

Sweden's strategy for development
cooperation with

Iraq

2017–2021



REGERINGSKANSLIET

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**Government Offices
of Sweden**

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1. Focus

The objective of Sweden's international development assistance is to create opportunities for people living in poverty and oppression to improve their living conditions. Development cooperation will be based on the principles of aid and development effectiveness, and the new international agreements the international community agreed on in 2015.¹

Within the framework of this strategy, Sweden's development cooperation with Iraq will contribute to peacebuilding and statebuilding in the country. The aim is to contribute to a peaceful society, respect for human rights and gender equality. The strategy will apply for the period 2017–2021 and comprise SEK 1 billion for activities implemented by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and SEK 30 million for activities implemented by the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) for the entire period.

Sida's activities are to contribute to the following objectives:

Peaceful and inclusive societies

- Improved resilience in particularly vulnerable areas, focusing on better, gender-equal and equitable access to basic social services.
- Enhanced capacity in public institutions at different levels and improved opportunities for participation in democratic and peacebuilding processes, not least for women.

¹The development agenda includes the 2030 Agenda with its 17 Global Goals and 169 targets for sustainable development, the outcome document of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) and the Paris Agreement.

- Better conditions for civil society to organise, focusing particularly on peacebuilding and human rights work, including for boys and girls.

Gender equality

- Increased gender equality and greater respect for women's and girls' enjoyment of their human rights.
- Increased participation by women in democratic and peacebuilding processes.
- Enhanced capacity to prevent and combat sexual and gender-based violence.

The FBA's activities are to contribute to the following objectives:

- Better conditions for reconciliation and inclusive peacebuilding and statebuilding.

2. Country context

Sweden's development cooperation with Iraq is motivated by the fact that the country is in conflict. The development challenges facing Iraq are many and complex. The country is experiencing several crises simultaneously, which is impeding positive social development. The armed conflict against Daesh currently characterises the overall situation, but Daesh is only symptomatic of a protracted crisis. Underlying factors to the current crisis include many years of weak political governance, corruption, conflicts, terrorism and the marginalisation of various ethnic and religious groups. They also include increasing sexual and gender-based violence, which has contributed to creating distrust and division in society. Weak and politicised governance, a lack of legitimacy and an economic downturn entail major challenges for the country. The conflict with Daesh has also contributed to a deterioration in gender equality and the possibility for women and girls to enjoy their human

rights. Current and earlier conflicts also contribute to the negative environmental and climate impacts, such as contamination of land, water and air.

In the long term, Iraq has every possibility to support itself and take care of its development needs. However, given the conflict situation, the country now needs renewed support to prevent political disintegration once Daesh has been defeated.

Due to the conflict with Daesh, the humanitarian situation is one of the biggest and most complex in the world. It is estimated that 11 million people are in need of humanitarian support and more than 3 million people are internally displaced. The majority of these are in local host communities and not in refugee camps. Strains such as increased competition for work, resource shortages and failing social safety nets risk leading to tensions between internally displaced people and host societies, and are often reinforced by underlying conflicts between ethnic and religious groups. Ethnic and religious minorities are particularly vulnerable groups among internally displaced people. People returning to liberated areas is a challenge, but is of great importance for preserving Iraq's ethno-religious diversity. Stabilising liberated areas and increased capacity to manage migration can help strengthen the rights of refugees and migrants, including returnees.

The civilian population has been hit hard by years of conflict, with serious violations of both international humanitarian law and human rights, not least women's and girls' rights. The situation for those who lived under Daesh's control has been very difficult, and women and children are particularly vulnerable groups among them. The conditions have been characterised by violence and oppression, restrictions on freedom of movement, kidnappings and forced recruitment of boys and men, mass executions, torture and sexual and gender-based violence that have had a particularly hard impact on girls and women. Minorities are seriously affected in these contexts. Many people suffer from traumas and will need treatment. Children are severely affected – of Iraq's 10 million school children, 3.5 million have had their schooling interrupted as a result of the conflict. Fewer girls are able to benefit from education than boys.

In areas that have been retaken from Daesh, there is considerable damage to buildings and infrastructure, and it is also difficult to earn a living. Rebuilding basic social services such as health care, schools, water and electricity supply and infrastructure is a major challenge, while it also provides an opportunity to create conditions for return, stabilisation and sustainable development. It requires clearing the area of abandoned or remaining unexploded ammunition and the many booby traps.

The state and local authorities are weakened, and corruption is rampant in public administration in Iraq. Poverty has increased as a result of the conflict and the falling price of oil. Iraq's oil-dependent economy, the absence of reforms in the economic sector and a lack of international investments have contributed to economic stagnation throughout the country. The parliamentary system is designed to promote representation among the various ethnic groups, but the political situation is deeply divided between Kurdish, Sunni and Shia elites, and marked by conflicts within these groups.

Relations between the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan regional government in Erbil is expected to remain problematic, and is characterised by claims to resources and power, both political and territorial.

The situation for women and girls is restricted, and women's lack of security is particularly disturbing. Sexual and gender-based violence is extensive and has increased due to the conflict. This is displayed through increased domestic violence, an increased occurrence of child marriages, trafficking and honour-related violence, and also female genital mutilation, which mainly occurs in the Kurdish areas. Women are under-represented in decision-making positions in legislative, executive and judicial assemblies, despite quota laws for elected assemblies. Women are also under-represented in national peacebuilding forums. Both the legal system and legislation discriminate against women, primarily in family legislation. The Iraqi government has adopted an action plan for Security Council Resolution 1325, but implementation is weak and the action plan lacks financing. A directorate for gender equality and women's rights was recently established in Iraq's equivalent to the Prime

Minister's Office. The directorate also has special responsibility for implementing Iraq's national action plan for women, peace and security.

3. Activities

Activities will be based on and characterised by a poverty perspective and a rights perspective, and the three thematic perspectives: a conflict perspective, a gender equality perspective and an environmental and climate perspective.

In a shorter perspective, Sweden will contribute to stabilisation, increased respect for human rights and gender equality, and, in the long term, improved conditions for sustainable peacebuilding and statebuilding, and reconciliation.

Development cooperation will focus on where the needs are greatest, where it is possible to achieve long-term sustainable results and where there is added value for Sweden.

The complex, rapidly shifting and risky context places great demands on flexibility in the implementation of the strategy as well as close dialogue and follow up with partners. The difficult security situation and limitations regarding access pose a major challenge to follow-up and evaluation. In the changing context, it is important that activities such as conflict and power analyses are regularly implemented. Effective implementation requires partners that have experience of conflict environments, good knowledge of the context, and established systems and methods for working in a conflict-sensitive manner. Increased participation by women in peacebuilding processes is a priority. The difficult humanitarian situation requires even more effective collaboration between humanitarian aid and development cooperation.

There is considerable risk of corruption when implementing development cooperation activities. It is important to bear in mind risks related to Swedish support being politicised in local contexts and affecting local conflict dynamics. Risks regarding security for cooperation organisations and individuals will also be identified, assessed and managed during implementation of the strategy.

Sweden's support will be focused and strategic. It should take account of the opportunities to supplement the initiatives of other donors, including the EU. Account should be taken of the UN's new development assistance framework (UNDAF). In light of the uncertain and changing situation, it can be important to maintain updated information about actors and possible partners in development cooperation. Joint donor programmes can be considered. Regarding support that is channelled via multilateral channels, resources should be set aside to enable active participation in the day-to-day governance so as to influence content and performance.

The Iraqi diaspora is also a development actor with potential, whose engagement and remittances can contribute to peacebuilding and increased gender equality.

Synergies will be harnessed between the different areas of the strategy. Synergies will also be sought with activities within the frameworks of other strategies, such as strategies for regional or theme-based activities. Support via multilateral organisations, known as multilateral/bilateral support, should be compatible with Sweden's priorities and approaches in cooperation with multilateral organisations.

Sida's activities will contribute to improved, gender-equal and equitable access to basic social services in both liberated areas and host communities. This is vital for increasing the resilience of people and societies. Social services can include access to sustainable water and electricity supply, education opportunities and health and medical care. Basic social services are a priority to enable a voluntary and safe return of internally displaced people within Iraq. Within the framework of the strategy's goals, Sida will also help strengthen Iraq's capacity to manage migration – including returns, both within and to and from Iraq – in a way that safeguards the rights of migrants and refugees and contributes to the country's development. It is also important to contribute to an environment free from unexploded ammunition, mines and the many improvised explosive devices (IED's).

Activities will contribute to better opportunities to organise civil society, not least women's organisations and children's and youth organisations.

Activities will also promote human rights, particularly the possibility for women and girls to enjoy their human rights. Independent media, increased protection and security for both journalists and human rights activists will be given special priority.

Activities will contribute to capacity and skills enhancing measures through support to women's rights organisations and other civil society and media actors. Broad platforms and opportunities for collaboration will be prioritised to set the groundwork for future reconciliation and the strengthening of democratic institutions. Gender mainstreaming is relevant throughout the development cooperation programme and activities aimed at contributing to peacebuilding and statebuilding. Enhanced capacity of authorities and institutions to work with gender equality issues is important.

In the longer term, activities can be directed towards institutional capacity support and support to the capacity of individuals and society to promote accountability at local and national level. The ongoing decentralisation process can be supported with the aim of increasing capacity at local level to help with planning, implementation and delivery of social services.

Gender equality efforts will contribute to a more balanced division of powers between women and men, girls and boys. Boys and men should be involved in the gender equality work as important agents of change and a crucial part of efforts to prevent sexual and gender-based violence and other drivers of conflict.

Sweden will contribute to gender equality, and integrate and implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and the support will be based on Iraq's national action plan.

In relation to the ongoing armed conflict and the humanitarian crisis, Sweden will help provide psychosocial support and trauma counselling for women, men and children. It is also important to prevent and manage the consequences of sexual and gender-based violence directed at women, girls and boys. Activities can be combined with legal assistance.

The FBA will help improve the conditions for inclusive Iraqi peacebuilding and statebuilding. Activities will specifically contribute to greater confidence and dialogue, greater resilience and better conditions for reconciliation and conflict management.

Activities will support Iraqi dialogue and mediation efforts, and also create and offer platforms for such processes in both Iraq and Sweden. It is a priority that activities target national and local level, and that measures aim to reduce the gap between the state and the population, and between different groups in society. The support can contribute to participation in and implementation of dialogue forums – discussions, seminars and other models for dialogue and confidence-building. It is vital to include actors that normally lack influence over political processes and social change.

Follow-up procedures are outlined in the Government's guidelines for strategies. Regular evaluations will be carried out of all measures within the framework of the strategy. Various performance monitoring methods will be used to obtain both qualitative and quantitative performance data. A balance should be sought between short-term and long-term results of the contribution portfolio to ensure that aid contributes to equitable and sustainable development.