.⁴⁴ There is also a comment on the difficulty for reporters to conduct the exercise: “I find that reporters often do not seem entirely to understand what is meant by goals and objectives planned (ex ante) and achieved (ex post, i.e. at the reporting date).”⁴⁵

This comment exemplifies that there was anxiety that staff members in general did not understand the exercise. It was declared that the exercise in fact was the “heart and the soul of development effectiveness”.⁴⁶ Comments were also made on how the report was presented, and it was suggested there should be more streamlining and analysis of the data in order to say meaningful things about sectors, subsectors, regions, countries that would be more attractive to the general public, and even for the specialists. In the end, it is stated that if these recommendations were followed, the product “would become a hundred times more palatable and digestible. It would acquire sex-appeal!”⁴⁷

As stated above, except for this letter and comments, it seems as if discussions and use of the information in the Catalogue were meager. It appears the information in the Catalogue was never used for decision-making purposes. The Catalogue was, for example, never mentioned in the Budget Bill for 1987/88:20, i.e. it seems that the government did not take any notice of the information produced for its planning of development aid. The designer of the initiative declared in a recent interview that the main aim had actually been to use the information as an “information brochure, a pamphlet used for informing outsiders about what we were doing” (D2-1). It was therefore noted that the Catalogue did not have any “operative significance at SIDA”. (D2-1)

⁴² Letter from Hellmut Eggers European Commission 10 August 1987

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

However, it seems that publishing the Catalogue brought a sense of relief within the organization. The designer of the initiative stated in a recent interview that: “We won the battle, so to speak, in that it was carried out, published and made public, you could say that we won” (D2-1). After the Catalogue had been published, the designer moved on to another international post. In a recent interview, he declared that the reason the initiative finally died was that: “There was simply no one pushing the issue and no official was needed at this point, we had done this and that was all that was needed” (D2-1). So, it seems that after 1987 there was no longer any pressure to do something further with the initiative.

After publishing the 1987 Catalogue, the Project Program Follow-Up initiative finally died. No one talked about it anymore, or was responsible for doing something more with it. In the end, it seems that the initiative mainly served the purpose of visualizing THAT something had been done.

5.3 Summary of the 1981 Initiative

In the late 1970s, the recipient-oriented view on aid, at the same time as it was being codified in official documents, was also being increasingly challenged. Strong calls were being made for firmer methods and ways of managing aid. The role of international aid was now increasingly seen as a way of influencing politics and economics by setting conditions and requirements for change and not only as a way to support deprived countries with actions of solidarity. In comparison to the previous decade, the discussion on results measurement and management methods was now more informed about both the pros and cons of these types of methods. Experiences had been gained regarding the reasons for the failure of the 1971 initiative. However, questions were simultaneously being asked about what had actually happened with public aid programmes which had now been up and running for a decade. So, whilst one can note that there was both an increased awareness and critique of results measurement and management techniques, the simultaneous pressure for effectiveness implied a new hope that the ideas, this time and if better applied, could be beneficial.

The 1981 initiative, too, could be understood as being triggered by an increased and hardening public opinion to demonstrate results. It is clear, however, that this time the external pressure in combination with internal pressure made it possible for the designer of the 1981 initiative to propose the initiation and further running of the initiative.

The purpose of the “Project Programme Follow-up initiative”, launched at SIDA in 1981, was to update results information from all aid projects and programs at SIDA in a printed Catalogue annually. The main purpose of the

initiative could thus be understood as supporting visibility of results produced for the Swedish public and other actors in Sweden. Recipients of aid were never mentioned in the purpose descriptions.

It is clear that once the initiative had been launched, the external questioning decreased. The only external questioning occurred six months into the programme, when Parliamentary representatives for the Conservative Party questioned the way SIDA reported results. The mere existence with and information that results were soon to be produced was sufficient to reduce the questioning. I have found no further evidence of questioning taking place in the Parliamentary sub-committee during the remainder of the decade. One could thus say that the initiative contributed to increased legitimacy and reduced the external questioning as soon as it was launched.

During the implementation period, several letters/requests were sent out from the SIDA Evaluation Unit to field offices with requests to fill out results information in a standard form. During the five different “test rounds,” the formulations for the aim, rationale and the proposed “main user” of the information changed several times. Also, the categories for what to report on – what was actually deemed as “results” – were constantly changed. The constant changes in the purpose, reporting categories and intended user show that throughout the initiative there was an uncertainty as to whether and how the exercise was in fact beneficial for anyone. This uncertainty might also explain the need to constantly change the formats for the exercise.

The type of comments raised by staff when responding related to: a) the concepts and categories of what a “result” was and how it should be counted; b) the task of filling out “results” as a duty of a “professional evaluator” or someone who was “accountancy minded”. Few staff members saw a potential use for the exercise for what they perceived as being their main work task; c) there was also a constant expectation from the field offices for feedback on the information that they had submitted to Headquarters. It seems that the lack of feedback angered field staff. There was a stronger reaction to this in the beginning; it decreased during later stages of implementation. Similarly, whilst the compliance rate was low during the initial stages, it increased in 1984 and 1987 when the two Catalogues were published. So, one could say that a general pattern was that staff resisted and opposed the initiative in the beginning, but that they accepted and complied with the exercise in the end.

The 1984 and 1987 Catalogues were sent out to various actors around SIDA. Except for one comment from an external actor, it is not possible to find any further use of the results information in the Catalogue. After the publishing

of the 1987 Catalogue, the initiative faded away. It is clear the Catalogue mainly served the need to make results visible.

The launch of almost an identical initiative, but with a different name, “Concrete Results of 25 years of Aid” (SIDA 1986b) in 1986 could be understood as an act of both hope and perhaps also desperation: could simply another reporting format and a new name lead to “results” being submitted? However, the Concrete Results initiative also faded away before long without any official documents being published or any “results” disclosed.

6 Sida Rating Initiative (1998-2007)

In this chapter, I describe the context in which Sida's third results initiative – the Sida Rating Initiative (SiRS) – was implemented. The initiative aimed to introduce an IT system for recurrent rating of projects/programs. SiRS was developed during four phases, starting in 1998 and finalized with a decision to reverse the system in 2008. As in the previous chapters, the first part examines the external environment prior to the launch of the initiative. The second part of the chapter deals with what happened within the organization and in its environment when the SiRS project was launched and implemented.

6.1 Environmental Demand

6.1.1 The Emerging Aid Effectiveness Agenda and New Organization of Aid

Within development aid, discussions on the effectiveness of aid were increasingly pursued in the 1990s within the emerging “aid effectiveness” agenda.⁴⁸ The discussion took its starting point in the question and the wish to understand why “aid was not producing the development results everyone expected to see” (OECD/DAC 2015). According to the OECD/DAC, the rationale for the aid effectiveness agenda was that the success of aid had not always been evident, and that “lack of co-ordination, overly ambitious targets, unrealistic time and budget constraints and political self-interest had too often prevented aid from being as effective as desired” (OECD/DAC 2015:1). However, although the agenda pursued principles such as increased harmonization among donors, alignment with recipient country policies and management for results, the core principle pursued was the need for and importance of increased “ownership” by the recipient countries. The main reason for the failure to produce “results” was thus seen as the lack of ownership or commitment from the recipient (Best 2014).

During the scope of four High Level⁴⁹ meetings, joint commitments and principles were formulated; principles that were seen as solutions for increased aid effectiveness. In addition to the High Level meetings, so-called

⁴⁸ One could say that the aid effectiveness agenda finally took off in 1998 with the “Assessing Aid” report by the World Bank. (World Bank 1998)

⁴⁹ High Level Fora on Aid Effectiveness in Rome (2003), Paris (2005), Accra (2008) and Busan (2011)

High Level roundtables were held on specific sub-themes, such as Management for Development Results.⁵⁰ From the 1990s onwards, aid donors were thus, like other public agencies, increasingly influenced by standards, such as the core principles for evaluation agreed upon in 1991 (OECD/DAC 1991) and peer reviews, in which donors' aid administration practices were scrutinized and discussed by peers.⁵¹

Within Swedish aid administration, several reports discussed the topic of how aid could be organized in a better way to be more effective. (See for example SOU 1990:17; SOU 1993:1; SOU 1994:102; DS1990:63). One of the “problems” identified in these reports as to why one could not know the “results” of aid was the complex organization of aid, that there were too many organizations and separate agencies dealing with aid. A solution was to merge SIDA, BITS (Beredningen för Internationellt Tekniskt-ekonomiskt Samarbete), SwedeCorp (Styrelsen för internationellt näringslivsbistånd), SAREC (Styrelsen för u-landsforskning) and Sandö U-centrum into a new agency in 1995: Sida – the Swedish International Development Agency. According to the new instruction, Sida was viewed as “a central administrative agency for Sweden’s bilateral aid cooperation” (FOU 1995:869).

During the 1990s, there was a greater focus on “organizing independency” in the assessment of “results.” In several government reports, it was, for example, claimed that evaluations should be done not by the agencies themselves, but by a separate body outside Sida (SOU 1993:1; RRV 1991). As a consequence of these discussions, two attempts were made in the 1990s to set up separate bodies that would have the role of evaluating and discussing “results” of aid: SASDA – the Secretariat for Analysis of Swedish Development Assistance, which was launched in 1992 (Gov 1992:59) and closed in 1993, and EGDI – the Expert Group on Development Issues, which was launched in 1998 and closed in 2007.⁵² In 2008, SADEV, the Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation was established. A similarity between the bodies was that they were all initiated with the motivation that there is a need for an *independent* and external viewpoint that would provide policy input or assess Swedish aid. SASDA was, for

⁵⁰ High Level Roundtables on Development Results in Washington (2002) and Marrakech (2004), and the OECD/DAC working group on aid effectiveness; *Managing for development results, principles in action*, April 2005.

⁵¹ The first peer review of Sweden was done in 1985.

⁵² It has been very difficult to find any information from government archives about the launch and closure of EGDI. Some EGDI reports are available at: <http://www.bistandsdebatten.se/alla-organisationer/expert-group-on-development-issues-egdi/>.

example, to provide the government “with improved documentation for the ongoing streamlining of aid and aid administration,” “to contribute to the government’s results management being developed” and to “broaden the perspectives” on questions regarding the efficiency of aid (Gov 1992:59:1).

However, as has been said, both SASDA and EGDI were closed down after some time. According to a Parliamentary Audit report, SASDA was closed down since “the work was concluded” (RR 1998/99:43). In its final report, the Secretariat proposed that a more long-term body for the evaluation of aid should be established, which would deal with “the problems of effectiveness in aid” (Ds 1994:137:9). The report also concluded that “The presently available statistics on Swedish aid are not suitable for studies and analyses of the effectiveness of aid” and argued that more efforts were needed to further specify the requirements concerning results reporting (Ds 1994:137:58). With regard to the closure of EGDI, the reasons were that the government lacked resources for further financing. Less official reasons might have been political, since both agencies were closed down after government changes. An informant declared, somewhat ironically, that the new government in 2006 had a perception that “sitting and reflecting was seen as a luxury”⁵³ It is interesting to note that both SASDA and EGDI were established as a result of the quest to improve analysis of “results” and that both died out due to difficulties in doing so.

6.1.2 Ambivalence in the Critique

I would say that there was an ambivalence in the type of pressure applied to Sida from actors such as the government and national audits in the 1990s. This ambivalence was mentioned in the Commission of Enquiry (SOU 1993:1), where it was declared that:

At the same time as there is a development toward more recipient-led contributions and decreasing project support from “professional aid interests,” there is a reverse current in domestic politics. Through the budget process, there are greater demands for showing results, and this is not just seen in the budget process, but also in other areas of society (SOU 1993:1:110).

On the one hand, there was a perception in the Swedish public administration that several reforms relating to public management were now in place (RRV 1996:50). It was now clear that the government would declare the aims, and the agencies themselves define the means. The Letter of Appropriation was to stipulate the “request” and the agencies were to report on their results and achievements in the Annual Reports (FOU 1993:134).

⁵³ E-mail correspondence with a former staff member at EGDI, 15 March 2015

State agencies now had a broader mandate of self-governance, for example for the administration of internal organization and recruitments. However, they were now also required to decide on, for example, which methods and measures to use to report on “results” themselves; in other words, “what the agency has accomplished and measurable effects of the performances.” In the annual report, they were asked to comment on the relation between the agency’s activities and the overall goals for the sector. They were also tasked with comparing the results over a period of three years (FOU 1993:134 para 5).

However, on the other hand, actors in the government seemed to continue to have an understanding of the difficulties of measuring “results” in development aid. The Commission of Enquiry from 1993, for example, declared that “A large part of the aid is given in forms that make it difficult to present results; in other words, it is either conceptually impossible or requires development work” (SOU 1993:1:134). Similarly, a study on how decisions were made within the aid administration, for example, raised the question of the complexity of results measurement in aid administration and argued that it was often assumed by “linear programming models” that decisions were made in a rational manner, but argued that decision-making processes within development aid could not be declared to be “rational in the classic sense of the word” (Ds 1990:63:199). The study was subsequently critical with regard to the need to develop measures to prove the causality between aid interventions and overall objectives, and concluded that:

First of all, we can conclude that there is no evaluation of what aid has accomplished in relation to its overall objectives. There are no proper measures here and we do not consider it meaningful to develop such measures. (DS 1990:63:209)

This citation demonstrates the typical viewpoint pursued by the government at this time, i.e. that measuring results and effects of aid was difficult and that it was therefore not worth the efforts to try to develop methods that would allow such measures to be carried out. As a consequence, studies instead recommended greater support for knowledge development, qualitative analysis and flexibility (Ds 1990:63:209).

However, simultaneously with this support from government and audits for the fact that results measurement might be difficult in state administration, the Government Inquiry from 1993 argued that the difficulties lay primarily in the reporting of effects. It was declared that:

The aid agencies may present results, but most likely when it comes to outputs. The effects of the contributions will be harder to evaluate and are frequently only seen in the long run. (SOU 1993:1:110)

The study thus suggested that more formal agreements on which goals and results were to be followed up should be established, in addition to a “development of goals and systems for reporting” (SOU 1993:1:110). Moreover, the Commission of Enquiry argued that “so far the difficulties in reporting had been motivated due to the needs in recipient countries”, and argued that instead “aid should be motivated by results that are seen as solutions to specific needs” (SOU 1993:1:110). It was argued that there was a need for a more in-depth utilization of tools in which it was possible to see the intended cause and effect relations, i.e. tools such as the Logical Framework.

In the Parliamentary Audit report from 1998 it was argued that the government typically requested a large amount of results information from Sida (RR 1998/99:2). In Sida’s comment on the audit, it agreed with the auditor’s claim and “questioned how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs used all results information they requested from Sida” (RR 1998/99:40). Sida argued that it was “locked in by the requirements for output reporting” but also that it was not possible to report on effects in annual reports. It is thus possible to see that despite increased reporting requirements, Sida’s view was supported by the Parliamentary Audit. The only recommendation made in the Parliamentary Audit report was a recommendation to the government (i.e. not Sida) that they should only request information from Sida that “was necessary for steering” (RR 1998/99:2).

Interestingly, the Parliamentary Audit claimed that the reason for the difficulties in reporting on results was the fact that it had been decided that 1% of the GDP should be allocated for development aid. The auditors claimed that the effect might be that “the requirements for cost-effectiveness and results achievement were set too low within development aid” (RR 1998/99:47). Moreover, the report claimed:

The internal planning information provides no satisfactory basis for follow-up activities, in part due to a lack of reporting discipline. (RR 1998/99:23)

So, one of the reasons for the inadequate measurement of “results,” according to this statement, was “a lack of reporting discipline” at Sida, which was caused by the unofficial “disbursement pressure”. As a consequence of these discussions, in 1998 Sida received a government request to “develop methods for results measurement and management and to develop a suggestion for reporting on outputs” within the agency (stated in RR 1998/99:40). However, a new government decision had already been taken in 1995 on the process for country strategies (Gov 1995). The decision implied that Sida was required to place a greater focus on knowing, reporting and analyzing “effects” of aid at the project level and at the sector level. An analysis was to be carried out on the total “effects” of aid in a

specific recipient country (Sida 1996). So, one could say that there were prior to the initiation of the 1998 initiative increased demands from the government to report on results at different steering levels. Whereas the “output” reporting was requested at agency level, reporting on “effects” was requested at country strategy level.

In sum, it is possible to note that although Sida seemed to offer support for and have an understanding of the difficulty for the agency to report on results, there seemed to be an increased pressure on Sida “to do better” in terms of results reporting, at an agency level, and at a country strategy and project level.

6.2 The 1998 Initiative

6.2.1 Preparations

In 1995, when the new Sida was launched, Sida officially adopted the Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) as a method to be applied in contribution management (Sida 1996b). Sida then also announced an official post as an internal “LFA advisor”, whose role would be to provide support to staff working with the method. During the 1990s Sida had also contributed with financing for about 20 consultants to become so-called certified LFA consultants.⁵⁴ All Sida staff members were recommended to participate in LFA training. Work with the LFA and other methods for aid contribution was run within the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit. The Evaluation Unit (which had previously been under the Economy Bureau) became integrated with a new function within Sida: the Internal Audit. So, one could say that from the mid-1990s it was taken for granted that the LFA would be *the* method used in contribution management.

When trying to trace how the idea of the Sida Rating System (SiRS) came to the agency, most informants have stated that the idea of launching SiRS came internally, from Sida’s Director General. In a recent interview with the DG in 1995, he stated the following:

Well, when I think about it, I know exactly where I got the idea; it was from the World Bank. Because we used to have a “high level delegation” that went to the World Bank each year and discussed various things, and we learned a lot. They learned some things from us and we learned a lot from them. And this was one of the things they regarded as obvious. And I was jealous of the fact that they, in this American way, could access statistics about everything.

⁵⁴ See <http://www.proprofs.com/quiz-school/story.php?title=the-logical-framework-certification-exam> for information on how to obtain the exam.

The Americans are good at that, but we were very bad at accessing statistics. Aggregated that is, and then I thought that we must have a homogeneous system. (DG3)

It is clear from several of the interviews that the idea of “rating” came into the organization after visits to the World Bank and after some meetings and presentations made by consultants who were working with LFA for other donor organizations. At this time, there was a perception that Sida had a huge project portfolio and that little was known about performance in the projects. There was thus an internally felt need for Sida to structure the project reports, as well as that Sida needed aggregated results data.

However, the ideas of the increased focus on results measurement and the ideas of “rating” were also counteracted and questioned. I illustrate this with a citation by a Sida Director and member of Sida’s Management Committee, who in a recent interview reflected upon the discussions in the Management Committee in 1998 when the initiative was initiated:

It was a lost cause trying to oppose the pressure using rational arguments, because the pressure was too hard. Management knew that we had to deliver something ... these external requirements with regard to results took over. Some of the weaknesses of that system were quite visible but it was still pushed through as we had to show that we were doing something. In the end I don’t think that the rating system delivered any grand results for Sida and the taxpayers. I think that this was already obvious from the outset. But it was absolutely impossible to get these arguments on the table at the time of taking that decision. (Interview Sida Director in 1998, 23 February 2015)

What this citation exemplifies is that the Sida Director, at the moment of the launch, felt it was irrelevant to put forward the notion that the 1998 initiative might encounter difficulties during implementation.

Simultaneously there was also confusion in regard to what “results” actually meant. In 1996 the Director General had tasked the evaluation unit with conducting a study on how Sida staff dealt with the task of performing results analysis in country strategies. The study pointed out that:

The Evaluation Units’s review of Sida’s results analyses shows that there is great confusion with regard to the concepts of “results” and “analysis.” Different concepts, such as cost-efficiency, are sometimes used incorrectly and frequently without an explanatory background. It is therefore necessary to distinguish and discuss two absolutely fundamental questions: What is a result and how is it to be analyzed? (Sida 1996a:8)

There was thus confusion in regards to how the term “results” was used by staff. The study thus recommended that Sida should “ensure that a clear and uniform concept of results is to be used by all units of the agencies” (Sida 1996a:27). The study also recommended Sida improve mechanisms for reporting, information and statistics. As a consequence, Sida developed

internal guidelines for how to conduct results analyses on the country strategies. In the guidelines, it was decided that results reporting should be done in a matrix format with cost information and information on planned and expected contribution outcomes and results (Sida 1997). It is clear that Sida itself developed the requirement for a results matrix to be used in contributions at this time. This was not something demanded by the government. It is, however, important to note that this reporting was not demanded by the government. In Sida studies in Evaluation 96/2 it was stated that:

It is rather Sida's own interpretation of the government's instructions that results reporting in the matrix format is an important requirement for reliable results analyses in the country strategy process." (Sida 1996a:4)

One can thus understand that the Sida Rating Initiative was decided upon in a context where the agency felt under external pressure to report on results but where there was at the same time an internal uncertainty on how to actually do it.

The Sida Rating Initiative was run in four different project phases, with four different project leaders/lead designers. Below, I describe what happened within each of them.

6.2.2 The First Project 1999–2000: Developing the Model

The aim of the first project was to develop and test a rating model. In the decision, the aim of the system was stated to be:

To get, by means of a regular and systematic follow-up of results fulfillment in Sida's efforts, obtain information concerning:

- Sida's actions vis-à-vis the cooperation partner and the implementation of the contribution
- assessment in final reports and evaluations
- arguments concerning continued Sida financing
- various applications, such as results analyses in country strategies, annual reports, etc.⁵⁵

The initiative was thus intended to systematize rating information in order to be useful for internal results management purposes. Expected effects of the system were that the system would be utilized by Programme Officers and managers and by Sida's Management Committee during follow-up and reporting. The decision also declared that Sida was expected to obtain an improved "overview of project results."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Internal Decision GD 109/99

⁵⁶ Ibid.

A project leader and a project group were appointed to lead the initiative. According to the first project leader, she was not appointed based on previous experience of rating, but since “I was seen as someone with good knowledge of aid and reality” (D3-1). The project was to prepare a “model for rating and suggest how the model was to be implemented within the organization”.⁵⁷ The definition of rating was declared to be “to assess and follow up on results by using standardized indicators and a standardized scale”.⁵⁸ It is clear that there was a belief within the rating project that the Logical Framework Analysis was already being used within Sida. The project was to be “built upon the LFA” and “how results reporting and follow-up is carried out today”.⁵⁹ The project was to: 1) Investigate how Sida is assessing “results” today; 2) Investigate how other organizations do this; 3) Propose a model and 4) Send out the model proposal as an internal proposal. It was stated that the model should be introduced within the organization no later than 15 April 2000, i.e. within one year of the initiation of the project.⁶⁰

a. Lessons and Previous Experiences

Among the first activities within the first Rating project was the issue of a memo regarding Sida’s current work with results measurement and a review of previous experiences. It is clear that the Project Group was surprised about the way in which Sida currently reported on results. The memo declared that:

There is no common format for reporting results at Sida that applies to all forms of funding and all types of projects and programs. Results reporting at the contribution level is done differently in different formats. It is therefore impossible for this project to draft a summary of the complete results reporting at Sida and what it looks like.⁶¹

The report thus found that annual reporting on “results” was not taking place within Sida. The memo also drew attention to problems and difficulties with the LFA, which had been assumed to be in place within the organization. It declared that:

We do not know to what extent the LFA methodology is actually used today (a survey conducted in 1997 shows a diverse use). It seems as if LFA is used to a reasonable degree during the preparation phase of an effort, but to a lesser

⁵⁷ Internal Decision EVU 85/99

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Internal Memo 1999 “Rating av Sida finansierade insatser. Redovisning av fas 1 och 2. EVU/VU” (Rating of Sida-financed contributions)

extent during the implementation and follow-up of contributions [...] A recurring deficiency in the project document is that expected outputs and goals are vaguely formulated, without clear indicators that concretize the change expected to take place.⁶²

This citation demonstrates that quite soon after the launch of the Rating project it was found that the basic assumption, i.e. that the LFA was being widely used within the organization and that it would be possible to collect results information, was incorrect. There was far more uncertainty in regards to how possible it was to pick up results.

The project group also mapped experiences and lessons learnt from rating from other donors. In the internal review it was found that 16 donor organizations had so far implemented rating.⁶³ Rating was declared to be valuable for the organizations, since they intended to create a results focus in organizations, and also since the system (in comparison to systems with objective data only) could demonstrate for external parties that “I control the moment of communication” and for internal parties that “I can show that I am in control”.⁶⁴ The possible benefits were thus mainly defined to be for control purposes of the donor.

In Sida’s summary of experiences of why other donors had introduced rating, it was stated that:

Increased focus on results follow-up and evaluation, as well as requirements to be able to show which results have been achieved is the background for why many aid organizations have introduced rating systems of different kinds. The purpose of rating systems varies, the bigger and more complex the systems, the greater the difficulties that have been encountered when they have been introduced and implemented. An important lesson that is universal for every organization is that the ease through which a rating system may be integrated into the organization’s management system or other processes depends on the design of the model. If the rating assessments carried out are not requested or used, then rating becomes nothing but a meaningless ritual [...] Another lesson is that it is psychologically difficult to introduce rating in an organization. The introduction of rating has been met with resistance in every organization. However, the organizations that have worked with rating for a longer period of time are more positive than those in the early stages of implementation.⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid. p.4

⁶³ Ibid. Experiences were provided from a workshop organized by DAC Expert Group of Evaluation. Experiences were also gathered from a visit to the World Bank and USAID.

⁶⁴ Internal Memo 1999:8. “Experiences with rating systems in development aid management. Summary of presentation”

⁶⁵ Ibid. p.6

It was thus found that other donor organizations had experienced difficulties in implementing rating. Among the experiences presented, it was specifically stated that the Dutch DGIS had found it difficult to publish rating information officially due to political reasons. After the information had been collected, the Minister of Development simply did not want it to be published for “fear of attacks from the media and journalists in case they would find out about bad projects”.⁶⁶ The World Bank was also declared to have a “complex model” and to have had difficulties in harmonizing different performance information systems. It was also claimed that, like Sida, they had had difficulties with the LFA since there was a “confusion of inputs/outputs/outcome/impact” and “unclear definitions concerning indicators, goals and over-arching goals”.⁶⁷

The report also reviewed experiences from within Sida when implementing results or rating initiatives. Experiences from four earlier initiatives were revealed: 1. It was announced that in the 1970s, the head of one field office had taken a private initiative to rate some projects, but that “the model was in use for a number of years, but was then forgotten when the initiator left the office”.⁶⁸ 2. Experience from the 1981 results initiative Project Program Follow-Up with Performance Rating was described thus:

These reports only represented a snapshot of Sida’s collected contribution portfolio. The report and the rating were not used operationally. This was a major weakness and the organization viewed the report as something extraordinary and not as a natural part of the project follow-up.⁶⁹

This citation shows that the rating project did review experiences from the second results initiative, the Project Program Follow-Up, and that the main difficulty seen was that the 1981 initiative was seen as something “extraordinary”.

The memo also analyzed a third and a fourth rating initiative: 3. In the country strategy process for Nicaragua in the mid-90s, a rating was made of the contributions in the country program. During the initiative, Programme Officers were tasked with assessing their projects’ possibilities to achieve their goals on a scale from one to three. It was claimed that “The rating was met with a great degree of skepticism, but the conclusion in hindsight was that it contributed to initiating a discussion on priorities at an earlier stage in the country strategy”.⁷⁰ 4. The department for research support (SAREC) had

⁶⁶ Ibid. p.24

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p.3

⁶⁹ Ibid. p.3

⁷⁰ Ibid.

recently needed to determine priorities and had tried to do so by rating all projects as “good,” “medium good” or “bad”. It was claimed that it had been difficult to obtain an “acceptance” for the rating system and to find a system that worked for all types of projects.

So, it is clear that prior to starting the 1998 initiative, there was a revision of both experiences and lessons. However, it seems that at this point in time the memos were generally archived, but not actually discussed within the organization. However, the only experiences reviewed were those regarding how other donors and Sida had worked with results in the past. In an e-mail, two staff members asked whether the project group had reviewed how other public agencies worked with results measurement and management. The project group replied:

We have not looked at the Swedish public administration, but focused on the experiences of other donors, as they do the same kind of thing as Sida. (L1 2000)

This citation demonstrates that the project group had not seen a need to evaluate experiences from other public agencies, only development aid organizations, since it was perceived that development aid practices were different from and not comparable with other governmental public agencies.

b. Interviews and First Interaction with Staff concerning the Idea

In order to gather experiences of how Sida staff members perceived the value added of a rating system in their work, the project group interviewed 15 staff members. A summary of their experiences stated the following:

Most interviewees were in favor of using a rating system, but found it difficult to find a model that would suit every kind of contribution. Everyone saw the need for an increased systematic approach in the evaluation of results, something that was seen as inadequate at the time. The managers were the most positive, who saw a clear use of a rating system as a management tool to get a better overview of their contribution portfolios, in addition to the ability to quickly and easily get information concerning different projects; for example, before annual reports or planning activities. Some managers also pointed to the significance of a rating system being able to contribute to an improved focus on problem areas. For the administrators, some people claimed, the introduction of a rating system would mean a more systematic approach in the follow-up and the ability to see trends over time more clearly. The interviewees expressed reservations and doubts with regard to the possibility of using rating for things other than clearly defined projects. For example, some of the interviewees argued that it would be difficult to apply a rating system on sector program support. Many also saw difficulties capturing

complex projects and programs, as well as complex contexts, in a simple rating system.⁷¹

In sum, at this stage, the assessment made by the project group was thus that the rating system could add value to the organization in a number of ways. However, the memo also declared that the majority of staff members believed aggregating rating information to be “very questionable”. Furthermore, it was noted that it was important for staff that the rating model was simple and that there was a demand for this information from Sida managers. It was noted that “otherwise, there is a large risk that the model will never be used”.⁷²

c. The Rating Model

In early 2000, the proposed model was sent out as an internal proposal. The model was sent out to 13 of Sida’s departments and 27 field offices. In the proposal, the rationale for rating was declared thus:

Rating codifies the assessment of a project. It serves as a signal system during the implementation phase of the project cycle and contributes to structured assessments over time. Rating is primarily an instrument for analysis and discussion.⁷³

Ratings were to be conducted by the Programme Officer best positioned and familiar with the project. It was noted that ratings “can be updated whenever necessary, but that the intervals should not exceed six months.” Every six months, the ratings were to be filed with the signature of a head of division or the councilor for development cooperation at the embassy.⁷⁴

The rating model was exemplified by the following picture:

⁷¹ Ibid. p.2

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Internal Memo: The rating model: Principles, instructions and explanations. 5 June 2000. 1999-5015/60.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p.2

PROJECT INTERVENTION + ASSUMPTIONS

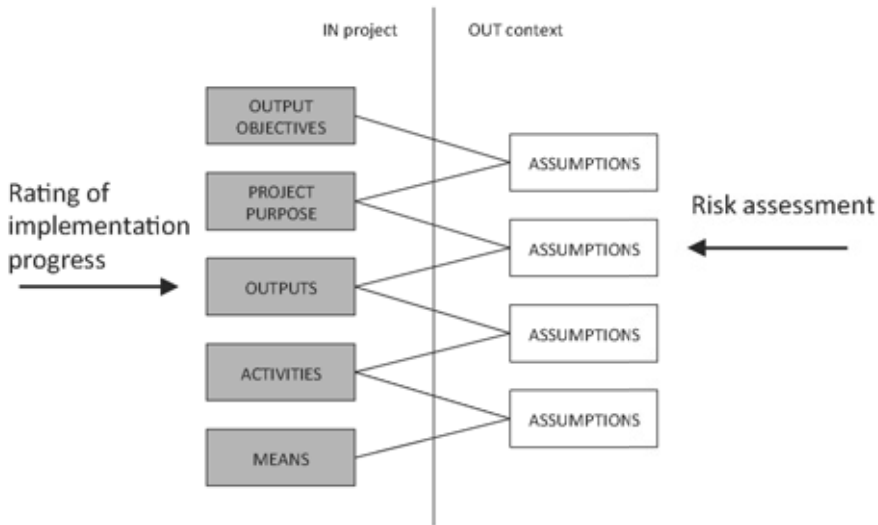


Figure 7 The rating model. Source: Internal Memo. The Rating model: Principles, instructions and explanations. 1999-5015/60

It was stated that the “model follows the logical sequence of the Logical Framework Analysis”. However, there was no clarification of what the LFA was.⁷⁵ After this explanation, the following picture was given:

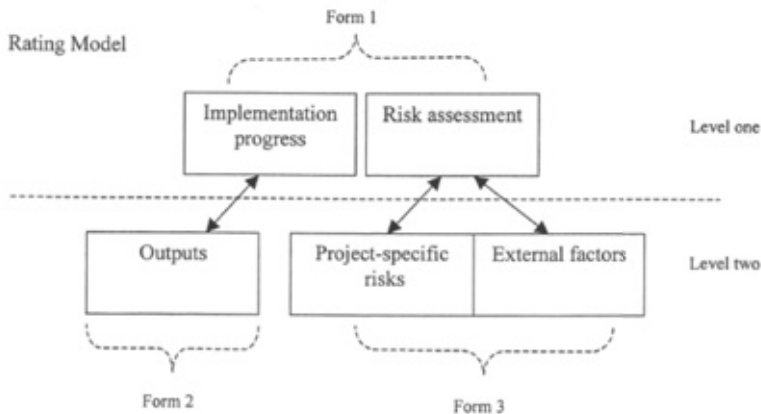


Figure 8. The rating model 2. Source: Internal Memo. The Rating model: Principles, instructions and explanations. 1999-5015/60

The model thus covered two aspects: implementation progress (outputs) and risk assessment (the risk that the project will not achieve its project purpose), and that ratings for these two aspects were recorded at two levels. It was stated that in Form 1, ratings were to be recorded for overall implementation progress; in Form 2, ratings were to be recorded for specific outputs; and in Form 3, risks were to be recorded.⁷⁶ Ten pages of instructions were then given on how to fill out the ratings in a computerized manual. For ratings at the first level – implementation progress, four values could be chosen: Very Good, Satisfactory, Less than Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory. For ratings at level one – risk assessment, the values were: Low, Modest, Substantial and High. It was recommended that six outputs were inserted and rated. The model also implied a rating of the risk that the immediate objectives would not be achieved.

What is interesting here is that although the review of experiences had declared that the Logical Framework was seldom used by staff within the agency, the model took it for granted that “output” information was available and that ratings could be made based on this information.

d. Proposal and Responses to the Proposal

In May 2000, the field offices and Sida departments were asked in an internal proposal to comment on the model (L2 2000). Responses were received from 10 of the 13 departments, and 15 of the 27 field offices replied to the internal proposal.⁷⁷ This implied a reply rate of 65%.

The responses were only documented in a summary form in a memo written by the project leader for the first phase of the SiRS initiative.⁷⁸ The comments were compiled both according to the topic/question and whether the respondents were positive or negative. The following table compiles all comments provided with regard to the question “Aim, benefits and use of rating”:⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Ibid. p.4

⁷⁷ Internal Memo 2000. “Sammanfattning av remissvar på förslaget till ratingsystem med kommentarer och slutsatser från projektets styrgrupp” Appendix 1. 6 June 2000.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ The categories “Comments questioning, comments in favor and comments other are mine. In this table, I have written down all comments from the summary. In brackets I have provided the number of respondents stating a similar comment.

| Comments questioning | Comments in favor | Comments other |
|--|---|--|
| The purpose of rating is unclear. (7) | Rating is a good instrument for follow-up and control. (8) | Rating may provide increased results orientation, but is there an organizational readiness? (1) |
| Rating is a bad management tool, dialogues are more effective. (1) | We accept the idea and the basic setup. (1) | Rating may lead to LFA actually being used. (1) |
| Rating is not useful for administrators. (2) | The idea is good and should be tested in a pilot project. (2) | Rating may provide a quick picture of status and developments in individual projects. At an aggregate level, it should be possible to get an overview of trends (1) |
| Rating provides nothing new. (1) | A complement to other kinds of reporting. (1) | The proposal is thorough, but we have a different view on conditions and applications. (1) |
| Rating is a poor fit for Sida, as our activities are so complex and varied.(1) | Rating is good; it is better to rate some of the aid than to not rate at all. (1) | Rating may be good at project level, but there are better methods. (1) |
| Assessments are complex and cannot be captured on a four-point scale (1) | The risk assessment may be used as a basis for structured dialogues. (1) | How to choose the six most important outputs? (1) |
| The proposal is donor-controlled and runs contrary to the principle of ownership and risks consolidating the project thinking at Sida. (3) | | Sida needs to measure the quality of projects using other measurements than dispersed funds (e.g. YEARS). If that is the purpose, then the model should be designed accordingly. (1) |
| A risk if aggregations are to be used by external actors and if the information is made public. (2) | | It is important to consider the resources used for rating in relation to the usefulness of rating. (1) |
| There is a risk that rating is perceived by managers as a control instrument. (1) | | How should rating be followed up and combined with other follow-up instruments? (1) |

Develop the follow-up systems currently in place instead. (1)

Not possible to aggregate rating (1). Aggregation requires reliable data. (1)

Annual review a better instrument for follow-up through dialogue. (1)

Important to define how information on rating is to be used for steering (1). The steering aspect has vanished. (1)

Easy to fill out, but impossible to do it “correctly” and to rank projects. (1)

The demand for rating must permeate the whole organization, responsibility of managers is unclear. (1)

A significant risk of subjective assessments lacking consistency over time. (1)

Table 4. Compilation of staff responses on Rating Source: Internal Memo 2000. “Sammanfattning av remissvar på förslaget till ratingsystem med kommentarer och slutsatser från projektets styrgrupp” (Summary of comments on the proposed rating system, comments and conclusions from the project's steering group)

In this compilation summary, it is possible to see that the comments provided by staff on rating at this stage were both positive and negative, but that there were more comments questioning than comments in favor. Some respondents declared that the aim of rating was difficult to understand and that it would be difficult to use for different purposes. Others responded that rating could become a complement to existing follow-up structures and that the initiative was worth testing in a pilot project. In the project group's summary of the experiences, it was, however, stated that “The majority of the responses to the proposal are positive and wish to go further and try out the proposal in pilot experiments”.⁸⁰ Rating was seen as beneficial both to triggering further use of the LFA and also for “overview” purposes.

6.2.3 The Second Project 2000–2002: Testing the model

a. Motivating the Project Group and Staff

The second rating project started in November 2000. A new project leader, a Sida Programme Officer, was appointed to lead the project.⁸¹ The focus of

⁸⁰ Internal Memo. “Sammanfattning av remissvar på förslaget till ratingsystem med kommentarer och slutsatser från projektets styrgrupp” Appendix 1. 6 June 2000. p.2

⁸¹ I have not found the decision for the second phase of the project, but I assume that the project group worked in accordance with the proposal “Förslag till pilotprojekt

the second project phase was to test the rating model in a couple of departments. It is clear that staff at this stage had resisted the idea of rating. There was therefore a strong focus on counteracting the resistance met and also motivating the project group itself to work with the initiative.

At their first meeting, the new project group discussed the question “Why do we want to participate in the rating project?”⁸² The responses included that it was because it was “fun” to be part of a project group and that “rating had a possibility to contribute toward an improved focus on results and the LFA”.⁸³ Another question discussed was whether “Rating is any good?” Among other responses, the group announced that “it is not clear why the rating exercise needs to be done” and that it was not clear that staff felt that rating was of any use to them. It was subsequently decided during the first meeting that it was important to establish the ideas firmly within the organization. It was deemed important to focus more on communication and dialogue with staff than on simply informing staff about what rating was. During the meeting, it was agreed that the project group should “try to take advantage of the naysayers” and try to re-launch rating within the organization. It was also agreed that problems and opinions concerning rating would only be discussed within the project group.

The project group also listed some questions that they were to address. These were:

1. How are we to deal with the resistance toward the project?
2. How do we present the project, now that we know that a lot of people are skeptical?
3. How do we deal with the uneasiness surrounding rating in a system that is public? That makes it particularly difficult to give a negative rating.
4. Rating is a question for the project administrator in charge. Are they ready for the reply? How do we handle the expectations that are created?⁸⁴

From these notes it is possible to see that the project group saw difficulties with resistance, but also with what to do with the information. During the meeting, it was also agreed that it had been difficult to recruit new members to the project group, which now only consisted of four people. It is possible

2000-06-09”. The minutes of the meeting record, however, a discussion showing that a project proposal was about to be written.

⁸² Internal Memo: Protokoll ratingprojektet. 22 November 2000

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

to note that the focus in the discussions was the question of how to motivate both themselves and Sida staff to become positive toward rating.

b. Pilot Testing the Model

In February 2001, it was decided that the rating model was to be tested in four units within Sida (the Embassy in Harare, the Embassy in Nairobi, the Health Division and the Division for Russia). Two members of the project team were to visit each of the Embassies as well as participate in introducing the two units at Sida Stockholm.

Both positive and negative reactions were voiced in the responses. It was, for example, noted that “In general, people have been interested in the model and agreed that Sida could benefit from such a system”⁸⁵ but also that “some units, Programme Officers have indicated that from their perspective, the exercise is not cost-effective”.⁸⁶ One of the comments from a Director in the Field were in regard to the usefulness of rating:

According to several managers, the immediate reaction in the sectors has been quite skeptical and rating has been seen to be “yet another burden from the administrative unit”. There has been a certain amount of fear with regard to how Sida Stockholm is planning to use the rating results. People are concerned with regard to one-way control, where Sida Stockholm makes far-reaching decisions based on the rating results. [...] Regarding the usefulness of rating, someone argued that no new information is made available from the system.⁸⁷

This citation shows that staff members were skeptical and anxious and felt fear concerning how the rating information would be used. Another problem mentioned was the difficulty in both using the LFA and finding the “outputs” to be rated. It was said that “outputs” listed by the participants were more “like headings or a summary of underlying activities” and not actually specific “results.” One of the Embassies, for example, responded with the following:

It became clear during the rating exercise that the reports received from the projects do not always make it possible to report results according to an LFA or project plans. [...] For at least one Programme Officer, the exercise led to that he in the future would request modified reporting from the co-operating partner⁸⁸.

⁸⁵ Internal Memo: The pilot test of Sida’s rating model: Summary of Rating no 1. 7 May 2001

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid. p.2

⁸⁸ Ibid.

This citation shows that the rating exercise, with its requirement to report on “outputs”, led to changed work practices; the Programme Officer would, in the future, request another type of reporting from the recipients. In the same response, it was noted that the exercise had implied that Programme Officers placed more focus on the LFA. It was noted that: “In a few cases, it was the first time the officers had returned to LFA since the beginning of the project.”

However, despite these difficulties, the conclusion of the rating project was that “The main benefits, however, come later with the development of a time series”.⁸⁹ The difficulties identified were thus expected only to be high initially, and the benefits of the model were expected to come later, once “outputs” had been identified.⁹⁰

During the second test rating period, a letter sent to the test units emphasized that rating should be based on the LFA and not just be “a general opinion and feeling” (L3 2001). In the letter, a reference was also made to “new” pressure for rating from the National Audit Bureau. It was stated that:

In various reviews, the National Audit Bureau, our internal auditors, etc. have recommended that Sida develop better systems to review and follow up development projects. This is the reason why Sida is now testing the rating scheme. (L3 2001)

The citation shows that the motivation that rating was important for Sida was a recommendation made by the National Audit Bureau.

In December 2001, the heads of the test units were asked to comment on their experiences of rating. Three of the four units provided written comments. The following is taken from the response from the Division for Russia:

“Mixed feelings” is the best way to describe ERO’s (the Division for Russia’s) position. Out of 8 persons who participated in the pilot test, two are mainly in favor, four mainly against. [...] Common views: there are many technical deficiencies in the computer system for rating, it is not up to standard, the layout does not allow an overview, etc. Rating takes too much time. The majority has a more pessimistic view and firmly believes that rating would still be an additional significant administrative workload. The most crucial questions are: Why? For what? For whom? The majority says that rating gives crude and unsophisticated information of little value. A minority says it is a way to keep better order, that it brings attention to the setting of goals and expected results. The majority says maybe so, but there are other ways to do that. Everybody agrees that it is of the highest importance that there is an end-user, that the Sida leadership will use the results. For head of

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p.3

units, there is no need because heads of division always know much more about the problems – discussing and solving problems is their everyday work. [...] A dilemma: if results are made public, the rating officer will be less inclined to classify a project as “less satisfactory,” because it is likely to lead to irritation and conflicts with some of the project implementers. As a consequence, there is a risk that rating becomes cautious and chickenhearted, which would diminish its value further. (L4 2002)

The comment demonstrates that the field office questioned the purpose of the exercise and who was going to use the information. From the Embassy in Nairobi, the following can be read:

We believe in rating – as a method to monitor program implementation. Our initial positive stand has been reinforced by the participation in the pilot phase. Less fortunate has been our fight with the computer-based system for recording the rating. Most of our time spent on rating has actually been used in attempts to overpower this awkward electronic creature! [...] During the pilot phase, it has not been possible to involve anyone from outside the embassy and accordingly, we do not have any view from representatives of recipients. [...] Programs are studied more carefully today in order to find verifications of results etc. [...] Rating may have led to that we are better professionals today. We read reports more professionally, we make relevant appraisals about the state of affairs in the programs, we are hopefully more objective and have probably distanced us from the respective programs. (L5 2002)

This comment demonstrates that this field office saw it as beneficial for Sida’s “professionalism” to do ratings but that they mainly saw problems with the computer system. Comments from the Health Unit stated the following:

Our overall assessment is “doubtful value.” It is good that there is an attempt to get a picture of Sida’s projects and contributions and “how things are going.” However, there is a problem in that Sida’s project portfolio is extremely diverse. [...] Furthermore, the assessment of how the projects work is of dubious value for most people due to the present layout of the rating system. For the managers, good with an overview, the administrators already know. [...] The question is whether to develop a system to satisfy the need of DG and other managers to have an overview. (L6 2002)

In sum, the use of rating was highly questioned in the comments: Why? For what and for whom? However, one of the comments was positive; it was argued that rating had contributed to Sida staff becoming more professional (L5 2002) which in this case may be read as Sida staff for example reading reports in an improved way.

In February 2002, a discussion of the rating system was held at a meeting with Sida’s Management Committee. As background to the meeting, a 25-

page Final Report about the experiences of rating thus far had been written.⁹¹ The report pointed out that there had been comments in various internal reports and audits on weaknesses in Sida's monitoring and follow-up of agreed project activities. Three alternatives were given for how to proceed with rating: 1) Not introducing the system; 2) Introducing the rating system at the Embassies but not at divisions in Stockholm; and 3) Introducing rating at most divisions at Sida. The rating project finally recommended option three – to introduce rating at most divisions at Sida.⁹² The following comment, however, was included in the decision:

This will be a difficult task. It will be a huge task to introduce the system at all or most divisions at Sida and it will also be more difficult to maintain. On the other hand, it might feel more “fair” as everybody has to do it.⁹³

The citation shows that when the decision was made, it was very well known by the decision-makers that the task of implementing the system would not be easy. However, the decision seems to have been made with a feeling that “there is no alternative”. On 8 April, a decision was made to accept the final report from the second project and dissolve the project team and relieve the project leader from her responsibilities.⁹⁴

6.2.4 The Third Project 2002–2004: Implementation

a. Motivating more Compliance

In March 2002, a new project leader took over the leadership of the third rating project. In addition to the project leader, the project group was supported during this phase by 2–3 consultants. The third project thus had considerable more resources than the previous projects. During the third project several training sessions and visits were made by the project group team members and the consultant to Embassies and field offices. The aim of the third project was to gradually introduce rating at all (or most departments) within Sida no later than 31 December 2003.⁹⁵ It was, however, stated that the introduction of rating was envisaged to take two years. Throughout the third phase, rating was voluntary, not mandatory. One could say that the main work done by the project group throughout the third

⁹¹ Internal Memo: Sida's rating scheme: conclusions from the Pilot project. 30 January 2002

⁹² Ibid. p.2

⁹³ Ibid. p.19

⁹⁴ Internal Decision EVU 1/02 “Concluding the test of Sida's Rating Model”

⁹⁵ Internal Decision GD 38/02.

project was that they tried, through different tactics, to find Sida units willing to participate in the rating exercise voluntarily.

When presenting the ideas within the third project to staff, it was said that the system would contribute to “improved discipline, effectiveness and results” (L7 2002). It was promised that earlier problems with the IT component, which was “a major problem in the past,” would now be solved (L7 2002). The project group also tried to maintain or enhance optimism among staff. This was, for example, done by sending e-mail to some “chosen” units congratulating them on the fact that they had “won the elimination competition and were being offered a first seat at next year’s rating trip” (L8 2002). Another tactic was to put pressure on units by referring to the Director General’s decision (L9 2002). In a letter to all Sida departments and field offices, it was stated that:

I am quite sure that most of you have already started to hope that the storm has blown over – and that the rating campaign has blown off! Sorry to disappoint you! On the contrary, considerable work has been done during the last two months since the first update. [...] Please file membership application as soon as possible! (L9 2002)

It is clear from this citation that the project group was aware that the rating exercise might be considered a low priority among staff members but that they hoped that either applying pressure or motivating staff would encourage more staff to fulfill the exercise.

As stated above, the project group made many visits to the Embassies during this phase. It is clear that once in implementation, discussions and difficulties arose with regard to the categories used in the rating exercise. There was, for example, said to have been a “heated discussion around the range/scale that SiRS employs” during one of the meetings and also that the “number of criteria/outputs, i.e. six outputs were considered too few and that they do not appropriately reflect reality”.⁹⁶ It was, moreover, noted that outputs did not fully reflect the complexity of the programs. In a letter to the project group, a staff member wrote, for example:

I would strongly argue that an assessment of the relevance of a contribution in relation to the poverty goal requires detailed analyses of causal relationships, which are impossible to capture in a meaningful way on a three or five point scale. (L10 2002)

It was thus noted that the categories in the rating system did not fully capture the reality of development aid. The response from the project leader noted that:

⁹⁶ Internal Memo. Travel report from Latin America. 7 August 2003

It is simply not the case that we add a lot of new boxes to fill out – but rather to remind the users of what we normally and recurrently should do – reflect on whether what we support is and remains relevant, efficient and sustainable. And relevance, today just like yesterday, is expected effects and impact on poverty. To me, it is about making this internal evaluation and reflection exercise a little bit more interesting when you are nevertheless forced to go through a routine that certainly will be perceived as somewhat unnecessary, burdensome and a bit dull! (L11 2002)

This communication shows that the project leader and the staff member had different opinions concerning the possibility of actually fulfilling the exercise and the rationale for the categories. Whereas the staff member saw the exercise as “impossible” to fulfill due to the requirements to demonstrate causality, the project leader saw questioning of the exercise being a question of attitude.

As a consequence of these discussions, in the spring of 2003 the categories in the rating system were changed (Sida 2004). These were introduced in a new User Manual. “Outputs” were now, for example, called “immediate results”. The rating scale had also been changed to a four-graded scale (EP: Exceeding Plans; AP: According to Plans; MDP: Minor Deviation from Plans; SDP: Serious Deviation from Plans and N/A: Not Applicable) (Sida 2004:5). The changes in the new manual thus implied that more detail was given regarding how to do the rating exercise. Another change in the rating manual was that a so-called “completion rating” was to be done when closing a project and a risk assessment was to be done on the likelihood that the program/project purpose(s) would be maintained after the termination of the project (Sida 2004:26). In the manual, comprehensive guidance was given to staff on how to fill out the different categories. Staff members were, for example, encouraged to “follow the reality, not the map” when looking for “immediate results” (Sida 2004:10).

In general, both the project group and respondents from the field argued that even if the initial reactions had been more critical, these had disappeared after some time and after discussions with members of the project group and the consultants. In a meeting memo from the project group, it was noted that:

Noticeably frequently, the participants say that despite previous skepticism, they now acknowledge the value and benefit of this method.⁹⁷

This comment demonstrates that the project group found that staff were frequently more positive towards the exercise after having tried it out.

However, despite these positive reactions, it was clear that the problems encountered with this voluntary requirement were considerable. Very few

⁹⁷ Internal Meeting Memo from the Rating Project. 21 October 2003

units actually complied with the exercise, the rating categories were seen as cumbersome and it was not clear for staff how information from the rating system would be used. During 2003, several strategies were employed by the project group to gain more acceptance of the exercise within the organization.

One of the discussions considered the use of the information. The project leader, for example, proposed to Sida's steering group that the "outputs" inserted in the rating system could be aggregated, for example in Sida's annual reports. It was argued that aggregating the "outputs" would be more "objective" and useful for the assessment and the comments. It was also stated that "the additional workload could be seen as quite insignificant, as one still had to find the results and read and assess them." This proposal was, however, rejected by the steering group, after which a question was sent to some selected staff members in the field. The e-mail contained the following:

Want to check in with you in the field if you would consider this notion of concrete results presentation as beneficial. (L12 2002)

The question exemplifies that the project group had doubts about the perceived usefulness of the reporting. It is not possible to find any answers to this request in the archives, and it seems that the discussion on whether to actually use the "output" information, for example for Sida's annual reporting, died after this attempt. Discussions subsequently took place on, for example, the establishment of "ethical rules" that would impede the use of rating data for purposes other than follow-up of projects.⁹⁸

A strategy to increase motivation and enthusiasm for the exercise was also tried out by launching a competition to find a new name for rating. It stated that none of the Swedish terms using "rating" as a name – "rejtning" or "rejtning" – had "appealed to" Sida staff. The competition was to run until the end of the year.⁹⁹ The competition was launched by introducing a slogan "Rating is Fun!" and by explaining that the exercise was valuable:

In spite of these technical mishaps – so much a part of the experience of any development cooperation worker – both the introduction program, the SiRS in itself, was definitely a success at all embassies visited. The hilarious and so-called Robinson Rating Exercise has proven its value both as a first rating experience and a clear example of the SiRS slogan:

Rating is Fun!

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

(The competing slogan –Rating is a Joke –could finally be dropped!) (L13 2003)

Due to the poor response, the name competition was later extended by four months. No official documentation can be found to show whether any staff members submitted name suggestions. The name for rating was never changed.

The Rating project held several information meetings and training opportunities. At the meetings the following Power Point picture was shown to demonstrate how rating could lead the organization to move from an “Island of Hell” to the vision of “Paradise”:

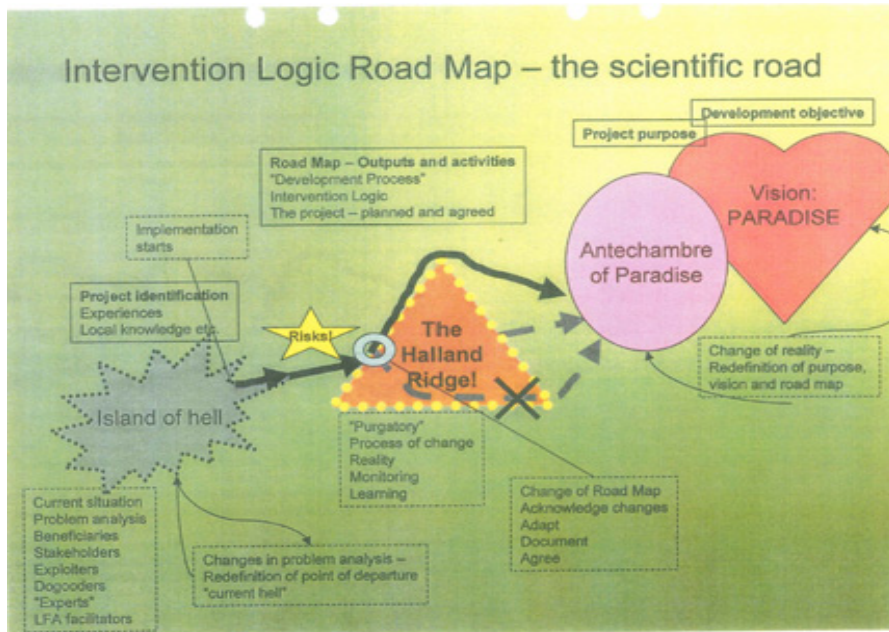


Figure 9: “Intervention logic road map –the scientific road” Source: The designer (D3-3)

However, it seems that it was not easy to entuse staff about the rating exercise. Not everyone saw the added value. This was discussed in a project group meeting:

A surprising experience was the negative reaction to the new introduction ... A fair number of people found it too elementary (perhaps because they were predominantly experienced administrators). A conclusion may be that we

should avoid being too detailed and “wordy” [...] and we should point out that this information is requested by the National Audit Bureau.¹⁰⁰

So, the project group concluded that the reason for the negative reaction from staff was the presentation technique. It was also emphasized that the project group “had failed” to inform staff that there had been external criticism of Sida’s results reporting by the National Audit Bureau.

b. Crisis Meetings and Actions

By April 2004, the third rating project had been in place for two years (i.e. the time period during which it had been envisaged that rating would be introduced throughout the organization). At this stage, a crisis meeting was held with the Sida Management Committee. At the meeting, the project group reported that only four (4) of a total of 5,000 contributions had so far been rated and approved by the system.¹⁰¹ This implied a compliance rate of 0.08%. The project group reported, however, that although the majority of staff had now been trained in rating:

On the whole, there has been little demand for the practical training sessions (KomiGång med SiRS) that have been offered so far and the units’ focal points for SiRS have often faced an uphill struggle. There is a great risk that four years of development efforts will not be realized and made useful¹⁰².

This comment illustrates the claim that it would be a waste of resources for the organization if something more was not done to ensure that staff complied with the exercise and that information was used. The project group therefore now declared that they wanted to hand over the responsibility for utilizing the system to the Department Directors. The title of the Power Point presentation used at the meeting was “SiRS at YOUR doorstep!! Or: ‘The ball is in your court...’”.¹⁰³

Some comments raised by the Department Directors participating in the meeting concerned the heavy work load. It was pointed out that “given the current workload, people cannot manage additional routines, elements and separate systems when administering contributions”. It was also noted that there was a continuous “imbalance between contribution administration and

¹⁰⁰ Meeting minutes with the Rating Project, 27 November 2003

¹⁰¹ Meeting minutes, 21 April 2004 “Anteckningar från chefsmöte angående Sida Rating System”. This figure probably refers to the fact that four (4) out of 5,000 had fulfilled the completion rating. According to the Meeting Minutes with the Rating Project 9 January 2004, 22 out of 5,000 projects had been rated. Irrespectively, it shows that the number of projects that had completed rating were few.

¹⁰² Meeting minutes with the Rating Project, 23 April 2004

¹⁰³ Article SIDA inside 14 May 2004. Upgraded rating system finds new home. From private archive.

contribution follow-up” and that SiRS had not managed to make the organization more results-oriented. However, in a final note from the meeting it was concluded that:

The rating project stressed that even if the initial investment in getting started and drafting one’s contribution portfolio may feel heavy, there is every reason to believe that the system in some time will actually both save time and simplify the ongoing evaluation and follow-up.¹⁰⁴

There was thus a belief that benefits of the system would show up later.

Before finalizing the third phase of the rating project, the project group conducted a so-called completion rating reflecting on how the third phase of the rating project itself had achieved the intended “results”. The report concluded that the project had a “high degree of achievement of immediate results and on the whole on track with some slippages with regard to time and cost”. The report reported on the risks of further maintenance and sustainability of the project. The external risk was rated as H (High Risk). It was stated that:

The biggest risk is that the system and method will not be applied and used by the organization. Lack of support and demand from management is a key risk, reflecting remaining skepticism against the system in many departments, combined with overburdened staff. The general lack of results focus and RBM culture in Sida makes SiRS an isolated attempt. (Sida 2008a:14)

According to the final report, an additional factor that might hamper the implementation was the “attitude of Sida’s managers” and the “resistance and disinterest” among staff (Sida 2008a:14). In sum, the main causes for the difficulties were attitudes, resistance and difficulties convincing staff to use SiRS, due to other tasks and due to lack of leadership support for the system. Nothing was said about the fact that the difficulties might have had something to do with the difficulty in actually using the model or the lack of results information and use of LFA in the first place.

In May 2004, an article with the title “Upgraded rating system finds new home” was presented on Sida’s intranet.¹⁰⁵ The article said that “it was now time to hand over the project to the line organization”.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Article copied and scanned by the Designer. Sent to me in by e-mail.

6.2.5 The Fourth Phase 2004–2007: Compulsory Use and Dying Out

In 2003 a new Director General was appointed, i.e. Sida was no longer headed by a Director General who had not personally taken the decision to initiate the Sida Rating Initiative. In June 2004, the new Director General took the decision to make rating compulsory for all contributions larger than 3 MSEK. It was stated that:

| | |
|-------------|---|
| | Decision: |
| <u>That</u> | from 2004-01-01, all contributions larger than 3.0 MSEK and with an agreement period exceeding 24 months shall be rated and registered in Computer Tool at least once every year, and that a retrospective completion rating is undertaken upon completion of a support/contribution in accordance with the SiRS Principles and General Guidelines, May 2004. |
| <u>That</u> | the holder of financial authority for a contribution is responsible for ensuring that rating is regularly carried out. ¹⁰⁶ |

The new decisions implied that rating was now being made compulsory throughout the organization. According to the decision every department was to appoint a SiRS contact person to provide support within the department/unit, and every department and Embassy was to incorporate the division of responsibilities and routines for use and follow-up of SiRS in their standing orders.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, the Unit for Internal Control (EVU) was to report regularly, and initially on a quarterly basis, to the Sida Management Committee on the application of SiRS. The Department for Policy and Method Development was now responsible for SiRS as one its regular tasks. A Programme Officer, who also held the position as Sida’s Chief Controller and Chairman of Sida’s Project Committee, was appointed as the new designer responsible for this. However, his task was merely to be a “contact person”, since compliance was expected now that Department Directors were being designated as accountable for the decision (D3-3).¹⁰⁸

Since rating was now the responsibility of every manager, the working approach of the new designer was seen as “developing, administering, informing and assisting” with rating.¹⁰⁹ However, it was announced that

¹⁰⁶ Internal Decision GD 67/04 “Application and use of Sida Rating System (SiRS)”.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ There is very scarce documentation from this fourth phase. I have only found five archived documents of which two are decisions, two are consultancy contracts and one is a report from the period from when rating was made compulsory in 2004 and to 2007, when it died out.

¹⁰⁹ Internal Decision 11731 POM “Utveckling av Sidas Rating System”

since the system had only been in use since 2004 there was a need to follow and further introduce the system to the users. For this purpose, consultants were hired to function as a help desk.¹¹⁰ The help desk now functioned on call. The consultants also organized training workshops which staff could attend without prior registration. Every third month, EVU printed out lists from the SiRS database and discussed the results with Sida's Director General. The lists showed that how different departments were complying with the requirement varied (D3-4).

Very little information exists in the archives on what actually happened during the fourth phase of the rating project, and why the compliance rate increased slightly. In 2006, there was a change in government. The new alliance government had a "results" focus as a core priority for government reforms. I will describe the shifts that occurred during the change of government in more depth in the following chapter. What is important to note in relation to the SiRS, however, concerns the interest of the new government in using the rating system. In a recent interview, the designer for the fourth phase stated the following about when the new Minister for Development Aid assumed power:

She requested the old types of results. [...] Then it was no longer goal management, but rather output [...] We were not able to respond to her questions with this. There was a great deal of irritation. There were massive tensions in what she wanted. Should we go back and tick off how many children are attending school? Then people started to take off in different directions in terms of results agendas. We hoped that something would come flying in. (D3-4)

What this citation exemplifies is that when the Minister came to power, what had been produced within the Rating initiative was not seen as suiting the new demands for "results" by the new government.

From this point onwards the rating exercise became more and more isolated. Discussions on the new "results" focus were held in fora such as a new internal results project entitled "Results for poor people"¹¹¹ within which several studies and analyses were made of experiences of results-based management in other donor organizations (see for example Sida 2006; Sida 2007a). It seems that there was now greater openness in criticizing the rating initiative. An internal audit report, for example, stated that:

The main problem for Sida is to create a focus on results throughout the organization. This is more important for Sida than selecting a model for performance management [...] SiRS captures only a small proportion of Sida's

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Internal Decision: Projektdirektiv "Resultat för fattiga människor" 2006-025498

contributions, and the results analyses made are often reports on “previous experience” and not on goal fulfillment in terms of results. (SIDA 2005:6-7)

SiRS was thus viewed as something isolated and the model used was not viewed as either leading to a focus on “results” within the agency or as suiting the organizational needs any longer.

Moreover, at this stage, the IT system was causing constant problems for staff, who could not access the system or who did not know how to fill out the forms. Some final attempts were made to facilitate its use. In 2006, for example, a discussion was held about whether rating should instead be done by filling out a Word template and refusing to use the computer system.¹¹² However, this suggestion was rejected by the Director General.¹¹³ In the Instructions for Annual Planning for 2007, the Director General decided that “Rating should be done in accordance with the previous DG decision from 2004”.¹¹⁴ A re-launch of rating was planned for 2007.¹¹⁵

In March 2007, a study on “the usefulness of SiRS” was conducted within a project aiming to improve the usefulness of Sida’s IT systems (Sida 2007b). The study, however, concluded that the IT system was “difficult to grasp and did not provide the user with enough support when using it” (Sida 2007b:3). It also commented that there was an unclear link between SiRS and Sida’s general work processes. Like previous criticism, it noted that it was not clear what “immediate results” were, or if there was a connection to the LFA, and that users found it difficult to “describe complex problem settings in a satisfactory way” with the help of the system (Sida 2007b:2). The study furthermore concluded that the motivation among users was low and that the benefits of the exercise were unclear. It was subsequently claimed that the system:

... may be felt as unserious and contributing to undermining the motivation of the users. (No one wants to do something that does not serve a purpose.) (Sida 2007b:3)

So, at this stage, the critique and difficulties seemed to have become overwhelming. As a consequence, in June 2007, the compulsory use of SiRS was reversed in a decision taken by the Director General.¹¹⁶ In the decision it was said that SiRS had only been used in 25% of the compulsory

¹¹² Internal Decision DG “Den fortsatta användningen av Sida Rating System”. 19 June 2007.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Internal Decision DG “Den fortsatta användningen av Sida Rating System”. 19 June 2007

contributions. The decision referred to the report and the recommendations from the IT study (Sida 2007b) and stated that:

A functioning system requires some simple adjustments, but also more comprehensive corrections, partially with external participation. POM does not consider this cost-effective. [...] It is at the same time clear that it is not meaningful and cost-effective to use additional resources on Computer Tool.¹¹⁷

It furthermore stated that “follow-up is a basic component in the more accentuated results-orientation Sida is now entering”¹¹⁸ and that the methods developed within SiRS were part of that results-orientation. It therefore suggested that SiRS be integrated into the overall work with Sida’s results orientation and the recently started project on the “results agenda”. A decision was subsequently made:

That the current obligation is suspended pending a position on the report on the results project.

That the computer-based SiRS Computer Tool should no longer be used for registering new ratings.¹¹⁹

So, in June 2007, the rating initiative finally died out, with motivations of cost effectiveness and that other “results” initiatives would now take over the task of making Sida more results-oriented.

6.3 Summary of the 1998 initiative

Performance measurement and management reforms were “hot” topics in the 1990s, in both the international and domestic environments surrounding Sida at this time. Within Swedish public administration it was perceived that several reforms relating to public management were now in place: the government was to declare the aims and the agencies themselves define the means. Within development aid, the question of why aid was not producing the development results everyone expected to see was discussed within the emerging Aid Effectiveness Agenda, whose core theme was increased ownership for the recipients.

In the 1990s, the government reorganized the development aid sector. The new agency Sida was established by merging four aid agencies (SIDA, BITS (Beredningen för Internationellt Tekniskt-ekonomiskt Samarbete), SwedeCorp (Styrelsen för internationellt näringslivsbistånd) and SAREC (Styrelsen för u-landsforskning). The government also established two new

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

external evaluation bodies – SASDA The Secretariat for Aid Analysis (1992–1993) and EGDI, the Expert Group for Development Issues (1996–2006) – which had the function of providing support and was to have an “independent” role in the valuing of the “results” and effects of aid. One can thus understand that the government tried to make aid administration more effective in the 1990s through a reorganization.

Between the years 1998-2007, the Sida Rating Initiative was run in four different project phases: three internal projects with different project leaders and project groups, and a phase when rating was to be the responsibility of each director. During the first project phase the rating model was developed and experiences were drawn from how other organizations worked with rating and how Sida had previously done so. So, it is clear that prior to starting off the 1998 initiative, a revision of both experiences and lessons was undertaken. Most of the experiences found within the review demonstrated difficulties and failures by other organisations when implementing similar initiatives. The project group explicitly decided not to review experiences from other public agencies in Sweden, since they were not considered to be “doing the same kind of thing” as Sida. However, it is also clear that the memos at this point in time were generally archived, but not actually discussed within the organization.

The Sida rating initiative and the model for performance rating was run under an assumption that “results” or outputs were already known and could be picked up from the Logical Framework, the use of which had been a compulsory requirement in contribution management within Sida since 1995. However, when assessing how Sida was at that time working with results reporting, it was realized that the Logical Framework had not been used by all staff members during the assessment phase. Although this was learned as early as in the first phase of the initiative, the underlying assumption that the Logical Framework had been used and that “outputs” were known remained throughout the implementation phase of the initiative.

Both during the pilot test phase (phase 2) and when the rating exercise was made voluntary (phase 3) throughout the agency, the exercise met with resistance and questioning from staff of the value added by the exercise. The “problem” that the Logical Framework had not been used during planning and that it was therefore difficult to pick the six required “outputs” which were to be rated remained. One could say that there was a large element of fear among staff about how the rating information was going to be used, and what would happen if, for example, a project was rated as “deteriorating”. Despite numerous efforts by the different project leaders and project groups to both educate and motivate in different ways, it was announced at the end of the third project, in 2003, that only four of Sida’s 5,000 (0.08%)

contributions had fulfilled the rating requirement. In the final report from the third project phase, the low compliance rate was explained by management's "attitudes" and the high level of "resistance" by staff.

The low compliance rate was discussed within Sida's Management Committee and the consequence was that in 2004 the rating exercise was made compulsory and the responsibility of each Department Director within the agency. During the fourth phase of the Sida rating initiative, it seems that the resistance towards the initiative was somewhat reduced. During the final phase of the rating initiative, compliance increased to 25%. The rating obligation was finally abolished in a Director General decision in 2007. Information from the system was never used in any official reporting. Reasons given were the predicted costs involved with the necessity for a total remake of the IT tool; a task that was not seen as cost-effective.

A contributing factor to the death of the rating initiative was also the fact that after 2006, when the new Alliance government had taken the reins of government, the focus on "results" had become a core priority within government. The rating initiative was not seen as a solution to meet this new demand. And, although not officially mentioned, one can understand that the death of the rating initiative can also be explained by the very low compliance rate throughout the initiative and that the rating information was used neither for external communication purposes nor for internal management decisions.

7 The Results Summary Initiative (2012-2016)

This chapter deals with the fourth results initiative studied in this thesis: the Results Summary Initiative, which was launched by Sida in 2012. As in the previous chapters, the first part of the chapter examines the external environment prior to the launch of the initiative, while the second part of the chapter deals with what happened when the initiative was launched and implemented.

7.1 Environmental Demand

7.1.1 Results – A Top Priority in Development Aid

Whereas the aspects of “ownership,” “harmonization” and “alignment” with recipient governments’ policies were still in focus in the aid effectiveness agenda in the early and mid-2000s¹²⁰, one could say that the principle of “results” and results-based management came to be at the core of development aid agenda from 2010 and onwards. Several reasons contributed to this: a heated public debate on whether aid led to results, pressure from Parliament and the government, a change of government in Sweden as well as in other major donor countries such as the UK, and a more powerful role for the external audits. In this chapter I will discuss each of these changes. However, first a few words about the beginning of the decade.

Internationally, joint agreements had been made both on what aid was to contribute to and how this was to be done. Within the UN Millennium Declaration, which was agreed on in 2000, eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) such as “eradicate extreme poverty and hunger” and 21 global targets such as “halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than 1.25 USD a day” (UN 2000). These goals were to be achieved by 2015. In the Paris Declaration, which was agreed on in 2005, twelve goals with subsequent global indicators set measures for how to deliver aid more effectively. The Paris Declaration was succeeded in 2008 by the Accra Agenda for Action, and in 2011 by the Busan High Level Meeting. The internationally agreed goals implied an increased pressure on governments to provide quantitative information about what and how their

¹²⁰ By 2000s I refer to the first decade of the 2000s.

aid contributed to “results”. The international goals and principles also implied that a more normative pressure was imposed on aid agencies regarding, for example, how to set up their results measurement and management systems. Due to publicly disclosed peer pressure structures through, for example, OECD/DAC peer reviews, it was now more difficult not to fulfil norms and standards for RBM set up.¹²¹

In 2003, Sweden launched its fourth government bill on support to international development: “Shared Responsibility: Sweden’s Policy for Global Development (PGD)” (Gov 2002/2003:122). The previous bill had been launched in 1978. The PGD was a novelty in two ways: a) It implied the first major change in Sweden’s overall aid policy since 1978; b) The main goal of the bill “to contribute to equitable and sustainable development” (Gov 2002/03:122:19) was to be applied not only in development aid, but in all policy areas. Sweden was the first country among the OECD/DAC donors to launch a policy for coherence, a perspective on aid that was seen as new at the time. The bill also raised the issue of Results Based Management and declared that “untying aid, improving coordination, simplifying procedures and ensuring more careful monitoring and evaluation” (Gov 2002/03:11:71) needed to gain more focus. However, the bill also declared Results Based Management to be a difficult task. It declared that: “It is difficult in practice to measure the concrete results of the efforts made by individual donors. The lack of data in many developing countries makes this even more difficult” (Gov 2002/3:122:71). Thus, even though the PGD raised the question of results management, it did not push for the perspective to any great extent.

During the late 2000s, the effects of aid were also being increasingly discussed in the public debate. Sjöstedt (2013:143), for example, pointed out that “previously more academically oriented debate on whether or not aid works was now brought into best-selling lists at bookshops around the world”. Research in the field was spurred by the discussion on whether aid worked and the question of what worked in aid and what did not. Emerging discussions were pursued on how development aid agencies should exit the development aid sector (Fee 2012; Jerve and Slob 2008).

Similarly, in Sweden, the debate on aid which was ineffective and had not produced “results” had led to various criticisms concerning the existence of

¹²¹ OECD/DAC peer reviews have existed since the 1980s. However, from 2000 and onwards the peer reviews have also reviewed and measured such things as progress against the Paris Declaration indicators and whether donor countries are on or off-track in achieving them.

development aid as such. One debater on aid, Bengt Nilsson, for example, wrote the following in the magazine *Ordfront*:

Perhaps somewhat prejudiced, people tend to say something along these lines: Once upon a time, there was a Vietnam demonstration that split into two – one half went into TV2 and the other half went into Sida. It may be a bit unfair to say that this is still the case, but it remains deeply-rooted. They put far too little focus on reality and on what to say, activities based on evidence rather than based on domestic policy and politically correct reasons. It is not as if LGBT issues are the big problem in the world. I think Sida should be closed down. I think that development aid work as such should be closed down (Ordfront 2007).

So, one could say that in the late 2000s, the calls to demonstrate “results” were stronger than ever before, and that these calls had led to severe criticism concerning the professional ability of staff within development aid to account for these results.

7.1.2 A New Government

Even before a new center-right alliance government was elected in 2006, the discussions on development aid that were held in Parliament took another tone. A Parliamentary representative for the Moderate Party, for example, declared that “aid feeds dictators”¹²² and that Swedish aid had not yet “after half a century” delivered expected results and that “Sweden carrying on aid programs that have been in place for a long time and have so far delivered very meager results cannot be a reasonable policy”.¹²³ Another opinion was that there was too great a focus on the disbursement goal rather than on results achieved. A Parliamentary motion put forward by Gunilla Carlsson from the Moderate Party in her capacity as Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, claimed that:

Large sums of aid do not automatically reduce poverty. Unfortunately, experience shows that poorly run countries that have received large sums of aid for a long time have become poorer. The aid should be in relation to what one wants to achieve. Stating the aid target as a proportion of GNI puts the emphasis on how much is spent, instead of the result.¹²⁴

In September, 2006, when the alliance coalition was elected to government, Gunilla Carlsson, as the new Development Aid Minister, pointed out “result,

¹²² Motion med anledning av prop. 2002/03:122 Gemensamt ansvar: Sveriges politik för global utveckling, 2003/04:U11. Lenmarker, G. et al. 2003

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Motion angående utgiftsområde 7, Internationellt bistånd. 2004/05:U293. Carlsson, G. et al. 2004

transparency and accountability” as key focus areas for aid. The first Government Budget Bill from 2006 subsequently declared that:

To live up to these requirements, Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs are now developing goal and results management in aid. The purpose is both to strengthen the systems of the recipient countries so that goal and results management is improved, and also to further tighten the goal and results management of the Swedish bilateral and multilateral contributions. There should always be a logical chain from results evaluation to the formulation of new goals and resource allocation. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Sida will jointly develop methods for determining the indicators and results measures. Furthermore, better tools for formulating goals in cooperation strategies that may be followed up will be developed. Measures and ratios for Sida’s reporting on internal efficiency will also be established (Gov 2007a:49).

Priority was thus to be given to results measurement and management. What is new in this statement, in comparison to previous government statements, is the compulsory existence of a “logical chain” from results assessment to the formulation of new goals and allocation of resources. Previous governments had always declared that providing all this information might not be possible. One could thus declare that the new government’s view on how “results” were to be measured was that they believed in quantitative measures and that it was possible to demonstrate causality.

The bill furthermore declared that: “There is a need, both for the populations in the recipient countries as well as for the Swedish public to know that Swedish aid really is used in the best way” (Gov 2007a:49), implying that one reason results reforms were needed was to make the results visible.

In an article published in a major Swedish newspaper, the Minister wrote that Sweden was now to switch from “passive disbursement politics to active development politics” (Carlsson 2007), implying that a rhetoric used to explain the need for the new reforms was that aid politics in previous years had been passive and focused on disbursements. Results-focused management was considered critical for the success of these reforms.

One of the first organizational reforms of the new government was the establishment of a new independent Agency for Aid Evaluation (SADEV), an agency that, independently or together with other partners, was to conduct evaluations of Swedish development assistance.¹²⁵ The next reform step was a decision taken in June 2007 on a new “Model for strengthened results

¹²⁵ The need to establish an “independent” evaluation body had already been raised in the Aid Bill from 2003 (Gov 2002/03:122), under the Socialdemocratic government.

management in development cooperation” (Gov 2007b). The model implied increased pressure on Sida to report on “results” at various levels: a) An annual separate results report from Sida was to be submitted jointly with Sida’s annual report; b) Biannual strategy reports with results information from each cooperation strategy were to be submitted; c) It was stated that “Sida is to operationalize the cooperation strategy in a results matrix for the whole strategy period, in accordance with international practice” (Gov 2007b:3). This implied that a results matrix was to be attached to Sida’s annual country plan. There were now many more results reporting requirements compared to previously.

However, at the same time as the focus on results was strengthened within the development aid sector, the ongoing discussions within the state administration promoted a reduced focus on results management. The Commission of Inquiry (SOU 2007:75), for example, declared that it was questionable whether results information requested from government agencies had in practice had any impact on the government’s steering. The investigation declared that results management was often subject to conflicts between different goals, and that causality was difficult to demonstrate since different actors looked upon a process from different perspectives and had a different view on, for example, what constituted a result. The Commission therefore claimed that: “We are very apprehensive of the perception that effects-oriented and more comprehensive goals are a good way for transforming political ambitions into steering of the administration” (SOU 2007:75:13). The subsequent Budget Bill 2008/2009 declared that:

The requirement to annually report back on results in the form of effects should only be used in cases where the agencies themselves are able to influence these [...] The government’s control will therefore from now on to a lesser degree be based on extensive annual reporting requirements to the agencies. [...] The basic notion is that the agencies should report and be assessed based on results that they themselves have influence over. (Gov 2009:292)

The discussions in the state administration at this time were thus pushing for a reduction in the requirements for results management. Agencies were to report on outputs that they themselves could influence, rather than outcomes and effects. So, one could say that the reforms within the state administration, and reforms embarked upon within development aid, went in different directions. However, simultaneously, the state administration reforms declared that steering in each sector was to be “adapted to activities” (verksamhetsanpassat) which allowed each government minister to decide how to manage the sector.

7.1.3 The Results Reforms Become an Area of Conflict

Once the new government had been installed, several changes were made at Sida. At the beginning of 2007, a temporary Director General was appointed. In January 2008, the government announced a new Director General. The minister declared in a press release that “I am convinced that the new DG has the leadership skills required to strengthen Sida’s capacity to increase quality and efficiency in Swedish aid”.¹²⁶ The new Director General described the expectations from the government as the following:

Then there was obviously an expectation from the government that they wanted a different Sida. It was not my perception that Sida did not focus on results, that Sida did not deliver results. On the other hand, I thought that there was a packaging and communication challenge in being able to structure what we do, and in my view this was not done completely. There was never a belief that we did not deliver any results, because we knew that we did that. (DG5)

So, the perception of the new Director General concerning the new requirements to report on results was mainly that it was a “packaging and communication challenge.” In 2008, Sida underwent an organizational change, which implied that the organization now operated under three pillars: Operations, Policy and Management. Sida also made several attempts to implement a greater results focus in its operations (Sida 2008:9)¹²⁷

Although the new results reforms had provoked discussions between Sida staff and the minister, one could say that in 2009 they became an area of conflict between the minister and Sida. Triggered by findings of corruption with regard to Swedish funds in Zambia, the minister voiced more harsh criticism of Sida. In an article entitled: “It is time we started an honest discussion of aid”, the minister criticized Sida for poor administration (Carlsson 2009). The criticism and the new management reforms provoked a backlash from civil society organizations, opposition parties and Sida staff. In 2009, the minister received two headline-generating letters: one from five of Sida’s department heads (Sida 2009a) and a Christmas letter signed by 172 (Sida 2009b) staff members at Sida. Both letters expressed the contradictions, difficulties and complexity in applying results management in development cooperation. The staff members’ letter declared that they were “groaning under increasingly grotesque requirements that everything

¹²⁶ Ministry for Foreign Affairs 20071018 Pressrelease

¹²⁷ Sida for example introduced results contracts both at individual and team levels. A Committee for Results was established, which was to keep track that results and experiences were part of the planning of new contributions.

must be documented” (Sida 2009b). And that the “requirements are becoming so extensive that time is hardly allowed for making wise assessments” (Sida 2009b). The letter from the heads of departments declared that they did not believe that it was “reasonable to require” them to show causal intervention chains in the way required by the minister, and that it was also not fruitful to “build up hope among the public that this is possible” (2009a). The letter from the heads of departments also declared that:

We are concerned about the image that you [i.e. the minister] give of Swedish development assistance in articles and interviews in the media. It is not based on the results that development cooperation actually achieves. It does not bring up the complex reality of managing results in development cooperation. The image you convey to the public makes us and many of our staff wonder how you look at the value of the aid profession in your work for change. (Sida 2009a)

The debate on results reporting had thus led to staff feeling that their professionalism was being questioned. Bjerninger (2013) argued that it was at this time:

...almost embarrassing to admit at the dinner table that you were a Sida employee. We had to defend ourselves against constant attacks in the media, where "our" ministers seemed to be on the attackers' side. (Bjerninger 2013:90)

The results reforms had thus disrupted relations between Sida staff and the minister.

The discussion concerning “results” concerned the utility and feasibility of increased requirements to quantify precisely how Swedish funds had been spent and how to attribute results. It is clear that the minister strongly believed that these reforms were a necessity for the development aid sector. In different media statements the minister declared:

I will not give up. We must work in a more results-oriented way with aid. We must be able to tell Parliament and the voters about all the positive things that are being done in a comprehensive way. We must also have a totally different system for documentation and be better organized in how we think of results in aid. (Ekot 2009)

Of course it is possible to measure. All you need to do is develop measurement methods; internationally, this is possible. [...] A challenge we have in relation to this is how we look upon our respective roles. I am doing my work and I expect Sida to do theirs. (Härdmark 2010)

The reaction of staff members to the “result reforms” led to the minister intensifying the reform agenda. The letter of appropriation for 2010 directed Sida to:

...ensure the introduction of a uniform goal and results management system; for instance, by strengthening the central features for goal and results management, to promote a results-oriented approach and a results-oriented culture by enhancing skills. This, for instance, includes ensuring that the results reporting the agency delivers to the government is based on the goals set by the government and the agency. The results reporting should be validated by reporting on indicators and including analyses of factors influencing the outcome. The agency is to ensure that the competency in this field is also strengthened and maintained long-term. (Gov 2010a)

The government request thus declared both *what* results measurement and management Sida should implement and *how*. Moreover, the request declared that Sida should ensure that competency in this field was strengthened and maintained. The request specified more precisely than previously that results measurement and management should be a priority for the agency.

During the period 2009-2011, Sida underwent several changes. Sida was mandated to report frequently, four times a year, to the Swedish National Financial Management Authority (ESV) and the government on how it managed to improve its systems for management and internal control (ESV 2010). However, despite these intensified reforms, the government showed dissatisfaction with the internal work. The dissatisfaction was intensified due to deficits in Sida's internal budget. In May 2010, the government replaced the Director General and appointed a new Deputy Director General with a background in the Ministry of Finance to lead Sida. A few days later, two of Sida's directors on Sida's Management Committee announced they were being replaced. The new Director General and Deputy Director General were tasked with balancing the budget, and the new leadership cut staff by 25%, inducing a large number of voluntary departures. Sida simultaneously streamlined all functions and job descriptions, implying that the reorganization had led to the redeployment of all Sida staff. This meant that Government reforms had now affected all Sida staff members personally.

Sida received a new instruction, stating that "the agency's core task is to administer aid assistance or other financing that contributes to the fulfillment of development goals" (Gov 2010b), thus deprioritizing Sida's previous core tasks on policy and knowledge. The agency's core task was thus now to be a management organization, rather than a policy-oriented organization. In 2010, the government also decided on new "Guidelines for Cooperation Strategies" (Gov 2010c). These included an increased focus on aid effectiveness, including more rigorous continuous reporting directly to the government on results at different levels. By this time, Sida had produced three separate Annual Reports on Results of Aid (Sida 2009c; Sida 2010;

Sida 2011) which after submission had been translated to special annual reports from the government to Parliament.

One could say that Sida's autonomy had now been reduced. Bjerninger (2013:75), who at the time was part of Sida's Management Committee, says that there was at this time an "unclear balance of power" between Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs where staff "felt they were being interrogated and controlled by staff at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs" in, for example, follow-up meetings of "results" and progress made within a Cooperation strategy.

Following an evaluation by the Swedish Agency for Public Management in 2012, SADEV was closed down with the motivation that "its operations cannot be perceived to be effective" (Statskontoret 2012:9) and that "the agency has still not evaluated effects of the aid. Most evaluations have focused on processes and internal efficiency" (Statskontoret 2012:9).

In another evaluation by the Swedish Agency for Public Management of the model for results management from 2007, it was noted that: "the management system impedes the possibilities of the government's priorities having an impact" (Statskontoret 2011:8). The evaluation declared that "affected actors in the management chain have difficulties understanding and adopting the management system" (Statskontoret 2011:8). Criticism was also voiced in the OECD/DAC Peer Review which declared that Swedish aid was composed of a "forest of policies" (OECD/DAC 2009).

The reports spurred yet another intensified round of reform work, for example with new "results strategies" and an aid platform that would facilitate the overview of goals and results to be produced in development aid. At this time, Sweden also intensified its work with results internationally. For example, before the High Level Meeting (HLM) on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, 2011, the Swedish minister invited a new group of like-minded donors, called the "Blue Group" (the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Denmark and Canada) to discuss how to jointly work toward an increased results focus, transparency and accountability in aid. Sida's mandate as an agency responsible for policy development had been reduced in the Government instruction from 2010 (Gov 2010). The result was that it was now predominantly staff from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs who represented Sweden in international meetings.

However, the criticism from the government toward Sida was also intensified. The minister stated in a speech to Sida staff after the Busan High Level meeting that the meeting was an "alarm clock for an aid industry that had fallen asleep" and that it signified "a long-awaited farewell to old aid, which was more about form and theory than practice and results" (Carlsson

2011). The newly appointed state secretary showed open dissatisfaction with Sida's efforts with "results" reporting thus far. In a seminar discussing results reporting and the three separate annual reports, she stated that:

We are able to find individual examples of very good contributions at the micro level. But we also have to be honest. The government has submitted three reports on the results of aid to Parliament. And it has been very difficult for us to say anything concerning the effects of aid interventions in any of them. (Hellquist 2012)

What this citation demonstrates is that the government now openly put the blame on Sida regarding insufficient reporting of "results." There was also now a more implicit call for tracking the Swedish contributions. The minister declared, for example, in a speech to Sida staff:

And the next time I go there (i.e. to Zambia and Mozambique), I want to see the heading "Swedish project to empower 1000 women in Zambia and Mozambique". (Carlsson 2011)

The picture given by the minister of what she saw as "results" was a result that would be easy to quantify and where it would be easy to trace the Swedish contribution.

In a media interview the minister also directed criticism towards previous aid being in the form of "talk aid" and declared the strong focus by Sida staff on "talk aid" to be the reason why results were not achieved. In a radio interview, the minister stated, for example, that:

... we have to start to move away from all the talk, all the good will, all the dialogues, and instead start to talk about what is happening out there in the cooperating countries. How do we best contribute on the ground? [...] there has not been any demand to only look at working with results in development aid – since we have been so busy having the good will and have instead looked at what we deliver in terms of money in the system [...] I think that those who find it difficult to measure results are the ones contributing to talk aid. (Carlsson 2012)

What this citation exemplifies was that the minister was arguing that the main reason results orientation was not being pursued in aid administration was that aid administrators were using dialogue and talk as instruments for achieving results. It is clear that the minister also wanted to reduce the dialogue on the topic since in this statement she accused those who found it difficult to measure results of contributing to "talk aid".

7.1.4 A More Clear and Powerful National Audit Office

During the years from 2007, Sida was also under pressure from the National Audit Office to improve reporting and administration. In 2003, the Swedish

National Audit Office (RiR) had been formed by the merger of the Parliamentary Audit (RR) and the National Audit Bureau (RRV). The reform has been declared as being the “largest and fundamentally most important change in control power since 1974” (Isberg 2003:247). According to Bringselius (2013:11) the reform had a focus on “greater accountability and compliance” by the agency, which had an organization culture “characterized by a fear of making mistakes”. External auditors gained more control over the state agencies’ reporting. The Swedish National Audit Office conducted several performance audits on development aid in the early 2000s (RiR 2004; RiR 2007a; RiR 2007b; RiR 2009a; RiR 2009b; RiR 2011a; RiR 2011b). Also, annual reports were now scrutinized in a different manner. The Swedish National Audit Office now officially published whether an agency’s annual report was “clean,” had an “objection” or a “notice.”¹²⁸ If annual audits received an “objection” or a “notice,” it was now mandatory for the agency to:

report to the government which actions the agency has undertaken or intends to undertake due to the objection. The report is to be delivered within one month after the annual report has been delivered. (FOU 2007:313 para 28)

During the years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, Sida was intensely scrutinized by the Swedish National Audit Office and received a remark on their annual audit being “unclean”. In 2008, Sida received an “objection” (i.e. the hardest form of critique) for their annual report (RiR 2008) According to the Swedish National Audit Office Sida had not:

- a) carried out adequate risk assessments in their contributions
- b) collected information from auditors who had examined the beneficiaries of aid
- c) sufficiently assessed approach, results or quality in undertaken audits and reviews
- d) taken sufficient action when errors or weaknesses had been identified among the beneficiaries of aid (RiR 2009).

Sida was subsequently recommended to “introduce systems and routines for fulfilling the Regulation concerning internal management and control (FISK: Förordning för intern styrning och kontroll) requirements with regard to internal management and control” (RiR 2009). Since this audit recommendation was expressed as an “objection,” it was officially said that Sida in 2008 had an “unclean” audit, which implied that even though the objection was only a recommendation, it was a very powerful

¹²⁸See information on:

<http://www.riksrevisionen.se/sv/vardeforrad/myndigheter/aktuella/Styrelsen-for-internationellt-utvecklingssamarbete/>

recommendation. According to the government regulation (FOU 2007:515 para 5) Sida was also forced to provide a specific report to the government on how it would fulfill the recommendation.

In sum, one could say that there was strong pressure from government including external audit's prior to the 2012 initiative that pursued improvement of management as well as communication of results.

7.2 The 2012 Initiative

7.2.1 Preparations

The huge organizational changes, cutbacks and administrative reforms had greatly affected Sida's culture and mandate. The new Director General declared that the organization she entered into in 2011 was:

... a troubled organization which was angry and felt cheated because of the economic situation they found themselves in and the fact that nobody believed in what they were doing [...] it was an organization on the defensive, shielding itself from the pictures being painted of what Sida did well and what it didn't do well, and worried about losing competence, I mean extremely worried about that. (D5)

One could thus say that the reforms and new government decisions had greatly affected Sida and its staff. In anonymous answers to a survey conducted on Sida's organizational analysis, staff gave low scores on the question "I believe that the government's management of aid provides a clear direction for Sida's work" (Sida 2012e:12).¹²⁹ Moreover, only 50% of staff said they would recommend others to work for the agency, a number which had declined from an average of 4.41% to 3.62% between the years 2006 to 2012 (Sida 2012e:15). Also, only around 50% regarded the agency to be a working place in which "one was acknowledged for produced 'results'" (Sida 2012e:17). Moreover, the organizational changes had also affected staff members' occupational health. In a report from Betania, Sida's occupational health company, it was, for example, noted that due to the changes, many staff were still leaving voluntarily or deciding to work part-time and that an increasing number of staff members needed to take sick leave. The report furthermore noted that staff felt stressed, that motivation for their work was low and that they reported they had little possibility to influence things within their daily working situation (Betania 2011).

¹²⁹ The average points given were 2.46 out of 6 possible.

It is clear that resisting reforms was at this stage no longer seen as a viable option. One of the signatories of the letter sent to the minister by the directors in 2010, for example, stated in a recent interview that:

Sida is today a disabled organization. We have complained, we have not retreated, we have produced evidence, saying that this will not work, we've done it here and there. However, we don't have the strength any longer to stand up and say "we do not think this works"... It has become clear to us, since 2006/2007 [...] that our job is not to fight poverty. They have narrowed the agency's mission [...] our biggest responsibility is to have a strong apparatus for managing grants and strategies. (Interview Sida Department Director 14 March 2013)

The quote shows that one year after the huge organizational changes and public dissent with the minister, Sida's leadership had started to accept that the agency now needed to change in accordance with demands for effectiveness. A major concern for the agency at this point in time was to regain legitimacy, implying that effective management was now increasingly seen as Sida's core task.

It is clear that Sida was now also reacting to the pressure from external audits in a more compliance-oriented manner. In a recent interview a Sida Director, for example, said the following:

Some of the reports from the National Audit Office were simply awful ... some of the things that the National Audit Office pointed out, it did not have a clue about, I still can't find any support in the international audit standards for much of what the National Audit Office argued, it was an opinion [...] there was a combination of observations from the National Audit Office that was kind of dishonest, or in any case uninformed [...] However, since Sida was then hamstrung... Sida was on the defensive and did not want a fight, we kind of wanted to show that we were good and could be the best in class, and, furthermore, everything that the National Audit Office said could be used rather selectively by the department and by the political leadership, and that also happened. (Interview Sida Director 2015-11-26)

The citation shows that the Director believed that a great deal of what was brought up by the National Audit Office was irrelevant for the context of aid and for the agency. However, the agency did no longer see it as an option to fight since it now needed to demonstrate that it complied with government demands and was a professional agency.

So, a major concern when preparing for the Results Summary Initiative, the 2012 initiative, was to do things correctly and fulfill external demands. One could say that the new contribution management process, which was prepared from 2008 to 2012, was prepared under the auspices that it was going to be "a system which would incorporate all external demands on reporting". One of the designers of the process, for example, declared that:

Every word there was basically assessed carefully in order to correspond to a demand. Then, of course, that was our interpretation, it is certainly possible to interpret it in many different ways, but that was our idea with the whole thing. Designing it so that this is what we just have to have on paper. (D4-4)

The designer told me in the interview that the system was in effect designed by first inserting all the external requirements and recommendations into an excel sheet; from international agreements, external audits, and government regulations, and then including these as internal Sida regulations to be used in contribution management. The preparations were made under the leadership of several internal project groups and supported by several consultancies, many of whom had also supported other Swedish public agencies in building up uniform process-oriented contribution management routines.

However, the new contribution management process was questioned among staff and also within the project groups who were responsible for the preparations. In 2010, the project group consisted of representatives from different organizational departments and units. A member of the project group in 2010, for example, declared the following after a meeting:

During our meetings, I have not always felt at home in the great amount of information in the form of process descriptions, flow diagrams, etc., and on several occasions, I have wondered when we are going to get to the content. Now, I will not be a part of it, but I want to leave behind a word of caution. I believe that there is a clear risk that in the future implementation of S@W, staff members become so busy using the forms and new methods that they easily forget important parts of the content.¹³⁰ (L1 2010)

The staff member declared that he saw a risk of the contribution management system becoming too mechanical and that there was a risk that the system was being given priority over discussions on the contents of aid. Perhaps since this type of questioning could delay the reforms, the group was “slimmed down” after a while and replaced by a new group consisting of only three members, all from Sida’s top management.¹³¹

Staff members also tried to raise questions, such as whether the results reforms being pushed for by the Minister of Aid contradicted the reforms in public administration. One director, for example, organized a seminar on the

¹³⁰ I was myself part of the project group that prepared the new contribution management process in 2010 and have saved this e-mail. I have checked that it is OK to publish.

¹³¹ Personal experience from being a member of the project group representing one of the departments.

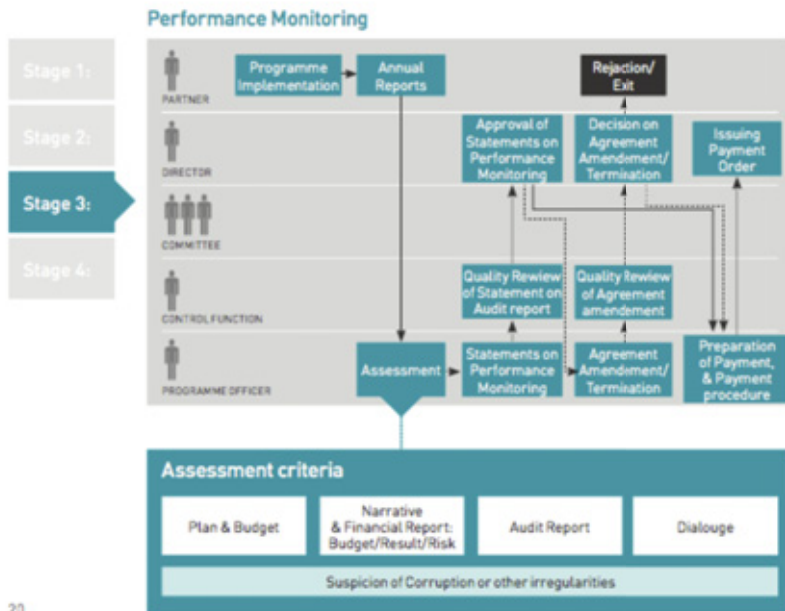
decreased ambitions in Swedish public administration reforms and how they contradicted the ambitions at Sida.¹³²

7.2.2 The Decision

In March 2012¹³³ Sida launched a new contribution management process for the agency, i.e. the process which regulated all the requirements that a staff member needed to comply with when managing support to aid projects or programs. The Results Summary requirement analysed in this case as the 2012 initiative was thus part of a major change in the entire way in which Sida managed contributions. This process had not changed to any great extent since 1974. Simultaneously, Sida launched a new organization which had been constituted mainly to fit the new contribution management process. This meant that departments and functions such as “Competence Development” or “Analysis” which did not have a clear function in the contribution management process or the cooperation strategy process were dismantled. In the new organization, different departments were now in charge of, and responsible for, different parts of the contribution management process which was composed of four stages: 1) plan appraisal, 2) appraise and agree, 3) performance monitoring and 4) contribution completion, all with identified actions on what to do during contribution management. As for stage 3, the process was as follows:

¹³² Seminar with Göran Sundström, June 2010.

¹³³ Decision DG 03079. “Beslut om insatshanteringsprocess inklusive en ny regel för insatshantering, tillämpningsanvisningar och malldokument, ny struktur för kvalitetssäkring av insatshantering samt upprättandet av en förvaltningsorganisation för biståndsprocesser”. 20120307



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Figure 10 Management process for performance monitoring Sour:e: Sida (2012d:20)

The different staff functions were thus to approve each of the action steps in a computerized system. Different specialized functions (such as controllers, legal counsels etc) were thus now responsible for assuring the quality of a *specific part* of the contribution management process.

Overall, the Department for Organizational Support (VU) was responsible for the overall system, the Methods unit had the overall responsibility for design of the system, with the Monitoring and Evaluation unit giving input on results-related issues. Other departments, such as the Legal Department, were responsible for the new contribution rule: a legal document on what was required for the contribution management process within the agency. This implies that the Results Summary initiative can be said to have had several designers, who jointly prepared the stipulations and regulations in the new contribution management process.

The components of the new contribution management process thus implied:

- a new contribution rule, which could be said to be the core document stipulating what a contribution assessment must include;
- a formalized process for contribution management with the four sub-processes, stipulated in a manual;
- a computer-based contribution management system (Trac) (Sida 2012d). With the launch of the process, Sida simultaneously reorganized and set up different committees (such as the Process

Committee), which was given the responsibility of revising the process rules. One could say thus say that the changes made in 2012 affected Sida's entire organization, as the changes made implied a major change to the entire contribution management process, which had essentially not been changed since 1974.

The purpose of the new contribution management process was described in the manual thus:

The process is designed as a support for Sida staff to “get it right” in terms of improving the compliance with our legal requirements, government-decided strategies and policies, international commitments and recommended work methods – and as a consequence, to contribute to better results in the development interventions that we support. (Sida 2012d:2)

The expected logic of intervention was thus that “getting it right” and complying with all the legal and external requirements would lead to improved results.

The aim of monitoring was described as important for “results and evidence-based management, informed dialogue, learning and decision-making” (Sida 2009d:9) but also for “making sure that the terms and conditions of the agreement are complied with” (2009d:9). The consequences of this monitoring were described as that it “can lead to agreements being changed (which may be a positive development of results-based management) or at worst terminated” (Sida 2009d:9). So, the idea pursued was that insufficient reporting could lead to consequences, such as terminating a project.

According to the contribution management assessment, the Programme Officer was to:

...review and assess the budget and the results framework, complete Sida's results summary and identify assumptions that are critical for the fulfillment of the objectives – before assessing the effectiveness of the intervention. (Sida 2009d:5)

The requirement thus implied two tasks for Sida Programme Officers: 1) To assess the quality of the partner's results framework; whether it included indicators with baseline and target values for all objectives, whether critical assumptions for the achievement of the objectives had been identified and whether the indicators enabled monitoring of results. 2) To summarize the “most relevant and important objectives from the partner's results framework” in a results summary with an intervention logic (that Sida believed to be feasible) to be used by Sida for monitoring and results reporting purposes (Sida 2009d:7). Whereas one could say that the first task was something that had always been part of Sida's contribution management regulations, the second task was something totally new. The second task

meant creating a results matrix solely for Sida’s management needs. In the computerized system, the results summary matrix looked like this:

| Results Summary | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Type the title of the contribution here</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Outcome Objective | <i>Type outcome objective here</i> | | | | | | | |
| | Indicator | Baseline (year x) | Target (year x) | Result (year x) | Result (year x) | Result (year x) | Result (year x) | Result (year x) |
| Indicator 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Indicator 2 | | | | | | | | |
| Bridging Objective | <i>Type bridging objective here</i> | | | | | | | |
| | Indicator | Baseline (year x) | Target (year x) | Result (year x) | Result (year x) | Result (year x) | Result (year x) | Result (year x) |
| Indicator 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Indicator 2 | | | | | | | | |
| Output objective | <i>Type output objective here</i> | | | | | | | |
| | Indicator | Baseline (year x) | Target (year x) | Result (year x) | Result (year x) | Result (year x) | Result (year x) | Result (year x) |
| Indicator 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Indicator 2 | | | | | | | | |

Figure 10 The results summary matrix Source: E-mail from designer D4-1 (Picture taken from the computerized contribution management system 2012)

The results summary matrix to be used by Sida thus required information on the baseline, annual targets at output and outcome objective level, and also at so-called bridging objective level. Achieved results were then to be inserted into the matrix annually during the performance monitoring phase.¹³⁴ According to the contribution management process, approval of the annual plan and budget, the financial and narrative reports and the audit report were to be noted in a “statement of performance monitoring” (Sida 2009d:7). This statement was to be approved in the system. If there were significant deviations, a head of unit or a controller was to be consulted. In terms of significant deviations in the results summary, deviations on outcome levels were to be documented by amending the agreement and reflected in the risk analysis register. However, adjustments at the output, bridging and activity levels could be amended by approving the partners’ reports. This implied that the system made it mandatory to comply with the requirements to monitor the plan, budget and financial, narrative and audit reports, but that no consequences would follow if the results summary requirements were not actually met. It is also interesting to note that neither the system nor the help texts actually said that the data in the excel matrix needed to be quantitative.

¹³⁴ This is stated in the help texts to the picture. E-mail from designer D4-1. 7 June 2013

7.2.3 Implementation

a. Rolling Out the System

In 2012, the new contribution management system was rolled out in phases; only new assessments were to use the new system. At first, there were technical difficulties rolling out the IT system to the Embassies; work was ongoing only to fill out the requirements in the templates (D4-2). 670 staff members underwent training in Stockholm and nine Embassies were visited during the launch, which is effectively 100% of Sida's staff.¹³⁵

Once the system had been launched, the Director of the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit went public on the Nordic Africa Institute debate page with the following:

In order to strengthen Sida's management for development results and results reporting – among other things – a new contribution management process has been developed. The new Sida at Work significantly raises the demands placed on Sida's assessments of partners' results frameworks, monitoring/evaluation capacity and achieved results/effectiveness. The introduction of the new Sida at Work is accompanied by an extensive push within the organization to enhance competencies in the area of results monitoring. This includes workshops at all Swedish embassies with Sida staff. Sida will hence be better equipped to report on results as well as to use dialogue with partners to promote better frameworks for monitoring and evaluating results, effects of support and future development results. (Nordin-Jayawardena 2011)

The Director's note demonstrates that Sida was now able to demonstrate that a system had been developed, a system which raised the demands with regards to results and effectiveness.

Once the new contribution management system had been rolled out and the organizational changes had been implemented, the comments and criticism from external actors decreased. In 2013, after five years of "unclean" annual audits, Sida's annual audit was once again considered "clean" (RiR 2013). It is thus clear that the mere launch of the contribution management process and the new organization implied that external actors now seemed to be more satisfied with Sida as an organization.

b. Renewed Hope at Sida for Quantification and Aggregation of Results

Soon after the launch of the Results Summary Initiative, Sida also launched two other results-focused agency-wide projects: a) the standard indicator

¹³⁵ According to an e-mail from designer (D4-2) 2013-06-07.

project (2012a) and b) the results communication project (2012b). One could say that both projects were driven by a wish to increase the use of quantitative indicators and improve communication of results to externals. Both projects were motivated by the statements made in the Budget Bill 2013 in which Sida was requested to quantify and aggregate results “to the extent possible and reasonable” (Sida 2012b).

With regards to the standard indicator project, interestingly, there was never an explicit demand from the government, until 2014, to actually try out standard indicators. The fact that Sida started this process as early as the beginning of 2012 demonstrates that the agency at this point in time was very attentive and wanted to comply even with informal requests from government. Within the results communication there was a strong focus on deliveries for external results communication by providing pictures and graphics of results achieved.¹³⁶ The setting up of the two projects demonstrates that there was, at this point in time, a strong belief within the agency in the need to quantify and aggregate results information.

However, in addition to mere results reporting, the results communication project also focused on the need to change the existing organizational culture within the agency. To support this project, contracted consultants analyzed the changes in culture and attitude required within Sida. Figure 1 shows how they visualized the transition of staff who were in denial and angry about the “results agenda,” but who came to accept and implement the agenda as a result of the communication efforts. The diagram was used with Sida directors to discuss how organizational resistance could be counteracted, illustrating Sida management’s belief that success with the results reform required working with staff attitudes and feelings.

¹³⁶ See for example <http://www.sida.se/Svenska/Samarbetsparter/resurser/Grafiska-riktlinjer/Profil-och-display/Resultatrapportering>

How to drive culture change within Sida



Figure 11. How to drive culture change within Sida? Source: Presentation of the “results communication project” by the Communication Department to Sida’s Management Committee, 2013 (author’s translation)

This picture demonstrates the foreseen change process and potential emotions that might arise during a change process towards the goal: less criticism from, for example, the media and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and “to be the best in the world!” in demonstrating results.

This renewed round of result reforms occurred in an organization that seemed to have a new sense of hope and possibility with regard to the reforms. Different explanations for this turnaround existed. For example, the director of communication stated that:

I believe that we, as an agency, have probably come to the conclusion that it is better that we drive the results agenda and results communication, instead of someone else driving and pulling us, because then we have the momentum, we are the ones who know the field and can be clever in how we move forward [...] I am absolutely convinced that both the new contribution management procedure and the standardized indicators and monitoring of results will give stability in the working processes. The working atmosphere for the individual Programme Officer will become much clearer. [...] It will become very easy to relate to, and then I will be able to use my expertise instead of using time thinking about the procedure or the formats. (Interview director of communication department 30 May 2013)

The comment demonstrates that the agency now saw itself (and not the minister) in the driver’s seat of the results agenda and was convinced that the reforms would give stability in the future. From a communication point of view, the director also argued that the complexity in results reporting was in

fact an opportunity to be transparent concerning quantifying development processes:

We need to be transparent about “this is the way we think,” “this is the way we attribute,” “this is the way we aggregate,” “this is the way we use the indicators,” “this is the way we use reporting”. We want to measure, and therefore we do it in this way. [...] Then someone else, so to speak, can say “It is very complex”. Then we can agree, but we should not avoid taking this step because we find it complex. (Interview director of communication department 30 May 2013)

The citation demonstrates that it was now considered important for Sida not to argue that aid was complex, but to let “someone else” do it. The face that Sida now wanted to show to the public was that the agency was able to demonstrate results.

Another Sida director, responsible for corporate results, stated that there were now other possibilities for implementing organizational changes at Sida:

One can accomplish things today that could not be achieved before, but perhaps we should not shout out that we are through it yet. [...] The strong organizational culture that existed before, which was largely where the resistance came from, has of course been removed. In combination, there has been a generational shift. [...] People just disappeared with the reorganization, and naturally, people from the old generation, who were used to doing whatever they wanted, and who could say that: “I am going down to Tanzania to start a project and then I’ll have my darlings that I support,” are now gone. (Interview Sida director, 10 June 2013)

So, at this time, it seemed as if some of the resistance had been removed. One of the designers working with Sida’s standard procedures stated, for example, that: “Even though there is resistance toward it now as well, there is no alternative now. You just have to do it.” (D4-3)

c. Implementation of the Results Summary

From now on, the running of the Results Summary Initiative was mainly an internal matter. In common with the previous results initiatives, some problems arose during implementation. Quite early on, when the requirements were being tested, some staff members expressed satisfaction that the system “is helpful for organizing and doing things right”¹³⁷ and that it was “positive that as an administrator you feel secure, and that you are not missing any important items”.¹³⁸ However, others voiced fears about the

¹³⁷ Internal Memo: Användares feedback på systemet. User’s feedback on the system. In e-mail 10 June 2013.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

system “taking over” the substance of aid. One staff member, for example, admitted she was afraid that the content of aid work would disappear:

It feels like I’m turning into an accountant or a pure administrator. Important issues, but the substance of our aid contributions is disappearing. The aid competence at Sida will vanish even more in favor of administration.¹³⁹

Another staff member expressed fear of Sida focusing on easier interventions:

My fear is that it will take so much time for Programme Officers to work in the system that dialogues with partners and actual field presence will suffer. The risk is then that Sida will start choosing “easier” interventions and will not have the time to focus on longer term processes, such as democratization and peace building. Quick results with quantitative measures!¹⁴⁰

Since the Results Summary requirement was also part of a change in the entire contribution management process, staff often commented and talked about the “system” in general. Staff members argued that the “system feels heavy and full of repetitive controls rather than full of support for the PO” and that the “system may turn out to be too ambitious and heavy as a tool for proper follow-up, unless the number of staff responsible doubles”.¹⁴¹ One staff member questioned the value and who would be the user of the information:

Complicated system, very cumbersome and time-consuming. I am not sure that the overall quality of interventions, or their result, will improve at all. Who is this for? Gunilla C and her quest for results?¹⁴²

One could thus conclude that even though some staff expressed satisfaction about the contribution management system providing them with security in that they would be doing what was expected of them, staff expressed fear of the system taking time from relations with recipients, as well as who would use the information in the end.

Once the implementation of the Results Summary Initiative was up and running, problems arose with regard to the categories used in the Results Summary Matrix. The actual problems with the categories were mainly brought up by staff at the two consultancy firms that supported both Sida Programme Officers and project recipients in how to comply with the requirements.^{143,144} Both consultancy firms were quite explicit in what they

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Framework Agreement between InDevelop and Sida for advice on results framework for contributions funded by Sida.

believed was difficult with the new requirements. One of the difficulties was to define what “results” and the different categories actually meant. One of the consultants stated the following:

When I work with these organizations, it is difficult to use terms such as outputs, outcomes and impacts, results framework, etc., without investing a lot of time in explaining what they mean. There is friction when it comes to understanding what it means at all levels. (Group interview with consultants. 8 February 2013)

Difficulties were seen mainly with regard to the terms “annual targets” and “bridging objective.” However, the other consultancy firm declared that the difficulty was in the term “objective,” and subsequently “recommended Sida change the terms used in the contribution management in accordance with our training workshops.”¹⁴⁵ It was moreover argued that due to the fact that there was no space in the IT system to write an analysis, Sida staff did not use the results information for analyses.¹⁴⁶ So, it is clear that the regulations in the different categories created confusion among staff as well as among the consultants who were supposed to support staff and recipients.

Another problem that arose was with regard to the question of who should fill in the results summary and how to use the information in it. In October 2012, the Committee for Contribution Management /Insatsrådet declared that:

The present results summary is difficult to use in the follow-up, as the reporting in many cases does not follow the results framework provided in the program document.¹⁴⁷

So, some of the difficulties noted were that the results summary was seen as an additional tool that could not be used for Sida’s management purposes. One of the consultants also claimed that what happened in reality was that:

Different Programme Officers make different judgments. If the administrator is uncertain and rigid, then the organization will most likely be considered very harshly and rigid demands will be made. Some administrators send out the entire Sida Results Summary Matrix, and that is not the idea; the receiving

¹⁴⁴ Framework agreement. Support to results orientation in Sida’s research cooperation. Contract no C01996, F00100. 2011-000767. 2012-06-14- 008201. CASE N. 2011-000703, JUNE 2012.

¹⁴⁵ Internal Memo. Support to results orientation in Sida’s research cooperation – Inception report. 18 July 2012.

¹⁴⁶ Observations from participation at meetings at Sida with the consultancy firms and Sida April 2013.

¹⁴⁷ Internal memo 2012-000719. ”Arbetsgrupp Insatshantering. Reviderad kapacitets- och riskbedömning och resultatsammanfattning”. 15 October 2012.

organization then believes that they need to fill it out. (Group interview with consultants. 8 February 2013)

The idea of using the results summary as a tool for Sida's own assessment had thus not been successful. As an attempt to clarify and further point out how the designers saw the different roles, in October 2012 Sida's Evaluation Unit wrote a clarifying note to Sida's partners. The note clarified that the results summary was an internal management tool to be used by Sida Programme Officers and that Sida's main interest lay in "the intervention logic, the likelihood that results you plan for can be achieved, and the possibility of following up or monitoring the progress toward these results as well as the actual results achieved."¹⁴⁸

However, despite this attempt to clarify the roles, a larger concern was that staff were not in fact filling in the results summary requirement at all. In an internal quality review (Sida 2013c) it was found that results summaries were missing in 40 of 45 decisions taken between March 7 and April 30, and in 11 of 30 decisions taken between May 1 and June 30 (Sida 2012c). Thus, only 12% of the staff during the first period and 36% in the second period of time had fulfilled the new requirements. Since I was at this point in time doing my research in real time, I asked one of the designers about the reason for such a low compliance rate. As a response, the designer declared in an e-mail that "the system had only been under implementation for a short period of time" and that staff had therefore not yet started to use it.¹⁴⁹

It is, however, clear that at this point in time, the results summary requirement had met much criticism within the organization. Staff claimed, for example, that the regulations were counterproductive toward the process-orientation that Sida wanted to achieve.¹⁵⁰ Questions were often raised concerning who was going to use the information and also that filling in information was time consuming. The culminating point was perhaps reached at a meeting with the Sida designers and one of the consultancy

¹⁴⁸ What makes a good funding proposal? A note to Sida's partners. Version October 2012. In e-mail 15 November 2012.

¹⁴⁹ E-mail from designer 10 June 2013

¹⁵⁰ I sent out an e-mail to department representatives in the Process Committee (Processrådet) and asked them: 1) how they had organized the collection of comments from staff within the organization; 2) if a specific request had been sent out; and 3) what type of comments had been sent in. Four out of eleven answered. All four replied that no request had been sent out and that comments had only come in randomly at meetings and through e-mails. One of the departments had a memo enclosed with department opinions to bring up at the meeting. This citation is an answer to the question 3.

companies in March 2013. During this meeting one of the consultants simply claimed at a meeting with Sida that:

The new requirement with the results summary is counterproductive. The only officer who can meet the demands is the one using “copy and paste”. It has not enabled people to think more, but rather less. (Meeting 19 March 2013)

The consultants were thus quite harsh and frank in their comments on what they perceived as consequences of the results summary requirement. Quite soon after this meeting Sida decided to take another route with the Results Summary.

d. The Results Summary Becomes the Results Register

In April 2013, about a year into implementation, difficulties with the results summary requirement were discussed at meeting with the Process Committee, where it was declared that “the results summary has not been used as it was intended”.¹⁵¹ It was decided that improvements needed to be made. The requirements needed to be simplified; to become more flexible and clear; to provide better foundation for decision-making and for improved results communication.¹⁵² It was noted that it must be possible to aggregate some types of results information. The forthcoming step was that Monitoring and Evaluation Unit was to produce a new proposal which would support these intentions.

Subsequently, in May 2013, the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit presented a memo proposing three alternatives for how to go forward with the results summary requirement to the Process Committee. In the memo, it was noted that:

The evaluation unit’s analysis of a number of existing completed results summaries indicates that an inadequate level of *knowledge* frequently leads to an inefficient or incorrect use of the tool. (Sida 2013b)

In the memo, the reason for the low usage of the results summary requirement was thus declared to be due to a low level of knowledge concerning results management in general. Nothing was said about the actual difficulties in interpreting what a result actually was, the categories used in the matrix, or describing the intervention logic. Moreover, nothing was said about the relations between Sida and recipients, and whether or how recipients were able to provide information about “results”.

¹⁵¹ Internal Memo. Protokoll Processrådet 25 April 2013 13/000141.

¹⁵² Ibid.

At the meeting, a discussion was held concerning three alternatives that could replace the results summary requirement (Sida 2013b). The first alternative was called a Results Summary ++ and implied it would be compulsory to fill in qualitative indicators in intervention logic (Sida 2013b). The second alternative was called a Results Register and implied that staff were to fill in some chosen “results” (Sida 2013b). The third alternative was called the Monitoring Log and implied that only a narrative story about the intervention logic should be registered (Sida 2013b).

However, in the end, it was determined at the meeting that it was impossible to decide which of the three alternatives was the best.¹⁵³ The decision made at the meeting was thus to leave the decision on which of the alternatives to choose to the Director General and Sida’s Management Committee.¹⁵⁴ At the end of May, the Director General chose option 2 (i.e. the results register alternative), which implied that there was “a choice regarding which ‘results’ to report on and a removal of the requirement to follow up whether there was causality between outputs and outcomes”.¹⁵⁵

With the choice of option 2, Sida had made a decision that reporting and documenting causality in quantitative terms during follow-up, which was previously declared to be important for results management purposes, would no longer be required. One could say that the choice of option 2 demonstrates that what was deemed as the most important use of the information was that the results information was needed for communication and external reporting purposes to the Swedish public (and not for the benefits of recipients of aid).

The decision on the Results Register implied that staff were now requested to register the “key intervention objectives” as well as “key dialogue objectives”.¹⁵⁶ The previous category of “bridging objective” had now been removed. As in the 1981 initiative and the 1998 initiative, Sida now also introduced a performance rating function in red, amber and green (According to Plans; Deviation from Plans and Serious Deviation from Plans) for project performance.¹⁵⁷

The purpose and the intended use of the results information in the result register was declared thus:

¹⁵³ Internal memo. Protokoll Processrådet 19 September 2013. 13/000141.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Internal template. Results Register/template. 3.3. In e-mail from designer (D4-3) 18 April 2013.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

The information provided in the results register will be used by Sida for management purposes, as well as internal and external communication and results reporting. The results information will enable Sida to make conclusions and strengthen Results Based Management of the intervention, while at the same time producing results that may be communicated both externally and internally (Open Aid – Strategy reporting).¹⁵⁸

The information was thus to be used for internal needs as well as for external needs. A new aspect was that information was also to be inserted for Open Aid reporting and reporting on cooperation strategies. This information was to be formally approved in a document entitled “Conclusion of Performance”.¹⁵⁹ The conclusion of performance was declared to be a document summarizing both the results register and the risk register. The conclusion of performance was to be done at least annually and should be signed by the head responsible.¹⁶⁰ Control of results fulfillment was thus explicitly made the responsibility of the director responsible. The conclusion of performance was a document intended to be used in Sida’s strategy reporting to the government.¹⁶¹

e. A new Government and Declining Interest in “Results”

In October 2013, a cabinet reshuffle led to the replacement of Gunilla Carlsson, who had been the Minister for Development Cooperation for seven years. This followed shortly after a heavily critical consultancy report on the minister’s management of her portfolio (Gov 2013). Even though the alliance government remained in power until September 2014, when a new government consisting of the Social Democrats and the Green Party took office, the heavy focus on “results” as the core priority for the government eased up directly after Gunilla Carlsson had been replaced. Within MFA, the unit responsible for results management, for example, changed its name from the Results Unit to the Methods Unit. More interest and emphasis was placed on the word qualitative rather than quantitative results information.

What is notable from this period is that the relations between Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs were still very tense. Informal meetings and communication were restricted. According to an internal decision which was talked about as the “contact field paper” (“kontaktytepappret”), all communication was restricted and all queries between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Sida had to pass through the Director General’s

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Regel för insatshantering 28 March 2014.

¹⁶¹ Interview with designer 12 November 2012.

Office.¹⁶² This led to misunderstandings and misinterpretations about what was actually required by Sida from the government. It also led to staff at Ministry for Foreign Affairs facing difficulties in their preparations of steering documents for Sida. One of the misunderstandings concerned, for example, the need to report on the Swedish contribution. A staff member from the MFA who did one week of exchange work at Sida declared that:

I arranged for a week of exchange work at Sida in September [...] And then I thought “My God, they really spend a lot of time on finding out information about the Swedish contribution”. Then I went out and asked the designers – “So, what’s this about the Swedish contribution?” And they looked at me and said: “Isn’t this what you have been wanting? Well, Sida has put a lot of energy into this, this is something you want, right?” (Interview with a staff member at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs 24 November 2014)

This citation exemplifies that the lack of communication between Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs had led to Sida striving toward reporting on the Swedish contribution, something which is extremely difficult. It is clear that the Government never officially requested Sida to report on the Swedish contribution; however, it is also clear that the Minister of Development Aid in various occasions had unofficially mentioned a wish for reporting on the Swedish contribution.

In general, staff at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs had little information about details in Sida’s handling of results, and what type of information it was actually possible to aggregate and request from recipients of aid. The same Ministry for Foreign Affairs employee stated what she expected from the results register and the contribution management system:

I had imagined that there would be a database where you could summarize and compile reports, and that you would be able to see results: so, there is Zambia, area: health. That we would be able to look at everything related to health. And then perhaps add some kind of standard indicators that could be included, but that is not possible at all. That’s what I thought. I was very surprised that you could not develop something else [...] That was the whole aim of this system [...] by creating a data system that can respond to follow-up at the contribution level and to be able to produce reports for consultations and produce extracts of annual reports, then it would make things easier, but instead it all became even more complicated. (Interview with a staff member at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs 24 November 2014)

The citation shows that the staff member at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was not aware that it could be cumbersome for Sida and the recipients to report on the requests made by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

¹⁶² Mentioned in several interviews. I have not managed to find the “Contact field document”. The document is not archived.

With the change to a Social Democratic and Green Party government in 2014, there was a decreased interest in at least quantifiable results. Since 2014 the Swedish government has worked under the slogan that “professionals should be allowed to be professionals” and supported a move towards more trust-based management methods in the government (Gov 2014b).

However, despite the fact that the strong political pressure was now gone, other actors now raised their voices to “defend” and make sure some of the result reforms were implemented. As an example, it was only now that the government demanded Sida actually report on standard indicators (Gov 2014a), despite (or perhaps since) Sida’s internal project on standard indicators some months before had concluded in their final report that:

Sida will not be able to present aggregated results for the agency, since this would have required similarity in the expected results decided upon in the results strategies. (Sida 2013c)

Another example was that Sida’s Director General only now decided to introduce a new category in Sida’s reporting requirements on the cooperation strategies in which the organization was to follow the Swedish contribution (D4-6). The Director General stated in a recent interview that “It was difficult for me, in my leadership when the government went and removed the word ‘results’” (DG5). This means that although the external pressure from the minister had now gone, the reform spirit for “results” did not directly die off.

f. Implementation of the Results Register

Within Sida, the new requirements in the Results Register started to show more satisfactory results in 2014. In comparison to the previous data on low compliance rates of the Results Summary requirement, an internal quality assessment in 2015 found that the Results Register had been completed in 36 out of 37 randomly chosen Sida interventions (which are about 4000 in total) (Sida 2015).¹⁶³ The compliance rate had thus now radically increased from 12% in 2013 to 97% in 2015. It was noted that there were some improvements with regard to how well staff now documented, and that 37% of contributions now included an assessment of the intervention logic, in comparison to 2013, when none of the contributions had done so (Sida 2015:3). However, it was also concluded that “over one third of the contributions did not fulfill the regulations concerning objectives that could be monitored” (Sida 2015:3). One of the conclusions was that:

¹⁶³ E-mail from designer (D4-8) 20160516 complementing information from the Sida (2015)

The results register has limited value for results management and external reporting. Today, collected results data is presented for a few selected contribution goals in each draft, which will be followed up in the annual results update summary. Assessments of goal fulfillment of these selected contribution goals are not sufficiently comprehensive to be used for Sida's needs with regard to results management and strategy follow-up, as this requires a holistic analysis of the results fulfillment of the contribution. At the same time, the use of the results register for reporting purposes (e.g. Sida's annual report or Open Aid) is limited due to the absence of a structure for quality assurance of the data collected. (Sida 2015:4)

So, a conclusion from the internal quality assurance was that the information from the system was not suitable for use for external results reporting purposes, since the data was not sufficiently quality assured. The report also discussed the internal use of the data. It declared that many staff members felt that they had "become better at systematically focusing on and following up on results" (Sida 2015:4). However, it was also said that the purpose of the results register was seen as unclear, which implied that the information in Trac had "limited value for their work as administrators and managers" (Sida 2015:4). One of the designers stated in a recent interview that the key problem behind why the information was considered as being of too poor quality was because the information from recipients was inadequate. He stated that: "There is no value in adding the results of our partners in our system. We cannot use it as it is, because we do not know if it is sufficiently quality assured" (D4-7).

A problem encountered with the contribution management system and the new results register was that staff devoted less time to contacts with the recipients and the "doing it right" culture had led to staff even starting to question whether they should have a dialogue with the recipients at all. One of the designers declared in an interview that:

Then it was not really a part of my world view that it would end up like that, and then that's just what we should do. When the systems were introduced, questions arose like: "Why are we not going to carry out field visits anymore?" And we were like, "Eh, what? What do you mean?" "Well, there is no box for that in the system" (D4-5).

So, it was argued that the regulations had led to staff questioning what was right in terms of their professional duties: to fill out the boxes or to have a dialogue with recipients.

During 2015 and 2016, internal discussions were held at Sida on what to do with the results register and the contribution management system. A Sida priority for 2016 had been to "simplify" administrative routines. Subsequently, in May 2016, Sida commissioned an evaluation of the whole contribution management system (SIPU 2016). The aim of the evaluation

was to analyze the “suitability” of the system. Although the evaluation declared that “the focus in contribution management and follow-up has to some degree been shifted toward the wishes of Sida and the Swedish state administration concerning a safe and flawless handling” (SIPU 2016:6) it also declared that “a probably unforeseen result of this is the risk that the different parts of the process and the requirements for formal administration routines take place at the expense of an approach focusing on the interests of the partner” (SIPU 2016:6). It was subsequently argued that it was considered “questionable” whether the system was a cost-effective solution for Sida’s contribution management, since it was clear that “many people find the system, and in particular the use of Trac, to be very difficult to use, that it takes a lot of time or takes away energy from working with other important tasks” (SIPU 2016:6).

The evaluation declared that one of the weakest parts of the system was the handling of “results,” which, according to the evaluators, was seen as a “paradox, as the criticism that brought on the development of the present system was related to the lack of results reporting” (SIPU 2016:67). The evaluation subsequently recommended that:

the current results register should be replaced by a more holistic approach to the results of a contribution. (SIPU 2016:6)

The evaluation report thus recommended that the results register be replaced.

In the aftermaths of the evaluation, Sida took a decision on 30 June 2016 to remove the obligation to register “key intervention objectives” as well as “key dialogue objectives” in the Results Register.¹⁶⁴ The decision was motivated by the fact that registering these categories was not seen as appropriate. An interesting aspect of the decision is, however, that the memo proposing the removal of the obligation to report on these two categories also mentioned that none of the Sida departments had declared that they had actually used the information included in the intervention logic. However, it was noted that the DG secretariat still wished to retain the obligation to report on the intervention logic since “it is expected that this can be used in future reporting”.¹⁶⁵ The decision and the comment demonstrate that also the Results Register, at the time of writing, encountered difficulties in surviving. One of the current designers wrote in a recent e-mail to me that “It is very likely that it will be completely removed from Trac starting from September 2017”.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Internal decision VU 16/000169. ”Beslut om justering av Sidas delprocess “Hantera biståndsinsatser” efter rekommendation från processrådet”.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. p.2

¹⁶⁶ E-mail from designer 2 November 2016

7.3 Summary of the 2012 initiative

Prior to the launch of the 2012 initiative, the demands from Sida's institutional environment to report on results were higher than ever before. One could say that the legitimacy or existence of development aid as a whole was being questioned during this period, making the demonstration of "results" an aim of aid politics. Since "results", "transparency" and "accountability" were now the goal of government reforms, one could say that during this period there were fewer discussions on "what" development aid should contribute to.

Between the years 2006-2013, the government's requests for results reporting from Sida increased drastically. Sida was, for example, to produce additional results reports together with the Annual Report, and to "ensure the implementation of a uniform goal and results management system" within the agency. Sida was also subject to criticism by the National Audit Office. In 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 the agency received an objection for not having complied with recommendations of stricter administrative control. Internationally, there was now an increased number of norms and standards and international agreements to follow. Many of these international agreements were included as requirements in letters of appropriation to Sida, implying that they were made legally binding for Sida. In addition to the formal coercive regulations, Sida and Sida staff were, prior to the initiation of the 2012 initiative, subject to a hardened informal criticism from government, the media, and external debaters.

However, at the same time as results management reforms were being heavily argued for within the aid sector, reforms within the public administration recommended playing down results management within the Swedish public administration (see SOU 2007:75). One could thus say that the steering trend within the development aid sector went in an opposite direction to the rest of the Swedish state administration.

The heavy pressure to report on results prior to the 2012 initiative led to an open conflict between the Swedish aid minister and Sida staff with regard to the possibility of measuring and managing results. As with regard to previous reforms, Sida staff argued that it was not possible to demonstrate the exact causal relationships between Swedish financing and its effects in developing countries and that the administrative requirements required for doing that were burdensome and made it difficult to continue fulfilling ordinary working tasks in development aid. However, contrary to previous years when these types of claims had been made by the agency in their official responses, the responses were this time not done officially by the agency, but in separate letters to the Minister; one from four department

directors and another from 158 staff members (Sida 2009a; Sida 200b). This demonstrates that the heavily pushed results agenda had created organizational separation and groups of actors within the agency.

As a consequence of the conflicts, and together with overspending of the Sida budget, the government replaced the Director General at Sida. New organizational changes led to leadership being replaced within Sida, as well as 25% staff cuts. In 2011 the government explicitly changed the role of Sida, making its core role to transfer resources, and not as previously to also spearhead and develop policy knowledge in Swedish development aid (see for example Gov, 2011). Policy development and work, including participation in, for example, international networks were now seen as duties to be undertaken by staff at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and no longer by Sida. It is clear that this organizational breakdown and the changed role of the agency led to the task of demonstrating “results” being considered a highly important task for regaining legitimacy. Sida now had increased pressure on itself to show that it acted in conformity with other public agencies in Sweden.

The 2012 initiative was launched as part of a major organizational reform, which intended to standardize all management routines and the tasks for different professional functions into so-called working processes. The results summary requirement had the aim of “‘getting it right’ in terms of external requirements.” (Sida 2012d). It is clear that Sida had now fully adopted not only the external regulations that urged compliance (such as legal prescriptions) but also all external “recommendations”, such as recommendations from external audits.

When rolling out the results summary requirement, staff commented on the requirements being heavy, that they were afraid that the system requirements would imply that time was taken from field presence and dialogue with partners and that there was a risk that Sida would start to choose easier interventions with these requirements, and also uncertainty whether the requirements would lead to improved results fulfillment on the ground. A year into implementation, it was found that the requirement had only been used by 12% and 36% of staff respectively during two measured time intervals (Sida 2012c). So, as in the previous initiatives, most staff seemed to decide not to comply with the results summary requirements.

The resistance, together with the difficulty of knowing what to actually do with the “results” already produced within the system, led to the results summary being replaced by the results register, a tool that emphasized external reporting needs to a greater extent, at the end of 2013. The decision implied a change made in the reporting categories, as well as the

introduction of a performance rating function. Although the compliance rate of the results register now seemed to have increased drastically, during 2014 and 2015 the life of the results register has been declared as cumbersome, implying a partial removal of some of the requirements as well as evaluation recommendations (SIPU 2016) for a total removal of the results register requirements.

8 The Five Phases of the Results Initiatives

In my empirical case studies (Chapters 4-7), I have described the environmental demand on Sida to demonstrate “results,” and also what happened when Sida decided to initiate the four results initiatives in 1971, 1981, 1998 and 2012. I have then described what happened within the organization when these initiatives were implemented and how they thereafter fell out of favor. In this chapter, I will answer and discuss my research questions. I will, with the support of the literature presented in Chapter 3, analyze mechanisms that drove the rise and the fall of the results initiatives.

I have observed a pattern of different phases during which the environmental demand and the organizational responses seem to be somewhat similar. This chapter is therefore divided into five parts, each discussing typicalities in each of the five identified phases. The phases are: 1) pressure, 2) the launch, 3) implementation, 4) point of re-do or die and 5) opening up for something new.

The first part – the pressure phase – is mainly an answer to my first research question: *What influences public sector aid organizations to initiate results initiatives?* In this part, I discuss the contents and type of demands that were placed on Sida prior to the launch of the results initiatives and how Sida responded to these demands. In other words, who made the demands? What were the perceived problems suggested in the demands? How were the demands made? How did Sida respond to the demands? And, what were the consequences of Sida’s response?

The second part – the launch – is mainly an answer to my second research question: *What happens when the results initiatives are launched?* This part deals predominantly with the phase immediately after Sida had decided upon the results initiative. However, during this stage, no staff members had yet been “affected” by the requirements of the results initiative (i.e. no one had yet been asked to fill out results information in the decided technologies).

The third part – implementation – also deals with the second set of research questions but specifically the question: *How do different groups of people act and react?* It deals with all the actions and reactions of the staff when the initiative became part of the organization’s day-to-day practice.

In the fourth and the fifth parts I answer my third research question: *What happens when the initiatives fall out of favor?* The fourth part – the point of re-do or die – deals with a specific point in time I have seen occur during the implementation of every initiative. It is a critical point when something new

needs to happen if the initiative is not to wither away. I explain the different approaches I have seen adopted by the organization at this point. The fifth part – opening up for something new – is a phase when the initiative had died, or was at least about to. During this phase, the organization was looking for new alternatives that could replace the results initiative.

Much of what happened during the phases looks the same over the years. However, some things are different. Throughout the chapter, I point out when there are differences between the four studied initiatives. Finally, I discuss and sum up the main conclusions made in this chapter.

8.1 Pressure

The “pressure” phase is characterized by an increasing number of demands imposed on Sida by several actors. Demands were raised first and foremost by external actors such as the Swedish government, the Swedish Parliament, external audits conducted by, for example, the Swedish National Audit Office, international actors and the media. In the first part I will discuss types of demands and questions raised by these actors prior to the initiation of all of the four results initiatives.

When comparing the way in which pressure was put on Sida, I have found that there are differences between the first three results initiatives (1971, 1981, 1998) and the last initiative (2012). I argue that the main difference took place when the new center-right alliance government gained power in Sweden in 2006. In the second part I therefore discuss the pressure prior to 2006 and in the third part I discuss the pressure after 2006.

8.1.1 Ideas About What Needs to be Done

Each results initiative was preceded by a period during which questions were increasingly being asked by actors in Sida’s external environment. Typically, questions were posed not only by external but also by internal actors. A statement by one actor was often later also made by other actors. One can understand that what happened prior to initiation of the results initiative was what Clemente and Roulet (2015) called a “spiral effect”, i.e. when certain statements and beliefs of problems are suddenly held by many. Prior to the initiation of the results initiatives there is thus a greater openness to voicing certain ideas. Increased questioning implies a need for the organization to gain legitimacy (Meyer and Scott 1983).

Miller and Rose (2008) proposed that in order to gain a deeper understanding for why reforms take place one should analyze the political rationalities, i.e. the values and collective beliefs regarding *existing*

problems. When analyzing the type of problems that were voiced by different actors prior to the results initiatives I have found that predominantly three types of problem statements were raised:

- a. We do not know the effects of aid.
- b. Incentives in development aid are centered on disbursements and not “results”.
- c. Sida staff are not sufficiently willing to work with result-orientation.

Below, I will discuss the contents in each of the three problem statements and thereafter propose how these three statements can be considered as the main “ideas” or the political rationalities that influenced Sida to initiate the results initiatives.

a. We do not know the effects of aid

As already stated in the first lines of this thesis, the questions “Does aid work?” and “Does aid lead to results?” are frequently asked to development aid workers and aid agencies. Whereas the quest for “results” can be seen as being a constant quest in development aid ever since its inception in the 1960s¹⁶⁷ I have found two characteristics when it comes to the contents of this question prior to the initiatives. First, prior to the initiation of the results initiatives the question was not only posed as an open question with a desire to know “results” in general but was, rather, posed as an argument or a threat, suggesting that if “results” were not known then, there would be consequences. The question was thus posed with a harsher tone. Prior to the 1971 initiative, the Parliamentary Audit, for example, declared that: “financing should not be provided to different aid projects unless it can be expected that they will realize benefits and lead to the intended development effects” (RR 1966:10). The argument proposed that if Sida was not able to demonstrate “results” then a consequence would be the cutting of financing to recipients, i.e. an act which threatened the core business of development aid.

Second, previous failures to know “results” were typically used as arguments for why the results initiatives were needed. This argument was more common after the 1971 initiative, once the first experiences of results measurement and management in Swedish development aid had been gained. Prior to the 1981 initiative it was, for example, argued that there was a need to know what actually happened with public aid programmes which by that time had been up and running for a decade.¹⁶⁸ Knowing “results”

¹⁶⁷ As early as 1962, the first government bill on development assistance considered the fulfillment and effects of aid to be a “major task.” Gov (1962:100:8).

¹⁶⁸ See section 5.1.3. for a discussion on this topic.

from the past was thus stated to be a condition for continuing with public aid in the future.

b. Incentives in development aid are centered on disbursements and not results

The second problem statement relates to the inherent incentive structure favoring disbursements and not “results” in development aid. Prior to the initiation of the results initiatives, there has been a wish to do something about this. It was already perceived as problematic in the 1960s that the only quantitative information that existed within development aid was information on the number of disbursements (i.e. inputs). This problem was further emphasized by the fact that Sweden had already committed itself to allocating 1% of its GDP to public development aid in 1968 (Gov 1968:101).¹⁶⁹ The problem was, for example, pointed out by SIDA prior to the 1981 initiative as one of the main reasons why an enlarged results-orientation had not been achieved during the 1971 initiative. They declared that “As long as SIDA’s main problem is to get rid of the reservations and allocations, monitoring and evaluations are not what responsible officials prioritize” (SIDA 1977:2). Subsequently, it was typically argued that a “problem” in development aid was that incentives in aid work were focused on disbursements and not on results.

The results initiatives could be understood as a solution to this problem, i.e. as a way to turn around the incentive structure. Prior to the initiation of the results initiatives, the need to focus on “results” rather than disbursements has been increasingly debated in relation to both external and internal actors. However, when it came to external actors, such as Swedish citizens, it has been perceived that citizens found it difficult to understand complex information about how aid works. This has led to an increased wish to present information in a simple format and possibly in quantitative terms. As an example, the minister of development aid said in a speech to Sida staff in 2012 that she preferred media headings declaring that “Swedish projects have empowered 1,000 women in Zambia and Mozambique” (Carlsson 2011), i.e. declaring that the preferred type of results information was quantifiable and which clearly stated what Swedish aid projects had contributed to.

c. Sida staff are not sufficiently willing to work with result-orientation.

Over the years, the aid profession has constantly been pointed to as a factor working against more results orientation in development aid. It was for

¹⁶⁹ See section 4.1.1. for a more in-depth discussion on this topic.

example pointed out by staff at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in the 1960s that Sida staff were not able “to think in a long term perspective” (Forsse 1999:62) and that they had “feelings of connectedness” (Kalderén, 1971:14) with the country and the recipients they were working with. In the 1970s, Odén (1984:20) claimed that Sida staff were typically seen as “blue-eyed aid enthusiasts throwing around aid money in the form of cheques without any concern for where it ended up”. In an audit performed by the National Audit Office in 1991, it was claimed that Sida staff showed “a lack of reporting discipline” (RRV 1991:23), and that this was the reason why results measurement and management reforms had not taken root within the agency. Subsequently, in addition to ideas regarding the need for increased results orientation as such, a common viewpoint of the aid profession has been that Sida staff has chosen their profession as a result of emotional and political interests and that this could hinder results orientation. I argue that the picture of Sida staff not being sufficiently willing to work with results-orientation has contributed to triggering the initiation of the results initiatives.

I understand these three problem statements as the main “ideas” circulating in Sida’s environment prior to the results initiatives. They all have in common certain beliefs about how public aid provision should best be *organized* and *governed*. They all come with an inherent idea that “results” (rather than disbursements, or emotions, or political interests, or pure intuition) should drive the actions of the different actors in development aid. The results initiatives can all be seen as solutions for how to best govern not only Sida as an organization, but the development sector as a whole.

Literature on organizational institutionalism proposes that organizational behavior is a consequence of the need to be regarded as legitimate in their environment (Meyer and Rowan 1977). It is argued that in situations when legitimacy is threatened, organizations adapt to environmental demands in order to secure their survival. The idea that the sector needs “results” for governing the sector has threatened the core values inherent within the solidarity rationale. The need to gain legitimacy is therefore the main mechanism that explains why Sida initiated the results initiatives.

Whereas one could say that these three problem statements and ideas are general and existed prior to all four results initiatives, I find differences in the way in which the ideas were proposed prior to 2006 and after. I will discuss these differences below.

8.1.2 Prior to 2006: Mimetic and Normative Pressures, and Solidarity

Up until 2006 Sida was mainly influenced by what DiMaggio and Powell (1983) would call mimetic and normative pressures, i.e. forces of pressure that could be understood as being voluntary for the agency to comply with.

It is apparent that Sida, through its dual role as a government agency and an international donor agency, was influenced by the pressure and the ideas coming from both Swedish administrative reform and the international donor networks, such as the OECD/DAC. However, this study indicates that until 2006 Sida saw itself more as an actor belonging to the international donor community. So, if we use Scott and Meyers (1983) concept of “field”, the agency mainly saw itself belonging to the field of the international aid community and other donors. Up until 2010 Sida’s official government mandate was also to be the main Swedish actor responsible for policies in development aid and contacts and support to the international community.¹⁷⁰ Consequently, prior to 2006, the government supported Sida in its claims that results measurement and management could be a difficult development aid task, both with regard to the type of results that could be accounted for and how the results could be interpreted. Furthermore, up until 2006, results measurement and management were pursued by the government as a technical issue that Sida should handle, i.e. the pressure lay on a level that Pache and Santos (2010) argued as being the *means* level and not the goals pursued by the agency, i.e. a level on which organizations would not feel so threatened.

So, it is understandable that when Sida was required to respond to the *how* in this rather supportive environment it chose mainly to use its international contacts when it needed to find solutions to some perceived problems. As shown in the empirical chapters, the first three results initiatives were picked out or directly copied primarily from, for example, the World Bank, or following “best practice” norms primarily established within the international community.¹⁷¹ Up until 2006, the agency did not see it as relevant to imitate or learn from other Swedish public agencies’ work with results measurement and management. Often the agency claimed that it worked in a completely different field compared to other public agencies.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ This role was reduced in the Government Instruction to Sida 2010 (Gov 2010b).

¹⁷¹ An example, when Sida fully copied the World Bank’s Performance Rating system in its entirety in the 1981 initiative (see section 5.2).

¹⁷² See, for example, Sida’s response to a question asked prior to the 1998 initiative on whether it had analyzed how results measurement and management practices were done in other public agencies (see section 6.2.1).

Up until 2006, the agency *officially* opposed or resisted external demands for further results measurement. Two arguments in particular were used. First, the agency claimed that it was not possible to demonstrate the exact causal relationships between Swedish financing and its effects in developing countries.¹⁷³ Second, the agency claimed that too demanding requirements for measuring results would lead to negative consequences for implementation of aid programmes in the recipient countries, i.e. it argued that its core responsibility lay primarily with the recipients of aid and not with the eventual information needs of Swedish citizens. Thus, the agency mainly used the strategy Sahlin-Andersson (2002) called declaring one's "extraordinary position", which has been argued to be a claim that can support organizations to not follow rules.

It is understandable that prior to 2006, Sida *officially dared to* fight back against the demands from the point of view that the requirements to demonstrate "results" did not threaten Sida's main goal. However, one can also understand Sida's confidence from the fact that it was regarded as belonging to the "field" of the international community and that this gave Sida "a shield" against external questioning. Through this belonging, the agency also became a trendsetter in Sweden. In comparison to other public agencies in Sweden, Sida was an early adopter of many results measurement and management ideas.¹⁷⁴ Thus, although there has occasionally been a need for the agency to (re)gain legitimacy, Sida's existence and main goal were not threatened prior to 2006. Both the government and Sida itself positioned Sida within the solidarity rationale and that its primary role was supporting recipients of aid.

In sum, prior to 2006 the main mechanisms that drove Sida to launch the results initiatives were mimetic and normative pressures. However, since the question of results measurement and management was, up until 2006, mainly threatened Sida at a means level, one can understand the initiatives as voluntary solutions chosen by the agency to regain legitimacy and decrease questioning.

8.1.3 After 2006: Coercive Pressure and Effectiveness

As shown in the empirical chapters, the pressure to demonstrate results increased after 2006. The main pressure placed on Sida was now coercive

¹⁷³ See, for example, SIDA's response to the 1974 National Audit Bureau audit, when SIDA claimed that it is "hardly possible" to demonstrate the exact causal relationships (SIDA 1975:4).

¹⁷⁴ See section 4.2.3.b and RRV (1974) respectively for further discussion.

(DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Three things changed, which will be described below:

First, as described in Chapter 7 the existence of development aid work as such was increasingly being questioned, both internationally and in Sweden from 2000 and onwards. Emerging discussions were pursued on if and how development aid agencies should exit the development aid sector (Fee 2012; Jerve and Slob 2008). Previous failures to demonstrate results were now used as evidence for arguments suggesting the closing down of development aid work as such. As an example, one aid debater, Bengt Nilsson, declared that because of the difficulties in demonstrating results “I think Sida should be closed down. I think that development aid work as such should be closed down” (Ordfront 2007).

Second, the government no longer saw results measurement and management as a technical issue and a mean to achieve other things; it was increasingly being seen as the goal and the core of aid politics. However, since the demonstration of results is typically the *how* or the means in theories of results measurement and management, the situation led to a lack of a *what*. The main difference is that the perceived problems were officially voiced this time by the government and the minister of development aid. So, although nothing had in fact changed in terms of solidarity, this time too being defined as the official motive of Swedish development aid in government Bills, previous ways of delivering aid were referred to by the Minister as “oldie aid” or “talk aid” (Carlsson 2012).

Third, after 2006, as a consequence of the Government Bill from 2010 (Gov 2010) Sida’s role was reduced to being an agency that was to transfer and control resources. Sida no longer had the role as *the* main Swedish development aid actor responsible for policy development within the field. Instead, staff from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs represented Sweden in most international meetings. The government not only increasingly requested reporting on “results”¹⁷⁵ but it now also declared *how* Sida should do this.¹⁷⁶ The Government saw Sidas primary role within the effectiveness rationale where the main beneficiaries of the “results” information was Swedish citizens. Sida was no longer supported by the government in its viewpoint that results measurement and management might be difficult.

¹⁷⁵ According to a government decision on a separate results model (Gov 2007b) Sida was now requested to for example provide a separate results report as an annex to its annual report.

¹⁷⁶ See Gov 2007a:49 where it is for example mentioned that “there should always be a logical chain from results evaluation to the formulation of new goals and resource allocation”.

However, it is interesting to note that the government's position in this regard was only visible in the development aid sector. In fact, within the policy field of administrative reform, the government went in the opposite direction when it decided, in 2008, to play down management by results within in the Swedish public administration in general (Gov 2009). So, whereas the changes can be described on the one hand as an effort by the government to normalize Sida, the strong pursuit of results within the development aid sector clearly went in another direction from public administration in general, making Sida a unique agency.

In sum, the pressure was now predominantly coercive. Internationally, there were now commitments to both standardize and make it mandatory for donor countries to report quantitatively on how aid was delivered and goals achieved. Due to publicly disclosed follow-ups on, for example, the Paris Declaration indicators in, for example, OECD/DAC Peer Reviews, the norms and standards came to be seen as normative and binding (see, for example, OECD/DAC 2009). Although these international standards were not legally binding, the Swedish government increasingly requested Sida follow them.¹⁷⁷

The study shows that Sida tried to oppose the government's directives to develop more elaborated results models within the agency. However, in comparison to earlier periods Sida now responded in a more fragmented and unofficial manner. The conflict had led to the creation of different groups of actors within the agency who now responded separately, as was illustrated by the two separate letters sent by the Sida staff to the minister in 2009 (Sida 2009a; 2009b). What followed was an organizational break-up where the government fired the Director General and where staff cuts of 25%, including several voluntary departures, were made.

Pache and Santos (2010) claimed that organizations were more likely to respond negatively if they see conflicts at a goals level, since this threatens their core understanding of what the organization is about. The unofficial and fragmented responses of staff, including the voluntary departures, confirms this claim.

In sum, after 2006 the main mechanisms that drove Sida to start the initiative were coercive pressures. Since results measurement and management reforms were now being pursued at a goal level, the action of launching the

¹⁷⁷ See, for example, Sida's appropriation letters for 2009 and 2010 respectively which require Sida to report annually to government on the Paris Declaration indicators.

results initiatives can be understood as the only viable option available to (re)gain legitimacy and survival of the agency.

Summing up the “pressure phase”, the increased amount of questioning by several actors, together with the idea that results are needed to organize and secure the survival of development aid, functioned as a mechanism for initiating the results initiatives. Up until 2006 the main mechanisms were mimetic and normative pressures, i.e. the action to initiate the initiatives was voluntary. The 2012 initiative was mainly driven by coercive pressures, i.e. it was mandatory for Sida to improve its results reporting. Independent of the type of pressure, the results initiatives can be seen as measures chosen by Sida with the aim of decreasing questioning and pressure, i.e. in order to increase legitimacy.

I will now turn to discuss what happened when Sida decided to launch the results initiatives.

8.2 The Launch

The “launch” is a phase when Sida has decided to initiate the results initiative. It is thus a phase when a perceived solution exists to the problems raised during the pressure phase. At this stage staff has not yet been affected by the requirements of the results initiative (i.e. no one has yet been asked to fill out results information in the decided technologies). I will below first discuss how the launch was perceived within the organization in general. Second, I will discuss more specifically what happened internally when the initiative was designed.

8.2.1 A Momentary Solution

Irrespective of the type of pressure that existed prior to the launch of the initiatives, the launch seemed to signify that the ball was now in Sida’s court. Sida launched a results initiative which was seen, at least momentarily, as an answer to the criticism expressed by actors applying pressure. If we use the concepts of Miller and Rose (2008), the results initiatives as such could be seen as the political programme, i.e. the solution to the perceived problems.

It is clear that the initiatives served the function of increased legitimacy for the organization. Typically, the actors who had applied pressure calmed down and a distance was created to these actors. The launch was so effective that in some cases, such as in the 1981 initiative, the external pressure completely faded away. As explained in the chapter on the 1981 initiative, only a couple of months after launching the results initiative SIDA made a

presentation to the Foreign Relations Committee, who immediately expressed its satisfaction with SIDA's work. Although no actual "results" had been reported, the information that SIDA expected to be able to provide "results" information "in a couple of months' time" (UU 1980/81:20:41) was sufficient and implied that no more requests were made by Parliament for further results reporting. This finding confirms Meyer and Rowan's (1977) proposal that the mere "showing" of effectiveness, without necessarily implying that the agency is now more effective, increases legitimacy.

It was typically perceived during the moment of launch that the task of gathering results information would be fast and easy. In all four results initiatives it was believed that the task would be "done with" within a time frame not exceeding a year. For Sida, however, the problem of why there was a need to initiate a results initiative was different than in the statements posed by the external actors (see 8.1.1). Sida was typically confident about the fact that the agency produced and contributed to "results" in developing countries. Prior to the 2012 initiative, for example, the Director General stated that "There was never a belief that we did not deliver any results, because we knew that we did that" (DG4). Internally, Sida considered the problem they needed to solve to be a "packaging and communication challenge" (DG4). So, the initiation of the results initiatives was seen, at least by top management within Sida, as a quick solution to get rid of the external questioning.

This confirms Brunsson's (2006) proposal that, at least at an overall level within the organization, there was not much focus at this stage on eventual practical problems that might arise. Moreover, in line with Brunsson (2006), the focus in discussions during the launch phase was on the vision and benefits of the initiatives *in the future*. As an example, a picture was presented to Sida's Management Committee in 2013 where the vision was "to be best in the world", which is clearly a vision for expected benefits for the future (see Figure 11 in Section 7.2.3.b).

Typically, at this stage negative arguments or comments about how the initiative might work out in practice were not valued. As shown in the 1998 case, one of the directors on Sida's Management Committee, for example, argued that it was a "lost cause trying to oppose the pressure using rational arguments, because the pressure was too hard" (Interview with a SIDA director in the 1998 initiative, 23 February 2015). This is in line with Brunsson's (2006) proposal that "hope", together with some skepticism, is the main mechanism that drives at least top management in the organization. Thus, during the moment of launch, at least the top management of the organization had a strong belief that the initiative would be beneficial for the organization.

However, whereas the launch signified that a momentary solution for the organization's legitimacy problem had been found, other things happened among the designers and staff within the organization. I will now discuss what happened during the launch, when the initiatives were designed.

8.2.2 “Extra everything” Toppings

Once a decision had been made to initiate the results initiative, the design of the initiative was largely in the hands of the designers. The designers were not what Brunsson (2006) called “reformers”, i.e. typically politicians or staff in government positions, but they had a position which Catasús et al. (2016) called “technicians”, i.e. they were employees who were in charge of designing and adapting the technology to the organization's needs. I will in the following argue that the design phase was beneficial for the designers. However, due to uncertainty about what would be expected of the organization in the future, they designed the technologies with “extra everything” requirements.

The external pressure, or support from the Director General, had often been beneficial for staff members already dedicated to results measurement and for management implementing the task internally. During the launch, there was an open mind toward “internal pressure” with regard to results measurement and management. As an example, the designer of the 1981 initiative declared that “I would never have had the opportunity and the interest to pursue this if they had not wanted it to be pursued” (D2-1). The increased focus on results led to the allocation of resources and staff. The organization was now more open to listening to staff members who possessed knowledge and competence concerning results measurement and management. The preparation phase consisted of a high level of activity and high expectations, when for example, meetings regarding results measurement and management were held more frequently and the meetings were perceived as more important (Gill and Whittle 1993).

A common denominator in each of the four studied initiatives is that they all introduced a technology which was built on a derivate of the Logical Framework. This confirms Miller and Rose's (2008) proposal that political programmes and ideas are only made operable with the introduction of a technology. However, Miller and Rose (2008) proposed that a typical feature in government reforms was that it was the governments, or as in Brunsson's (2006) perspective, the hopeful “reformers”, who typically introduced technologies to make political ideas operable. In all of the four cases studied, the introduction and design of the technology was a *choice* made by Sida.

The process of designing the technologies was characterized by much reflection and learning. In line with Røvik's (2011) proposal, the technologies were shaped in an *interaction* with external experiences and ideas but then adapted and adjusted to the internal needs. I have found that during this process the designers were very familiar with, and also analyzed, past experiences, information and reports discussing difficulties encountered in previous results initiatives. This finding stands in contrast to Brunsson (2006), who argued that the seeming repetition of results initiatives could be explained by mechanisms of hope and forgetfulness and that learning seldom took place. In line with Catasús (2016:4) I argue that the designers did not believe blindly in complete success, but rather that they had a "reflective hope" towards the initiative. So, whereas the interest of the top management and "reformers" during the launch may have been on the future, I argue that the designers were often fully aware of possible technical difficulties, including more profound problems; what have been termed "model problems" (Jacobsson and Sundström 2006).

However, although the designers were aware of the problems, the technologies in all four studied results initiatives were based on an assumption that it is possible to map out the exact causal sequence of events. Moreover, when analyzing the design and the type of reporting categories introduced in the technologies the designers actually introduced *more extensive* requirements than demanded by the Government and external actors. For example, the government did not request Sida to trace exactly what Swedish funds had contributed to in any of the initiatives. Despite this, Sida introduced this kind of requirement in the 1971, the 1981 and the 2012 initiatives.

In addition to introducing more extensive requirements, the aim of the exercise was in all initiatives declared as *many-fold*. The expectation, in all four studied initiatives, was that many different audiences (the media, Swedish tax payers, Parliament, government etc.) would benefit from the *same* information. However, and interestingly, none of the initiatives identified or analyzed during preparations what type of information a citizen, politician or internal decision-maker actually needs and wants. During the design phase the designers chose to analyze what others did, but not what users needed, implying that the design phase too is a mimetically and normatively influenced process.

Moreover, although was not explicitly stated in any of the four initiatives, all four initiatives had a preference, an implicit wish, that the inserted information should be quantitative and that the information should be used for aggregation. Information from the systems was assumed to be used both for internal management and steering, as well as for external reporting and

communication. The main purpose of the initiatives could be understood as serving the internal purposes of what Behn (2003) called “control” and “budget”, i.e. to use information for internal management as well as the external purposes of “promote”, i.e. to make already existing results visible. Although aspects of “learning” and “improvement” have also been mentioned as purposes in some of the initiatives (1971, 1998 and 2012), they were often defined as secondary purposes.

I believe that the “extra everything” technologies and the wish that the information might serve multiple purposes and audiences can be understood as further emphasizing the action to “show” the external actors that the organization now had a solution to the perceived problems (see e.g. Meyer and Rowan 1977). Adding “extra everything” requirements can thus be understood primarily as giving the designers a “sense of safety” that they have done what can be done to secure legitimacy. By topping the technology with “extra everything” the organization can also expect to be regarded as a trendsetter; it gains what Røvik (2008) calls a “snob effect”.

The adding of “extra everything” can also be understood as an act of uncertainty regarding what “results” and results orientation actually mean. Even though past experiences and experiences from other organizations were examined, exact details about previous difficulties were not known. Typically, knowledge about the actual possibility of compiling “results” from the recipient organizations and countries and to what extent different units at Sida collected and used “results” in their day-to-day operations was also scarce. The technologies were often designed in a “trial and error” mode where the designers tested how staff within the organization reacted to some reporting categories. Adding “extra everything” can be understood as an action of testing which of the different reporting categories might work.

In sum, whereas the launch often implied a momentary solution for the top leadership, at the level of the designers this phase was characterized by hectic activity and uncertainty regarding how to meet expectations.

In the pressure phase I claimed that the pressure differed after 2006. Similarly, I have found some differences when it comes to what happened within the organization when the 2012 initiative was launched.

8.2.3 Deeper Adoption in the 2012 Initiative

It is clear that the pressure prior to the 2012 initiative, including the organizational break-up that took place at Sida in 2011, influenced the decision to launch the 2012 initiative to a greater extent. As an example, a manager at Sida stated that the organization had become a “disabled”

organization whose biggest responsibility now was “to have a strong apparatus for managing grants and strategies” and no longer to “fight poverty” (Interview Sida department director 14 March 2013). The citation shows that Sida had to a greater extent accepted that it needed not only to “show” effectiveness on the surface but also to change for real.

The 2012 initiative went furthest with “extra everything” requirements in the technology. The deliberate purpose of the results initiative was this time to “get it right” in terms of “improving the compliance with our legal requirements, government-decided strategies and policies, international commitments and recommended work methods” (Sida 2012d:2). One of the designers stated: “Every word there was basically assessed carefully in order to correspond to a demand” (D4-5). This time, the requirements were inserted as part of Sida’s normal contribution management process. Thus, whereas the technologies used in the previous three initiatives were run as somewhat isolated initiatives on top of normal routines, the 2012 initiative formed part of a change in the entire contribution management process.

In the pressure phase (8.1) I argued that the “fear of the pressure” was a mechanism that triggered the initiation of the results initiatives. Gill and Whittle (1993:291) claimed that in situations when organizations feel threatened by external actors, they may easily adhere to solutions that the authors refer to as “short-term panic measures.” One can thus also understand the deeper adoption and acceptance of external demands in the 2012 initiative as being a consequence of both the more coercive pressure on the organization prior to the initiative (Røvik 2011; Lawrence 2001) as well as the organizational break-up in 2011, and that this break-up also led to the disappearance of the government’s protective “shield”. In 2012 it was thus no longer an option to only partially accept the external demands.

In sum, the mere launch of the initiatives provided Sida with legitimacy. At this stage, questioning and external pressure decreased. During the launch, top leadership was typically content that a solution now existed. However, among the designers there was an awareness that the implementation of the results initiative might face difficulties. Despite this knowledge the technologies were topped with “extra everything” requirements, probably to gain a sense of safety in case of further questioning.

8.3 Implementation

During the implementation phase, staff are requested to fill out the requirements in the results matrix and the organization is to take action based on the collected information. In contrast to the launch phase, where the organization mainly lived in expectation of future benefits, the

implementation phase happens in present time. I will first discuss typical problems that were encountered during implementation and thereafter how staff and designers reacted and responded to the problems.

8.3.1 Problems in Implementation

Brunsson (1993) argued that when reforms are implemented, new problems generally arise. I have found that during implementation three new types of problems arose: a) problems related to the concept of “results” and the categories in the technology, b) problems with usefulness and the user, c) problems related to recipient relations. I will discuss each of these problems below.

a. Problems Related to the Concept of “Results” and the Technology

A question that arose when staff members were to fill out the results matrix was: What information needs to be inserted in the matrix? In other words, what was actually construed as a “result”, and where could it be found? Were results to be taken from the recipient’s reports, or was a “result” an action Sida had undertaken in relation to the recipient? A lot of time was spent discussing what the different categories meant, such as: what does an output, an outcome or an effect actually mean in a certain context?

Moreover, during the design phase it was typically assumed that aid projects had already been planned with a defined causal sequence of events, such as the Logical Framework, and that “results” had only to be picked out from the Logical Framework during follow-up. However, in each of the four studied initiatives it was discovered that this was not in fact the case. Aid projects had most often not used the Logical Framework during planning. This meant that there was rarely a hypothesis of the expected change process in the project. Moreover, the expected “results” were often formulated as either inputs or outputs of the project, since these results were often easier to quantify. Also, baseline information was frequently missing, which made it difficult to know what the formulated “results” were to be assessed in relation to. These findings confirm literature that argues that a vast number of challenges exist in public sector organizations with regards to, for example, first knowing what “results” to choose, then determining the indicators, controlling the facts and then attributing results (Binnedjikt 2001; Mayne 2007). They also confirm literature claiming that due to the complex nature of reality it is difficult to predict processes in the way assumed in linear approaches, like that applied in the Logical Framework (see for example Earle 2002; Ramalingam et al. 2014).

b. Problems with the Use of the Information

Another set of questions that arose when staff were to fill in information in the results matrixes related to the use of the information: Who is going to use the information? For what purpose is the information produced? What will be the consequence of a positive or a negative result? Typically, staff members wanted to know these things. As an example, a Sida director who participated in the 1998 initiative wrote the following in an e-mail:

A dilemma: if results are made public, the rating officer will be less inclined to classify a project as “less satisfactory,” because it is likely to lead to irritation and conflicts with some of the project implementers. As a consequence, there is a risk that rating becomes cautious and chickenhearted, which would further diminish its value. (L4 2002)

The director raised the issue that staff members might not dare to be honest when rating, since this could lead to conflicts between the donor and the recipients, which was feared would reduce the value of the information. I have found that doubts were expressed as to whether the information would be used by external actors, such as the Ministry for Foreign Affairs or the media, but also if it would be used by, for example, Sida’s Director General or Sida’s Management Committee to justify the cutting of funding to projects. There was thus often some sort of “fear of the use” of results information. This confirms Sundström’s (2011) proposal that a fear of how information will be used is a driver in responses on performance measures.

When the designers collected certain information, they often found that a great deal of information was missing. The quality of the results information reported to Sida by the recipients was frequently found to be inadequate for aggregation purposes or wider dissemination. A designer of the 2012 initiative, for example, declared that: “There is no value in adding the results of our partners in our system. We cannot use it as it is, because we do not know if it is sufficiently quality assured” (D4-7). In line with previous literature on difficulties encountered when implementing results measurement and management reforms it is clear that it was difficult for Sida to collect and rely on data collected by partner countries (Binnedjikt 2001; Jerven 2013).

c. Problems with Crowding Out “Real” Work

The task of filling out the requested results information was typically much more time-consuming than expected. As a consequence, discussions arose on what the “aid profession” should in fact be about and which tasks staff members should spend time on: filling out the results matrix or maintaining contact and having dialogues with the recipients? Further, internal conflicts arose between Sida headquarters and staff in the field. Staff at headquarters,

who were closer to Swedish citizens, were more inclined to see the potential value of the exercise, whereas staff in the field seldom saw a value added for relations with recipients; they mainly saw it as an additional work load. As an example, a Sida director in the 1981 initiative wrote to the designers that “We cannot cope with current aid production in a decent way and then this kind of task feels like rubbing salt in the wounds” (L28 1984). It was perceived by the director that the exercise came into conflict with prevailing working routines in development work. This kind of conflict went furthest during the 2012 initiative when staff felt unsure whether they should be involved in relations with the recipients, since, as stated by one of the designers, staff did not know if relations mattered at all any longer since “there is no box for that in the system” (D4-5).

The discussion above demonstrates that once the technology had been rolled out, new practical problems arose. During the implementation phase both staff and designers responded to these problems in different ways. In the following section I will first discuss the ways in which staff responded to the problems and conflicts and thereafter how the designers did so.

8.3.2 Responses by Staff

Oliver (1991) proposed that organizations use five strategic responses to institutional pressures: a) acquiesce, b) compromise, c) avoid, d) defy, and e) manipulate. These responses signal different levels of resistance where acquiesce is the most passive. I found staff using all five strategies. However, rather than there being a stable pattern of all strategies used at once and depending on how the staff perceived the conflict, I found a pattern where some strategies were used at the initial phases of implementation whereas others were used later on. I begin by explaining how staff responded during the initial phases of implementation and end by discussing how they responded later on.

a. Initial Phases of Implementation: We don't do it!

In all four initiatives, the usage rate for staff members who actually fulfilled the exercise was low. However, whilst the compliance rate was often lower in the beginning, it increased after a while. I will first illustrate the available figures for compliance for each of the four initiatives below:

- In the 1971 initiative, it was found in 1974 (i.e. three years into implementation) that less than 10% of Sida staff had in fact followed the compulsory rule to conduct so-called special valuations (RRV 1974:39), i.e. assessments of effects of aid projects. In 1974, routines for planning and follow-up of results were introduced as part of Sida's ordinary contribution management routines. I have not

found figures on compliance after 1974. However, one could say that one effect of the 1971 initiative was the institutionalization of general routines for planning and follow-up (of which planning and following-up “results” was a part) within Sida.

- In the 1981 initiative, the purpose was to disclose results information annually. However, the Catalogue was only produced twice (in 1984 and 1987). The 1984 Catalogue contained information from 213 projects and programmes, and the 1987 Catalogue was said to contain 216 projects and programmes. These numbers represented about 90% of Sida-supported contributions in 1984 and 1987 (Sida 1984; Sida 1987). So, one could say that initially, during the three first years, not enough staff complied with the initiative to produce a Catalogue, whereas at the end 90% complied with the exercise.
- In the 1998 initiative, it was found that in 2004, when the exercise was still voluntary, only four (4) out of 5,000 Sida projects had been rated. This implies a compliance rate of only 0.08%.¹⁷⁸ In the final report for the project in 2007, it was noted that 25% of Sida’s aid projects were included in the system.¹⁷⁹ So, the compliance rate increased but that it remained low throughout the initiative.
- In the 2012 initiative, it was found that in 2013 (i.e. one year into implementation) the compliance rate was 23% and 36% respectively during two different time intervals measured (Sida 2012e).¹⁸⁰ According to e-mail correspondence with one of the designers in 2016, the compliance rate had increased to 97% in 2016.¹⁸¹ This means that the compliance rate increased when the Results Summary requirement was replaced with the Results Register requirement.

These figures indicate that the compliance rate for filling out information was lower during the initial phases of the initiatives, and then increased. The most common strategy adopted by staff members in the initial stages, using Oliver’s (1991) concepts, was in other words, *defiance* (i.e. that staff members explicitly dismissed or ignored the instructions). However, since more staff members started complying with the exercise after some time, the

¹⁷⁸ Minutes from the project group meeting on 14 January 2004

¹⁷⁹ Internal Decision DG 09376. “Den fortsatta användningen av Sida Rating System, SiRS”. 19 June 2007

¹⁸⁰ It was declared that results summaries were missing in 40 of 45 decisions made between 7 March and 30 April 2012, and in 11 of 30 decisions made between 1 May and 30 June 2012. (Sida 2012c)

¹⁸¹ E-mail from designer (D4-8) 16 May 2016 complementing information from the Sida report Sida (2015).

main strategy adopted after a while was to *compromise* and carry out the exercise.

During the initial stages there was often a great deal of resistance within the organization; many staff *challenged* the initiative, for example by bringing up different types of problems as exemplified in the section above. The initial period was often much more hectic when it came to discussions about the initiative. When, for example, counting the responses from staff in the 1981 initiative, I found 26 archived and rather wordy responses from staff during the initial phases of implementation (up until 1984) and only one from the period after 1984 when the first catalogue was produced.¹⁸²

I found that during the initial phases, staff responded with more emotional expressions, expressions that were often characterized by frustration or anxiety. Even though there were some responses in which the exercise was complimented, most responses during the initial phases were negative. This finding adds a perspective to claims made by several researchers on the fact that positive attitudes and emotions, including hope, are at stake when initiatives arise (see for example Brunsson 2006; Catasús 2016; Gill and Whittle 1993; Miller and Rose 2008). In line with the above mentioned scholars, I also found that positive attitudes and hope were expressed by the top management during the launch; however, among staff who were to implement the requirements, the responses and reactions were predominantly negative. There was thus a difference in responses depending on the analyzed actor group.

That staff used more emotional expressions and reactions in general during the initial phases can be understood by the fact that the technology at this stage was a “new” element that they needed to take into account in their ordinary working routines. Confirming findings by, for example, Ahrens and Chapman (2007) and Qu and Cooper (2007) the technology created increased action among organizational members. At this stage, most reactions by staff were in relation to the requirements in the technology, and not the ideas of results measurement and management as such.

At this stage the reporting requirements were seen as cumbersome and difficult to fill in, with the result that staff tried to avoid filling in the requirements for as long as possible. So, one strategy used is what Oliver (1991) referred to as a response of *avoidance*, which might, for example, be to “escape” institutional influence. I mainly found avoidance being adopted when staff waited out the requirements or used delay strategies before doing the task. Arguments used for waiting out were, for example, that they needed

¹⁸² See reference list “E-mails and letters among staff members”.

more time to analyze an external factor or an event, or that they declared their extraordinarity (Sahlin-Andersson 2002). As an example, in the 1981 initiative the field office in Vietnam argued that “We again found that the projects in Vietnam are different from “normal projects” in other developing countries” (L5 1981).

Another method of avoidance was when staff members claimed that they did not have sufficient knowledge to carry out the exercise. In the 1981 initiative, a head of unit, for example, claimed that only people who were “accounting-oriented” could actually fill out the forms (L5 1981). The argument supported the view that staff perceived the exercise as something which was additional to their ordinary work tasks and therefore decided not to comply with it.

The fact that staff used more of the active resistance strategies during the initial phases confirms Oliver’s (1991) proposal that staff, at this stage, perceive a larger conflict with the requirements. It seems that avoidance or delay strategies were used largely due to a lack of trust in how information would be used, i.e. “fear of the use”.

In sum, compliance was often lower during the initial phases of implementation. During this stage strategies used by staff were avoidance and challenge. One can understand the reason for the low compliance and high resistance as the fact that the technology was still new and that staff felt a “fear of the use”.

b. However, after some time: Compromise

As shown in the figures above, after some time in implementation, more and more staff complied with the exercise. The compliance rate increased and staff spent less time discussing, challenging and resisting the initiative. They mostly complied in silence. At this stage they used more of Oliver’s (1991) passive strategies, i.e. acquiesce and compromise.

In the literature it is argued that institutionalization processes often take time (Røvik 2007; Tomson 2008). One way of understanding that more staff now complied is that the ideas as well as the technology had become more accepted within the organization. I have found in my empirics that after complying with the exercise some staff were more positive and expressed gratitude over the exercise. In the 1998 initiative, for example, one manager declared that Sida staff had become better professionals, since they were now reading reports more professionally, making relevant appraisals of the aid projects and that they were now more objective and distanced from the projects.

I have found that staff at this stage were also more positive and tried to solve problems. According to Oliver (1991), tactics for *compromising* might include bargaining, negotiating or using “pacifying tactics”. An example of pacifying tactics might be when a staff member in the 1981 initiative wrote a private letter where she suggested how the designers could design the requirements differently (L22 1982). At this stage staff might also, for example, motivate other staff members to comply with the exercise and find solutions to existing problems.

However, the increased compliance rate could also be understood by the fact that some time into implementation the exercise was made (or seen to be) mandatory.¹⁸³ One of the designers in the 2012 initiative, for example, stated that: “Even though there is resistance toward it now as well, there is no alternative. You just have to do it” (D4-3). This type of compliance can be seen to a large extent in the 2012 initiative. In these cases one might assume that staff members were hiding what they actually felt and thought about the exercise, i.e. they decoupled (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Or, if using the concepts of Hirschman (1970), since “exit” and “voice” were no longer seen as viable options, staff chose “loyalty” and compliance with the exercise.

In sum, compliance often increased during later phases of implementation. During this stage staff used more passive resistance strategies. One can understand the more passive strategies either as an acceptance for the technology, or as a response that there was no alternative other than to comply.

I will now turn to discuss how the designers responded.

8.3.3 Responses by Designers

During the implementation phase, the designers had the main responsibility for the success of the results initiative, so they had a great deal of independence, including their own budget that they were able to use to get the initiative started. At least initially, the designers chose not to involve other actors, such as Sida’s managers or the Director General. Typically, external actors such as the Ministry for Foreign Affairs were not involved at all. The responses and strategies used by the designers can be seen as ways in which organizational actors pushed for further institutionalization of the results initiatives. Their task was to find solutions to the new problems that arose.

¹⁸³ The 1998 exercise was made mandatory in 2004, and in the 2012 initiative it was made mandatory in 2013. In 1984 there was an increased perception that the 1981 initiative and the requirement to fill in results information was compulsory.

Sundström (2006) proposed that during implementation typical solutions applied by reformers in results management reforms are: a) to improve the methods and techniques and to declare that the steering model is not yet ready; b) to educate and inform actors how they should use and understand information from the model and to declare that there is a lack of understanding among the users; c) to increase the commitment by users and declare that there is a lack of interest among users and d) to show patience, declaring that it takes time before the model is adopted.

I find that all four of these solutions and strategies were used by the designers. Much time was spent waiting for something; for something to be declared necessary in order to continue or to take the next step in the implementation of the results initiative. This something might be the finalization of the IT system or more data on results information which was needed to make the information comparable. Something arriving *in the future* was seen as a factor that would solve existing problems. This, if using Brunsson's (2006) terminology, is a mechanism of hope.

Often discussions arose among designers as to whether staff had the right type of *knowledge* when it came to measuring and managing results. Staff within the initiatives were therefore offered education and training activities, either by the designers or by consultants. The designers also allocated a great deal of time to changing the attitudes of staff members and to motivating them to carry out the exercise. A common tactic for motivating the rest of the organization was, for example, to show appreciation and gratitude to staff members who had complied with the exercise. A strategy used primarily in the 1998 rating project was to make the initiative appear fun (see section 6.2.4.a). A more coercive way of motivating staff was to remind them why the exercise was important. This might mean repeating that there was a demand for the information and pressure from the media and the government, and that the exercise was not unnecessary (see for example section 4.1.1).

However, whereas a lot of the strategies used by the designers were similar to strategies used by the "reformers" in Sundström's (2006) and Brunsson's (2006) studies, there are some differences. According to Sundström (2006) and Brunsson (2006) reformers perceive all technical problems encountered as "implementation problems" and not as "model problems", i.e. based on the fact that it is not actually possible to demonstrate causal sequences in the way typically requested in the model. I have in my empirics found facts supporting the claim made by Sundström (2006) that external actors avoid talking about problems in model design itself. This was, for example, done in 1973 when the Parliamentary Audit claimed that "As shown in the audit, results valuation at SIDA has several shortcomings. These, however, do not

apply to the system design, but its application” (RR 1973:28). This citation demonstrates that problems were seen as application or implementation problems.

However, adding to their perspective from a point of view of what happens *within* an organization, I found that during the implementation phase the “model problem” was discussed by both staff and designers. Staff brought up the model problem in all four results initiatives. For example, a staff member in the 1998 initiative declared that it is “impossible to capture causation on a three or five-point scale” (L10 2002). However, I found that these opinions were seldom taken note of and did therefore not change anything in the initiatives.

When earlier shortcomings or difficulties were brought up designers made sure that this negative information was documented; in other words, the designers archived information about previous failures and difficulties. Prior to the 1998 initiative, for example, a memo from the project leader declared that rating had not succeeded in the 1981 initiative, i.e. the past, and that “the introduction of rating had been met with resistance in every organization”;¹⁸⁴ that is, in every other donor organization studied. However, these negative experiences were never discussed within the organization at that time. So, a typical strategy used by the designers was to make sure that the information was archived but not to inform anyone about previous difficulties. Instead, and probably since they were aware of the problems, the designers chose to allocate time for motivation and teambuilding among *themselves*. It seems that it was important for their own job motivation to find strategies on how to manage the job task (see for example section 6.2.3.a).

Brunsson (2006) and Sundström (2006) argued that the repetition of results measurement and management reforms can be understood by the fact that the “reformers”, i.e. staff in government offices and external audit agencies, have a strong tendency to rely on their professional background when proposing new reforms and solutions to existing problems. Sundström (2006) moreover argued that these types of reforms had often been driven by economists and accountants, who had an obligation to be loyal to norms within their own profession. In the four studied results initiatives all but one of the designers (the designer within the 1971 initiative) were ordinary staff members within the agency and seem not to have been chosen for the task because of a professional background in, for example, accounting. The first designer in the 1998 initiative, for example, claimed to have been chosen for

¹⁸⁴ Internal Memo 1999. “Experiences with rating systems in development aid management. Summary of presentation” 1999:8

the task since “I was seen as someone with good knowledge of aid and reality” (D3-1). I have not, therefore, found a similar pattern to Sundström (2006) and Brunsson (2006) of a certain profession driving the initiatives. Rather, the designer’s professional survival depended on staying loyal to the core values in aid, and aid reality.

In this vein it is understandable that the designers also used a strategy I call “defense”. This happened on a number of occasions throughout the four initiatives when the designers referred to external or internal pressure as the reason why the task needed to be carried out. One example was when the designer of the 1981 initiative replied to a question from a field office about why the requirements needed to be filled out so quickly with the following:

Really regret the hefty job of filling out the forms and that this must be done in such a hurry. However, as you know, the Evaluation Unit it is not the one putting pressure on this question. It is rather the Management Committee’s baby. (L17 1981)

The citation exemplifies that the designer in this case disconnected from the responsibility of why the task needed to be carried out. This can be seen as a means of self-defense against criticism. Defense seems to have been adopted in cases when the designers themselves were uncertain with regard to the rationale of the exercise and needed support. They then needed to defend the fact that they remained loyal to the aid reality. Support could either be requested from the managers or they could try to find support from staff members within the organization, who could clarify and support the rationale as to why the exercise was being carried out.

In sum, during the implementation problems arose in relation to the concept of results, with the use of information, and the fact that the exercise was seen as crowding out work with recipient relations. Both staff and designers responded to these problems by using different strategies. Typically resistance and non-compliance were higher during the initial stages, whilst decreasing after some time.

When further support was needed, the initiatives had reached a point in time which I call “the point of re-do or die”. In the following section I will discuss what happens at this point in time.

8.4 Point of Re-Do or Die

The “point of re-do or die” is a phase which concurs with “implementation”. The phase can be characterized as the process that takes place when the initiatives slowly become de-institutionalized or when they fall. I will

discuss below what happened and how one can understand why the initiatives fell out of favor.

8.4.1 An Urgency to do *Something*

At some points in time during implementation the initiatives were re-done. After some time in implementation, there seems to have been a need to make a new decision and slightly change the initiative in order to boost institutionalization further. The problems found in practice when implementing the initiatives contributed to re-doing the initiatives. At this point in time, the Director General or Sida Management Committee were involved in the discussions again. Problems were now discussed and the question raised of how or whether to continue with the initiative. This was a point when the designers were fully open concerning the difficulties faced by the initiative. It seems that the designers now needed support in order to remain motivated to coordinate the running of the initiative.¹⁸⁵

According to the four studied initiatives there were four alternatives when the initiative had arrived at this point. These were:

1. To change the aim or intended user of the initiative, something I call a *re-motivation* of the initiative.
2. To change the technology and reporting requirements in the initiative, something I call a *re-initiative*.
3. To launch a parallel, but in other ways equal, initiative with a different name, something I call the launching of a *sub-initiative*.
4. To let the initiative die or fade away.

In order not to mix up what I mean with different alternatives surging during the “point of re-do or die,” from now on I refer to the official results initiative (i.e. the 1971, 1981, 1998 and 2012 initiatives) as the *mother initiative*. In the following, I explain the characteristics of the re-motivations, re-initiatives and sub-initiatives, which may all be seen as possibilities for further continuation of the mother initiative. They can all be seen as strategies or actions not yet tried out.

8.4.2 A Re-Motivation

During a “re-motivation” the changes made in the mother initiative were made in the rhetoric. This means that a reformulation was made either of the aim, the rationale or the intended user of the initiative. The change did not,

¹⁸⁵ As an example of a point of re-do or die, see section 6.2.4.b.

as far as staff were concerned, change anything in their working practice in regard to their tasks. The reporting requirements remains the same. As an example of a “re-motivation,” the rationale for the 1981 initiative was first declared to be: “To facilitate control and follow-up as well as make the progress of the projects easy to understand for anyone interested” (L1 1981). A couple of months into the initiative, the purpose of the exercise was changed “to get an overall picture of what has happened during 1980/1981” (L121981). The declaration on how results information was to be used had changed from being for the purposes of internal control and follow-up to being a way to show external parties what Sida was doing.

So, the rationale for why a “re-motivation” was undertaken was to combat the problems encountered in relation to the intended user. There was an uncertainty in regards to who was going to use the information; therefore there was a need to “re-motivate” who the intended user was. It could also be understood as an action undertaken when there was a need to find internal legitimacy for further continuation of the initiative.

8.4.3 A Re-Initiative

During a “re-initiative” the change made in the mother initiative concerned reporting requirements (i.e. the results matrix). This might be that a change was made in the reporting categories. This implied that staff members now had to learn and comply with a new way of reporting. From my analysis of the four mother initiatives, I find that re-initiatives were launched twice during the life of the 1971 initiative, five times during the life of the 1981 initiative, three times during the 1998 initiative and, so far, twice during the 2012 initiative.

An example of a re-initiative is when staff working with the 1981 initiative asked staff members to “quantify the results of the contributions in terms of concluded activities and reached production goals” (L13 1981:3) whereas in the following year, 1982, reporting was requested on “planned goals of the contribution and achieved results at every level of the goal hierarchy” (L20 1982). So, compared to the request from 1981, the 1982 request asked for reporting at all levels of the causal chain.

Another type of re-initiative is what happened in two of the mother initiatives (the 1981 and 2012 initiatives) when the reporting requirements were at one point changed from *objective* reporting (i.e. reporting on actual inputs, outputs, outcomes and effects in the aid projects) to *subjective* reporting or performance rating (i.e. when the programme officer subjectively rated the performance of the aid projects). This type of re-initiative seemed to occur when it was found that objective reporting was too

complicated, but when there was a wish to be able to aggregate some other type of information.

So, re-initiatives seem to have occurred due to uncertainty regarding which reporting requirements might in fact fit the organization. This uncertainty originated from uncertainty concerning what a “result” was. As mentioned earlier, from the inception of the mother initiatives, there was seldom a clear analysis or any knowledge about whether it was possible to expect this type of reporting and whether this information was available in the recipient’s reports. Different reporting formats were therefore tried out in a “trial and error” mode to see how staff members reacted to these and what kind of information they delivered.

8.4.4 A Sub-Initiative

What I call a “sub-initiative” is when Sida launched a parallel, essentially similar, initiative to the mother initiative during the implementation of the mother initiative. The sub-initiative could be seen as a way of trying out results reporting in a slightly different format and with a new name.

An example of a sub-initiative was when a project called “Concrete Results of 25 Years of Aid” (Sida 1986b) was launched at Sida in 1986. This took place at a time when the 1981 initiative had encountered a lot of problems and resistance. Like the mother initiative, this project was motivated by the fact that there was a “lack of systematic reporting of what aid has achieved” and the fact that there was now “more pressure from primarily the media but also from Parliament and Swedish citizens to report on results” (L33 1986). The main difference between the mother initiative and the sub-initiative was that the latter sought to capture a longer time span for reporting (25 years) (L 33 1986). However, as shown, the project “Concrete Results of Aid” soon faded away (see section, 5.2.3.f). SIDA never published any kind of official document with the results information gathered in this initiative. In the archives, it is only possible to find an early draft with the information and also the request sent out to the field offices. So, it seems as if sub-initiatives were launched when the designers wanted to try out slightly different ways of results reporting.

8.4.5 A Back and Forth Process

In contrast to, for example, Røvik (1996:146), who claimed that de-institutionalization is a gradual process with a constant “decline in enthusiasm” of the ideas and the technology, I claim that the de-institutionalization process consists of several mini-processes that go back

and forth. I claim that within the larger “tides of reforms” under umbrellas such as Management by Objectives or Balanced Scorecard (Ferlie et al. 2009), or which in this study would be the main ideas in the mother initiatives, several smaller tides exist in which the reforms go back and forth. I find the de-institutionalization process to be more in line with Oliver’s (1992) explanation of de-institutionalization as being a constant conflict between *inertia* and *entropy*, i.e. pressures that impede de-institutionalization and pressures that accelerate de-institutionalization.

One of the mechanisms *impeding* de-institutionalization is what I would call a “fear of dying”. The decision to let the initiative die was typically very difficult. It signified that several years of work may simply be thrown out. Organizational members seemed to feel at this stage what Røvik (1996) referred to as *inertia*, i.e. they felt anxiety about abandoning the initiative. Typically the “re-do or die” phase lasted for years, when different alternatives were tried out. Specifically if no other major alternative was at hand it was often considered a better alternative to hold on to the mother initiative, than to throw it out entirely.

There were, at the “point of re-do or die”, a large number of meetings and discussions where solutions were sought to prevent the mother initiatives dying. Practical consequences of what would happen in the organization *without* the requirements were often considered. The finding contrasts with both Brunsson’s (2006) and Røvik’s (2011) claims about de-institutionalization being a phase when there is a decline in meetings about the initiatives. The reason for the need for meetings at this stage was the “fear of dying”; there seemed to be a need to discuss whether death could somehow be avoided.

A mechanism that *accelerates* the de-institutionalization process is resistance towards the reforms. This confirms proposals made by Oliver (1992) and Val del Fuentes (2003). However, as discussed in the previous section, resistance was mainly apparent during the initial phases of implementation, but after a while it decreased as compliance increased. Lawrence (2008) argued that the most effective forms of power in terms of maintaining institutional control are those which are associated with little or no visible conflict (2008). The findings in this study contradict this proposal. Despite decreased resistance and less conflict during the final phases, the initiatives were not sustainable. I argue that whilst resistance accelerated the process of de-institutionalization, resistance was not the main reason the results initiatives finally died.

The second mechanism that accelerated, but does not explain the fall of the initiatives, was the changed demands from the organization’s external

environment. After some time in implementation the external expectations often changed and there was an increased interest in qualitative and narrative results information, a larger focus on concepts such as “learning” or “trust”. Scholars within organizational institutionalism have typically also explained the fall of management reforms with mimetic influences. Røvik (1996) for example proposed that during the roll-back process of reforms, organizations discard old, unfashionable ideas and try to find new ones in order to recover the “snob effect”. My findings show that whilst the organization took note of these new ideas and there might be groups of people discussing new initiatives simultaneously, they did not to any major extent influence internal decisions taken in regards to the results initiatives. Often, the initiatives continued for many years even after external demands had changed. I would therefore claim that whilst mimetic pressures might accelerate the de-institutionalization process, the pressures do not explain the fall of the initiatives.

I have so far, in the previous sections argued that the pressure and adoption processes differed between the 2012 initiative and the other three. Despite the difference during the rise and adoption of the reform ideas, I found no differences between the four studied initiatives during the de-institutionalization process. The mechanisms at play during the de-institutionalization process seem to be similar in all four studied initiatives. Lawrence (2001) argued that institutionalization might depend on the type of power exerted on organizations. Coercive forces of power, and specifically if exceeded by institutions upon which the organization is dependent, were argued to lead to increased sustainability of reforms (Lawrence 2001). In contrast to Lawrence’s (2001) claim I argue that whereas coercive pressures can be considered important or even crucial in initiating change, this does not seem to have affected what happened thereafter in the initiatives, and it does explain the reason why the initiatives fell.

In sum, whilst resistance and changed external pressures seem to have triggered de-institutionalization, neither resistance nor external pressures explain the reason why the initiatives died.

At some point in time it seemed not to be sustainable to re-do the initiatives. What is it then that led to the final death or fall of the initiatives? When was the “tipping-point” reached? I will discuss this in the next section.

8.4.6 The Death

If analyzing the official explanations for the death of the four initiatives there is no clear date or decision to close down the entire mother initiative for any of them. With regards to the 1971 initiative, the decision for a new

Results Valuation Programme was taken in 1974. With regards to the 1981 initiative, a final Catalogue was printed in 1987, after which it was stated by the designer that there was “simply no one pushing the issue” (D2-1) any longer. With regard to the 1998 initiative, it was stated in the official decision to close down the initiative that it was not considered “meaningful or cost-effective”¹⁸⁶ to allocate more resources to the IT solution within the initiative. It was announced that ideas from the initiative were “to be integrated” into another results project that then took off.¹⁸⁷ As said in Chapter 7, the 2012 initiative, or the Results Register, is still in use, but appears to be gradually being phased out. I will argue in the following section that there were mainly three mechanisms that explain when and why the final tipping point – to the death – was reached.

The first tipping mechanism relates to the reporting categories used in the initiatives. The final fall of the initiatives occurred *when every possible way of reporting “results” had been tried out*. In all four results initiatives the same type of reporting categories were tried out. The categories were: “output,” “outcome,” “effects” and “assumptions.” Reporting was tried out by defining the causal links between inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In the 1981, 1998 and 2012 initiatives, “performance rating” was also tried out as a more subjective way of reporting. The 1998 and 2012 initiatives included reporting on “risks.” In all the initiatives, there was a wish to attribute and aggregate information to external reporting, such as Sida’s annual report.

However, irrespective of the reporting category introduced, staff have found it difficult to report on the category and in each of the initiatives it has been difficult to find a standardized reporting category, which allows information to be aggregated. Once the initiatives had died, the reporting requirements used in the results initiatives have not remain as reporting categories within the organization. That is to say, the reporting categories constantly remained un-institutionalized (Abrahamsson 1996). One can conclude that once it has been discovered that a certain category cannot solve the problem of making “results” visible within the organization, the category is thrown out as a “natural rejection” (Røvik 1996). So, the initiatives die since they never find a reporting category that can be standardized and that become institutionalized. But they last as long as there exist categories that have not yet been tried out.

¹⁸⁶ Internal decision DG 09376 ”Den fortsatta användningen av Sida Rating System, SiRS”

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

The second tipping mechanism is related to the *non-use of the information*. As said previously, once some results information had been compiled within the initiatives the information was considered to be of inadequate quality. For example, information on baselines was often missing and it was therefore not known if the “results” reported were in fact an improvement on how it was before. Moreover, it was often found that the reported information was not “results” but inputs. Each of the four initiatives assumed in their purpose description that external and internal actors were interested in the same type of information. However, it was found that the information could not be used for aggregation or for making any agency-wide decisions, or function in external reporting. This finding is in line with the findings of Saliterer and Korac (2013) that information created for external accountability purposes may be difficult to use for internal management purposes, and vice versa. It also confirms findings of Moynihan (2005) that despite vast production of results information, this information is not used by decision-makers in organizations or by political leaders. This study shows that because results information was considered to be of inadequate quality the results information (except for in the 1981 initiative when two Catalogues were produced) was never disclosed outside the organization. The tipping mechanism is thus rather related to the “fear of the use” and opinions that would come if information would be disclosed rather than actual knowledge of non-use among external actors.

The third tipping mechanism is related to the fact that the *results initiatives no longer fulfill the function of providing legitimacy* for the organization. Rather, at this stage they produce a bad or a negative reputation for the organization. What typically happened when what had been produced and done within the initiatives became known was a reaction such as that expressed by the staff member at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in the 2012 initiative who had expected Sida to develop a database that could easily say what type of aid interventions had worked and what not, but who was surprised about the type of information that actually existed in the Results Register: “I was very surprised that they could not develop something else...instead it all became even more complicated” (Interview staff member at Ministry for Foreign Affairs 24 November 2014). When the limitations of “results” production became known and it was clear that the results initiatives would not produce easily understandable information, then the initiatives fell.

It seems that the organization was able to live with all these inconsistencies for a while. However, when it became apparent to both external actors and organizational members that the results initiatives were mainly a façade and that they had no bearing on what happened in reality, the initiatives died out.

This conclusion confirms the claim made by Scott (2001) that it seems that decoupling is not sustainable over time. Scott (2001) argued that it would be difficult for individuals within organizations to persist inconsistency (Scott 2001). Similarly, I argue that whilst showing a façade could function and be a beneficial strategy for a while, it is apparent that this is not a sustainable strategy for a longer term.

In sum, the “point of re-do or die” can be perceived as the phase during implementation when the results initiatives started to de-institutionalize or fall. A decision of re-motivation, a re-initiative or a sub-initiative was chosen to further boost the initiative. Whilst the “fear of death” impeded de-institutionalization, resistance and changed external pressures accelerated de-institutionalization. The final fall of the initiatives happened when there were no more reporting categories to try out and when it was found that the results information was not used, i.e. when the initiatives had failed in every way possible.

8.5 Opening up for Something New

At the moment when the initiative died, or when most people know that it would soon die, there is a phase when the agency is once again open for new ideas. I call this phase for Opening up for Something New.

In each of the four studied initiatives, new people replaced the previous designers. Frequently, new people who came in did not have a strong commitment to the initiative and were keen to tidy up after the results initiative, which was clearly no longer so popular and fashionable. It is clear that when the ideas within the results initiative are no longer fashionable, it is difficult for both the previous designers and directors who have driven the initiative to advocate other ideas. Sida’s Director General between the years 2012-2016 for example stated in an interview in 2016, when the 2012 initiative was on its decline, that “It was difficult for me, in my leadership, when the government went and removed the word ‘results’” (DG5).

At this stage, there is an open mind and a search for new solutions. The fourth lead designer for the 1998 initiative, for example, declared that “We hoped that something would come flying in” (D3-4), meaning that the organization then hoped some new ideas of other type of results initiatives be available, when the new government assumed power in 2006 and had other expectations for how Sida would report on “results”. So, after the fall there was often a period when the organization needed something new to hold on to.

Brunsson (2009) claimed that hope is a strong mechanism that drives the rise of new rational reforms once one reform has died out. With the exception of the period between the 1998 and the 2012 initiatives, my findings, however, suggest that hopes at this stage were placed in something *contrary* to the results initiatives, not in a new similar rational reform. I have found that at this stage the organization is open to ideas that has been circulating in its surroundings for a while. For example, several staff members within Sida were already promoting ideas launched within the Doing Development Differently initiative in 2013. However, these ideas only gained a strong foothold at Sida in 2016 when the 2012 initiative was officially heading towards its downfall (see section 7.2.3). One could say that promoting and belonging to the unofficial Doing Development Differently group within Sida only then gave a “snob effect” (Røvik 1996) to the new designers of that approach. I argue that during “the phase of opening up for something new”, as during the “pressure phase”, the organization is once again open for new and fashionable ideas. If using Krasner’s (1988) concepts of periods of “lock in” and “openness”, these phases would be a phase of openness, whereas during the whole period from launch to implementation the organization had a lock-in period for learning and taking in fashionable ideas.

I have found that directly after the death there was seldom much interest in analyzing the reasons for the death of initiatives. Except for the evaluation done on the 2012 initiative by Swedish Institute for Public Administration in 2016 (SIPU 2016), there have never been any evaluations or studies carried out of any of the studied initiatives. However, confirming Røvik’s (1996) proposal it is clear that the ideas as well as the technologies used in the results initiatives remained to be “stored” within the organization. I have found that “storing” is done in the rememberings of staff members dedicated to results measurement and management. Often, after a period of trying out something alternative, a new interest for results measurement and management emerged. Then, the ideas and rememberings of the stored ideas were picked up again. For example, on hearing about my PhD topic a staff member at Sida in 2015, who was one of the designers of the 1998 initiative, wrote me an e-mail saying: “If your dissertation could raise the SiRS-thinking to the skies, then my advocacy work would be so much easier ☺.”¹⁸⁸ At that time, this designer had argued for the re-launching of the performance rating function from the 1998 initiative within Sida.

So, since the death phase of the results initiatives was often cumbersome for the organization one can view the period of “opening up for something new”

¹⁸⁸ E-mail from designer in 1998 initiative 18 February 2015

as a necessary period for the organization to gather strength and go on with something new. However, after a period of trying out contrary approaches, reform ideas relating to rational reforms and results measurement and management seemed to return.

8.6. Summary

In this chapter, I have shown that the life of the four results initiatives could be understood as having taken place in five stages: 1) the pressure phase, 2) the launch, 3) implementation, 4) point of re-do or die, 5) phase of opening up for something new.

The increased questioning by an increasing number of actors, together with the idea that results were needed for organizing and securing the survival of development aid, functioned as a mechanism for initiating the results initiatives. Up until 2006 the main mechanisms that drove Sida to initiate the initiatives were mimetic and normative pressures, i.e. the action to initiate the results initiatives was voluntary. The 2012 initiative was mainly driven by coercive pressures, i.e. it was mandatory for Sida to improve its results reporting. Independent of the type of pressures, the results initiatives can be seen as an act chosen by Sida that would decrease questioning and increase legitimacy. The main mechanism that influenced Sida to initiate the results initiatives was thus the need to regain legitimacy.

The mere launch of the initiatives provided Sida with legitimacy. At this stage, questioning and external pressure had decreased. During the launch, top leadership was typically content that a solution now existed. However, at the level of the designers, who now were the main actors during this phase, there was an awareness that the implementation of the results initiative might face difficulties. Despite this knowledge the technologies were topped with “extra everything” requirements, probably to gain a sense of safety for any further questioning. The fact that technology used in the 2012 initiative went furthest with the “extra everything” toppings can be understood by the coercive pressure put on the organization prior to the initiative.

During implementation, problems arose in relation to the concept of results, with the use of information, and because the exercise was seen as crowding out work with recipient relations. Both staff and designers responded to these problems by using different strategies. Resistance and non-compliance was higher during the initial stages, whilst it decreased after some time in implementation.

The “point of re-do or die” was the phase during implementation when the results initiatives started to de-institutionalize or fall. There was at this point

in time a need for the organization to do something in order to hinder de-institutionalization. A “fear of death”, implying, for example, an increased number of meetings being held to discuss the consequences if the initiative were to die out, was a mechanism that impeded the de-institutionalization. In contrast, resistance, as well as changed external demands, contributed to de-institutionalization.

The final fall, or the death, occurred when there was an increased awareness among actors of the (non-)usefulness of the information and when all the possibilities to re-do the initiative had been tried out. Whereas mimetic, normative and coercive forces contributed to the initiation and adoption of the ideas and technologies in different ways, it was mainly internal factors within the organization that explain the fall or the initiatives.

After the initiatives had died out, the organization was once again open for new ideas, most often *contrary* to results measurement and management. After a period of interest in, for example, qualitative evaluations, with its focus on learning or trust management, the organization again seemed to be open to ideas relating to rational reforms and results measurement.

9 Concluding Discussion

In the previous chapter I discussed and summarized various mechanisms in play during the five phases of the results initiatives that contributed to either the rise or the fall, or further institutionalization or de-institutionalization, of the initiatives. In this chapter I discuss the development on a more general level, looking at different patterns over time. I relate to the discussion in Chapter 1, on the solidarity and effectiveness rationales, and conclude what I believe are the main contributions in relation to previous literature on the topic.

An analysis of the story over time shows it comprises five stable, or institutionalized, elements. First, both public development aid and results measurement and management can be regarded as institutionalized ideas, and as institutionalized practices within Swedish public administration since the 1960s. It is taken for granted that Sweden should provide public development aid, and it is taken for granted that public agencies should be able to demonstrate results. I have shown in Chapter 8 that prior to the initiation of the initiatives the pressure increased; ideas and statements such as “we do not know the effects of aid”, “incentives in development aid are centred on disbursements and not results” and “Sida staff are not sufficiently willing to work with results orientation” were increasingly voiced by external actors. A stable element found in this study is thus that *during certain time intervals the ideas of results measurement and management were promoted more intensively*. This confirms Ferlie et al.’s (2009) proposal that the quest for “performance” or “results” seems to remain a permanent feature in governance and that a greater quest for it comes in “tides of reforms” or in different peaks.

The second stable element is that Sida *initiated similar results initiatives every 10-12 years*. In Chapter 8, I showed that the launch often signified a point when a momentary solution to the external pressure was found. During the launch the organization designed the technology to be used in the initiatives. As shown, this technology was designed with “extra everything” toppings, i.e. there was often a wish to show that everything possible had in fact been done. This demonstrates that the desire to aggregate and make results visible and also to test the technology, despite knowledge of previous difficulties, appears to be a stable, recurring element. This confirms Miller and Rose’s (2008) proposal that solutions to ideas of pressure are often sought in the introduction of technologies. This study, however, shows that the design of the technologies is driven by an interest both in making results

and the results initiative visible (Martinez 2013; Quattrone 2009) and also by uncertainty of what works and fits in the organization.

The third stable element is that the reform attempts *faced difficulties every time when it came to implementation*, with non-compliance and resistance as responses. As shown in Chapter 8, there were often problems related to the concept of “results”, with who was going to use the information and a feeling that the exercise crowded out “real” work. These types of problems are in line with earlier findings on implementation of result management reforms (see Chapter 1 and Section 2.3).

A fourth stable element found in this study, something that adds to previous literature, is the occurrence of what I labeled in Chapter 8 the “point of re-do or die”, i.e. a point when there was an urgency to do something in order for the initiatives not to wither away. The organization then chose to re-launch the initiatives, either by a re-motivation, a re-initiative or a sub-initiative (see 8.4.). So, the *back and forth process between resistance and compliance, between de-institutionalization and institutionalization* also seems to be a stable and recurring element in the initiatives.

The fifth institutionalized element is apparent when analyzing the type of resistance more deeply, and if distinguishing between the “ideas” and the “technologies” (Kurunmäki et al. 2011). It was mainly the task of filling in the requirements in the technology, not the ideas of results measurement and management, that was resisted. In the end, the information gathered was typically considered non-useful for decision-making purposes, which subsequently led to the fall of the reforms. In the end, the reporting categories introduced in the initiatives remained un-institutionalized (Abrahamsson 1996). A stable feature within the initiatives was thus the *constant hope of finding better reporting categories, but also the failure to do so*.

In Chapter 1, I showed that previous literature on “tides of reforms” had explained the occurrence of the tides with different mechanisms driving organizations and people to be seen as effective and rational (for example Ferlie et al. 2007; Brunsson 2006). I argued that there is also a need to analyze whether reforms can be explained by mechanisms such as feelings and emotions that drive people and organizations to, for example, show solidarity; actions that people and organizations simply perform because they feel that they gain a good feeling out of it. I will argue in the following section that the stability of the five elements mentioned above leading to continuous rise and fall of management reforms. Three main can be main mechanisms explain their stability:

1. The tension between solidarity and effectiveness.

2. Fear and other emotions.
3. Gained benefits.

Finally, I will discuss some general learnings from this study and whether there are alternative ways to gain the kind of legitimacy and the kind of benefits that the initiatives provide.

9.1 The Tension between Solidarity and Effectiveness

The tides of reforms in this story can be understood as a continuous tension between the wish to do good or to do a proper action, i.e. the solidarity rationale, and the pressure to show results, i.e. the effectiveness rationale. Thus, actors involved in the processes were constantly driven by both rationales, and since it was at some points in time difficult to combine the two, tensions were created. These tensions drove the results initiatives. For example, one conclusion from Chapter 8 was that, prior to the initiation of the results initiatives, an increasing number of questions were raised by an increasing number of actors. I argued that the increased pressure for results was related to ideas and beliefs that the public aid sector as a whole could not survive without showing results. The assumption in the problem statements was that results were needed in the sector in order to continue to organize actions of solidarity; citizens needed results in order to nourish the notion that their tax money supported something good in the world, and Sida staff and recipients needed results in order to make correct judgments of what actions were proper.

Lack of trust, i.e. that aid funding might not support something “good”, leads to a collective “dissonance in the minds” of people (Martens et al. 2005), which in turn leads to a search for solutions in the form of results initiatives that can increase (the feeling of) objectivity and bring back trust. During the “pressure phase” there were concerns that the solidarity rationale was too strong and therefore solutions were sought within the effectiveness rationale, in results measurement and management techniques.

However, problems arose during the implementation phase. As shown in Chapter 8, the problems were mainly connected to the concept of results and the requirements in the technology, the fact that there were problems with how to use the information and to the notion that the exercise crowded out ordinary or “real” work duties in development aid. During implementation there were thus concerns that the effectiveness rationale was dominating, and solutions were therefore sought within the solidarity rationale. Oliver (1991) argued that using strategies and responding to organizational pressures might give organizational members a feeling of being in control. One could therefore see the staff’s resistance as an action to protect the

solidarity rationale in aid work. The fact that staff in the four studied initiatives often reacted against the requirements in the technologies can be seen as giving them a sense of doing something which they felt was a proper action in relation to their work duties and in relation to the reality of the recipients of aid.

In turn, the fall of the results initiatives can be understood as a phase when the actors stopped believing that the initiatives could do any good for either the solidarity rationale or the effectiveness rationale. In line with literature arguing for “loose links” between ideas and practice (see for example Miller and O’Leary 1987; Meyer and Rowan 1977), and that practice never turns out to be the same as the ideas (Brunsson 2006) one could say that the loose link only became obvious for the actors after some time in implementation. However, as shown in Chapter 8, the de-institutionalization process did not happen, as claimed by Røvik (1996:146), as a gradual process with a constant “decline in enthusiasm” of the ideas and the technology. The de-institutionalization was a back and forth process consisting of several mini-processes with renewed attempts to revitalize the mother initiative. One could therefore say that throughout the life of the initiatives the link between ideas and practice sometimes increased, sometimes decreased.

That the initiatives survived for as long as they did can be explained by the fact that as long as there was hope that the right reporting categories could be found there was also hope that the link between ideas and practice could be tightened, and that both the solidarity and the effectiveness rationale could be supported.

As a consequence of this reasoning, the rise and fall of the initiatives cannot be explained only by external factors and the desire of organizations to be perceived as rational or to show that they are effective. I argue that the solidarity rationale must be seen as an equally strong driver of action. Since staff in development aid also need to respond to the solidarity rationale, they ensure that their actions also are supportive to this rationale.

In Chapter 8, I argued that previous literature studying tides of reforms had typically focused on explaining how “reformers”, i.e. staff in governments offices and in external audit agencies (Brunsson 2006; Sundström 2006) act. I have shown in this study that the designers and staff often acted in different ways than reformers. The designers were, for example, most often aware of difficulties with results measurement models. I argued that the reformers and the designers had different professional values they needed to be loyal to. Whereas the reformers might have needed to be loyal to their profession for example as accountants, the designers also needed to stay loyal to the core values in aid and aid reality. One can understand the designers and staffs

actions as following the “logic of appropriateness” (March 1991) and that they chose to perform actions they perceived were appropriate and right in a given situation. However, I argue that what was perceived as appropriate depends on the strength of the tension between the solidarity rationale and the effectiveness rationale at that moment in time. During the pressure phase, the most appropriate action seems to have been to launch a results initiative i.e. do something within the effectiveness rationale, whereas during implementation, when requirements became too heavy, the most appropriate action seems to have been to resist the requirements and defend the solidarity rationale.

Since the story told in this thesis is cyclical, and since it is clear that each results initiative came in different phases of a cycle, I believe that there is not just one answer to the question of how organizations respond to increased control requirements and results measurement and management techniques. The answer depends on when in time one actually analyzes responses. Sometimes, staff might very well find a balance between increased control requirements and their daily work duties, while at other times they experience a major conflict. This finding leads to the argument that organizational responses depend on a factor of *time*.

Given the above, my contribution to previous literature is that people’s inner drive to do good and proper actions (since this gives them a sense of “feel good”) is also a mechanism that drives reforms. A tension between the solidarity and effectiveness rationales makes people and organizations act and react, since they wish to resolve the tension. Their collective actions contribute to the rise and fall of results reforms, in this case in development aid. The strength of the tension differs depending on where in a reform cycle it occurs.

I will now turn to discuss why not only hope, but also other emotions and feelings, such as fear, drive results reforms.

9.2 Fear and Other Emotions

In Chapter 2, I showed that previous literature explains rational reforms as being driven mainly by positive emotions and feelings, such as hope (Brunsson 2006) or optimism (Miller and Rose 2008); emotions that during the initiation of a results initiative can imply a “largely uncritical discourse” (Abrahamsson and Fairchild 1999) and where people are blind to other alternatives (Gill and Whittle 1993). In line with this literature I have also in this study found that hope and wishful thinking were clearly part of the studied reforms. However, as shown in chapter 8 hope mainly explains behavior and thinking by top management during the launch phase.

Based on the findings in this study I claim that fear, as well as other (negative) emotions, drive the tides of reforms. Three types of “fears” driving the results initiatives were discussed in Chapter 8.

First, *fear of illegitimacy*, a fear that was most visible during the pressure phase (see 8.1) or a fear of the consequences if results were not demonstrated, has triggered the initiation of the results initiatives. This fear was most apparent in the 2012 initiative. The strong coercive pressure, and the fact that all staff members within the organization during this period were personally affected by the organizational crisis in 2011, led to fear becoming a mechanism that drove the organization to fully adapt and incorporate external demands. Fear of further external scrutiny and sanctions might also explain why the organization and staff members this time refrained from archiving their personal reactions towards the initiative. The initiation of the results initiatives was seen as a proper course of action to reduce this fear of illegitimacy.

Secondly, *fear of the use of results information*, a fear that was visible during implementation (see 8.3.1), drove action during the implementation phase. This happened on two occasions. First, during the initial phases of implementation staff often asked questions about who was going to use the information and how information was going to be used. And whether this use might have any consequences for the aid projects that they were handling. The reaction or action of not complying or of avoiding fulfilling the exercise for as long as possible, could be interpreted as a way to reduce the fear of the use. If no information was submitted, no one could take any action on it. Second, when information was submitted by staff and compiled by the designers, the designers and the top management frequently (except for in the 1981 initiative) decided not to disclose the information further. So, the action taken by the designers and top management in deciding not to disclose information could also be seen as a way to reduce the fear of the use. If no external party knew about the internal details, no further actions could be taken based on the information.

Thirdly, the *fear of dying* drove action, especially at the “point of re-do or die”. As was shown in Chapter 8 (see 8.4), during this phase the initiatives were re-done in different ways: either by changing or fine-tuning the purpose descriptions, or by changing the intended users of the information, or by changing and trying out different reporting categories. The different ways of changing the initiative can be seen as different attempts to keep the initiative alive, i.e. to reduce the fear of dying. The increased number of meetings held during this phase can be seen as a way to reduce anxiety about what would actually happen if the initiative was left to face death.

To sum up, the *fear of illegitimacy* mainly influenced the rise of the initiatives while the *fear of use* mainly influenced the fall of the initiatives. The *fear of dying* influenced the time it took for the fall to be completed.

Literature within organizational institutionalism has often noted that *uncertainty* influences organizational action (see for example Greenwood et al. 2008). It is also often argued that organizations decide to perform the type of actions that can benefit them in the future (for example Brunsson 2006; Ferlie et al. 2007; Miller and Rose 2008). In this literature, concepts of feelings and emotions, or other non-cognitive ways of describing people's action, such as fear, are seldom used. Fear can certainly be a feeling that is similar to what people feel when they experience uncertainty. However, fear is something qualitatively different than uncertainty. In literature on emotions, fear is often considered as a basic emotion (Ekman 1992; Damasio 2006). According to Ekman (1992), fear is a feeling induced by a perceived danger or threat, and has been argued to lead to several instant responses which are intended to help people to survive a dangerous situation by preparing them for either "fight or flight", i.e. either to escape or to avoid the threat. Fear and the fight-or-flight response have been depicted as an instinct mechanism that every animal (including humans) possesses (see for example Ekman 1992).

Moreover, Damasio (2006) has argued that when people react with a strong emotion such as fear, reactions come instinctively. Rational reasoning about what to do to gain advantages in the future often comes secondarily. I argue that many of the actions and reactions in the cases studied in this thesis should not be perceived as being planned rationally, but have rather taken place instinctively, from a feeling of what was the right thing to do right there and then, without thoughts about future consequences. In this vein, I further claim that instinctive feelings and emotions, such as fear, also functioned as mechanisms that drove the results initiatives.

In this vein, it is also most probable that the mechanisms of fear function differently among the "reformers" studied by Brunsson 2006 and Sundström 2006 than among designers and staff in implementing agencies who are to fulfill results measurement and management reforms, but who do not have these reforms as their overall goal. Although Bringselius (2013:11), for example, argued that the organizational culture within the Swedish National Audit Office (an organization which according to Brunsson 2006 and Sundström 2003 would consist of "reformers") was characterized by "a fear of making mistakes", I would claim that fear might be an even stronger mechanism driving action among government agencies implementing results measurement and management reforms. Since the reformers set the rules whereas the government agencies need to obey them, there is a power

imbalance between the two. Fear of, for example, sanctions might therefore explain action among implementing agencies.

So, one can assume that coercive pressures and power trigger mechanisms of fear to a larger extent than mimetic and normative pressures. In this vein one might assume that fear was a stronger mechanism driving action prior to the 2012 initiative when coercive pressures were the predominant mode of influencing action.

Given the above, my contribution to previous literature is that the initiation of organizational reforms and adoption of technologies within an organization cannot be explained only by positive emotions, such as hope and optimism, but I also claim that negative emotions, such as fear, drive action in reforms (Boedker and Chua 2013; Masumi 2002; Thrift 2008). Fear might play out differently depending on the type of pressure put on the organization/persons and depending on when, during the reform cycle, one conducts the analysis.

9.3 Gained Benefits

The fact that actual results produced within the four studied initiatives have never been officially disclosed (except for the two Catalogues produced in 1984 and 1987) or used in agency-wide decisions could be seen as a failure of the initiatives as such. The initiatives have not fulfilled their intended purposes. Still, as was discussed in Chapter 8, the initiatives have continuously been re-introduced and implementation has continued for long periods of time (four to ten years). This indicates that they have been beneficial in some way for the organization. Otherwise, the organization would have closed them down quicker. Below I will discuss some benefits that might have driven the initiatives.

As shown in Chapter 8, the results initiatives quite quickly put an end to external questioning. During the phase of launching the initiatives, Sida was able to demonstrate that it had worked out a solution, and that it would soon be able to demonstrate results. This finding confirms overall assumptions made by scholars within organizational institutionalism that the mere appearance of effectiveness is important for securing organizational survival and legitimacy and that this legitimacy can “insulate the organization from external pressures” and external questioning (Deephouse and Suchman 2008:51). Despite that “results” from the initiatives were not disclosed the agency continued during all this time receiving government allocations for aid, and as shown in chapter 1, since 1970’s the public support to aid has continuously increased. A conclusion drawn from this reasoning is that it was not the disclosed “results” that mattered, benefits were gained anyway.

However, during implementation the initiatives were also proven to be valuable internally for the organization. The launch in itself typically provided the designers, primarily, with some form of internal legitimacy, meaning that it gave them legitimacy to further pursue results measurement and management reforms within the agency. The initiatives were moreover found to be valuable internally for some staff members who declared that the running of the initiative provided them with “a sense of safety” (Baniel 2013) with regard to their professional role as aid managers. When they filled in the requirements in the technology, they felt that they fulfilled external expectations and that they were doing what was expected of them.

So, even though the story can be looked upon as a continuous failure to meet pronounced purposes, I argue that the results initiatives have filled a function, for both external and internal actors. They have reduced the “dissonance in our minds” regarding worries that aid has been ineffective (Martens et al. 2005). Their mere existence has proven valuable for their “symbolic purpose,” as they have convinced both external and internal actors that attempts have been made to prove there was value for money provided by public organizations and programs (Thomas 2007). Since they have done this, they have also proven valuable for supporting the other expected “payment” of development aid – i.e. to gain a sufficient “feel good” value; that aid supports people living in poverty (see for example Lumsdaine 1993; Ramalingam 2013; Riddell 2007).

So, one could say that the results initiatives – even though they failed in a technical sense – have in fact supported what they intended to support, namely increased legitimacy for development aid. Therefore, I argue that the benefits gained from the initiatives drove their further continuation. Therefore it is most likely that similar initiatives will also be tried out in the future.

I will now turn to discuss some issues I believe it will be important to consider when the next peak comes.

9.4 Is an Alternative Possible?

Since the coming and going of results initiatives represents a stable feature in this story, there is not much to support a claim that a new peak and a new results initiative will not come again in the future. At the present time, the end of 2016, it is clear that development aid discussions in Sweden are focusing on finding alternative ways to demonstrate results. One could say that development aid practice today is in a valley, or in the “phase of opening up for something new”. At the moment the Swedish government focuses on the importance of “trust” and “trust based management” in

government steering.¹⁸⁹ In Swedish development aid discussions are focused on “simplification”, “adaptation” and being flexible to recipient needs.

However, if we would in future follow the time intervals when the four studied results initiatives have peaked, the next peak should arrive sometime around 2022–2026. I will end this chapter by discussing what I believe can be considered as learnings from this study for when the next peak comes.

First, although the results initiatives have proven valuable in many ways, one can question whether there are other more cost-effective ways to support the legitimacy and existence of development aid. Riddell (2007) argued that people in general are not overly interested in knowing too many details about aid. The fact that the results produced within the initiatives have not been disclosed or used, but that the initiatives have nonetheless proven valuable, confirms Riddell’s (2007) claim. These findings show that the solidarity rationale, i.e. also the mere feeling of doing good and the knowledge that Sida is doing its best to ascertain results, seems to have been a sufficient “payment” for most actors. However, a continuation of this feeling needs to be supported by various measures taken to ensure that people can have faith that their tax money is used for good purposes.

During my work with this thesis I tried to count all the costs connected to the initiatives, but soon found it very difficult, as they not only involve *direct* costs (such as the actual costs for consultancy firms, development of IT systems, etc.), but also *indirect* costs (such as working hours devoted to compiling information, competence loss when staff members leave the agency, etc.) (see Forssell and Ivarsson Westerberg 2016). However, a Sida director in the 1971 initiative claimed that the initiatives have also involved other costs, such as “psychological costs,” (L4 1974) which he explained as costs of waiting for results reports to be produced and approved before taking action, and so on. Moreover, Forssell and Ivarsson Westerberg (2016) have claimed that increased control often also leads to *social costs* in terms of poorer working conditions, increased stress and the erosion of trust between the one who is controlling and the one being controlled. I believe that when planning for results initiatives in the future one might benefit from asking the question of what costs it is worth allocating for these kinds of

¹⁸⁹ In June 2016 the government made a decision to establish a Committee for Trust Management
<http://www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/kommittedirektiv/2016/06/dir.-201651/>

initiatives. Interestingly, this has never been carried out in any of the initiatives. As far as I know it has not even been discussed.¹⁹⁰

Second, since, the intended users of the results information have been multiple (the initiatives have intended to serve both internal and external actors) a recommendation for future similar initiatives is to be clear, already at the planning stage, about *who* is to benefit from the information; in other words, to follow Patton's (2008) recommendation to identify, already at the planning stage, an individual or a group of individuals who personally care about the results information. It may also be important to analyze clearly which information different users actually need for their decision-making. If it is not possible to produce the information (they believe they need), or if it is only possible to produce it at a very high cost, then both sides may benefit from a dialogue on the possible costs and value of this information. The suppliers (or designers) of results information might benefit from declaring that proving exact results of aid may not be possible and, even if it might be possible, these results might turn out to say little of interest for broader management decisions since aggregation is generally difficult.

Third, I suggest anyone interested in knowing the results of development should ask themselves the following question: Who do you want to trust: information from people and the "real world" or the results information gathered in the results matrix? This question is similar to the final question Neo poses to the human population in the movie *The Matrix*. The movie depicts a dystopian future in which reality as perceived by most humans is actually a simulated reality called *the Matrix*, created by sentient machines to subdue the human population. The Matrix is presumed to support people in their ordinary lives so that they can live in a perfect world without suffering and with total happiness. However, in the movie, the main character, Neo, argues that people are enslaved under *the Matrix*, that their minds are trapped and pacified under the simulated reality created by this simulated world. This makes him fight for "a world without rules and controls, without borders or boundaries", for "a world which is messy and in which we actually do not know the future".¹⁹¹ At the end of the movie, Neo says that it is up to the people themselves to decide what to believe in and what kind of world they want to live in.

I believe that the message from the movie *The Matrix* may contribute an interesting point in relation to the findings of this thesis. As in the movie, the

¹⁹⁰ An exception is the discussion in SIDA (1976:32) discussed in section 4.2.4. However, this discussion referred to costs of evaluations in aid projects and not costs involved in the results initiatives as such.

¹⁹¹ From Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Matrix

“results matrix” in the four results initiatives was created to organize information and to predict changes in the “real world.” Following this line it is interesting to note that the word “matrixing”, as in the title of this thesis, is a word used in paranormal investigations (i.e. by ghost investigators), which concerns the human mind’s natural tendency to find proof concerning facts about a given subject before they can believe it. In paranormal investigations, this might, for example, be finding a face (i.e. proof of a ghost) in the shapes and shadows of a collection of objects.¹⁹² As when “matrixing” for ghosts, it seems that when the results initiatives peaked there was a belief that if they were done just a little better the “results ghost” would finally be found. During these periods there was a strong belief in objective and quantifiable information. The consequences were that incentives favored staff doing things right in the “results matrix” rather than actually working towards results in reality. As with the point made in *The Matrix*, an overbelief in the ability of a “results matrix” to provide perfect knowledge of what happens in reality can actually lead to us missing what is happening in the “real world”.

A general recommendation for forthcoming initiatives is to be aware of the different mechanisms that may contribute to the rise and fall of results initiatives and not lose sight of what is happening in the “real world”. This would also mean paying attention to what people actually say when resisting the initiatives. I believe that these opinions and experiences cannot be seen as mere resistance toward results measurement and management ideas, but that they may tell us something important about reality and the “real world”, something that “the matrix” cannot tell us. Since the mere knowledge that aid organizations are at least doing their best, and that the wish to do good for someone else and the feeling of doing so are also “payments” of aid, in the end it might not be the knowledge of exact results that matters for doing the right actions as well as continuous trust and support for aid.

¹⁹² See for example: http://www.angelsghosts.com/matrixing_ghosts and <http://www.ghost-tech.com/Matrixing.php>

10 References

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11 Svensk sammanfattning

Idéer om resultatmätning och resultatstyrning tycks komma och gå i så kallade "reformvågor". Syftet med denna studie är att öka vår förståelse för reformvågor genom att identifiera och diskutera mekanismer som driver uppgång och fall av reformer för resultatmätning och resultatstyrning. I denna avhandling studeras fyra så kallade "resultatinitiativ" som lanserades på den svenska statliga myndigheten Sida 1971, 1981, 1998 och 2012. Studien beskriver vad som hände både i den externa omgivningen samt inne i organisationen innan lansering, under implementering, och när resultatinitiativen föll.

Studien visar att händelseförloppet i resultatinitiativen sker under fem faser; 1) tryck, 2) lansering, 3) implementering, 4) göra om eller dö –punkten, 5) öppenhet för något nytt. Under dessa fem faser bidrar olika interna och/eller externa mekanismer till vidare institutionalisering eller till avinstitutionalisering.

En slutsats från studien är att den huvudsakliga mekanismen som bidragit till att resultatinitiativen initierats är behovet av legitimitet. Under implementeringen uppstår olika problem och svårigheter. Medan motstånd mot initiativen och ett förändrat tryck från omgivningen accelererar avinstitutionalisering, förklarar inte dessa mekanismer varför initiativen faller. Den huvudsakliga förklaringen till varför initiativen slutligen faller är istället svårigheterna att mäta resultat, att resultaten som producerats inom initiativen inte används, samt att resultatinitiativen efter ett tag upphör att bidra till legitimitet.

Studien visar att medan olika former av externt tryck påverkar initiering av reformer, är det framförallt interna mekanismer inom organisationen som förklarar varför initiativen faller. Reformvågors uppkomst har i tidigare studier framförallt förklarats utifrån drivkrafter från den så kallade effektivitetsrationaliteten, dvs. att organisationer strävar efter att bli ansedda som effektiva. Hopp och optimism om att (denna gång) lyckas bidrar till att nya reformer implementeras om och om igen. Denna studie visar att resultatvågor också drivs av den så kallade solidaritetsrationaliteten, detta vill säga en känsla eller vilja att göra något bra för någon annan. Samtidigt drivs reformerna av rädsla och andra känslor. I det stora hela uppstår reformvågor på grund av spänningen mellan solidaritets- och effektivitetsrationaliteten.

Studien bidrar med en förståelse för mekanismer som driver reformvågor *inne* i en organisation och under en längre tidsperiod. Studien diskuterar

anledningar till varför resultat efterfrågas, men också vad som händer när resultat inte visar sig vara möjliga att rapportera. Reformvågor kommer och går, och nya resultatinitiativ kommer med all sannolikhet också komma i framtiden. Studieresultaten torde därför vara intressanta både för beslutsfattare och praktiker inom biståndsverksamhet och beslutsfattare och praktiker inom andra politikområden.

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