

**COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR  
PROGRAMS SUPPORTED BY SIDA**

Introduction

The utilization and development of human resources has always been a major focus of Swedish development assistance. Twentyfive years of experience convincingly shows that if a program is to result in lasting improvements, knowledge and skills must be developed and structures and institutions built up within the recipient countries. To focus on competence development is, therefore, to ensure sustainability and - over the longer term - self-reliance.

SIDA has both given assistance to various educational institutions and supported competence development within programs which have other primary goals. However, the Nordic evaluation of the effectiveness of Technical Assistance Personnel - as do many other studies - indicates that the development of competence and institutions has often been neglected and the results consequently less than satisfactory. SIDA has therefore tried to define measures that within the programs and projects that receive Swedish assistance would develop competence. The long-range goals are to develop institutions which can operate without aid and to reduce the recipient countries' dependency on foreign expertise. The intention here has of course not been to draft an overall strategy for promoting competence development in the recipient countries, but rather to suggest what SIDA can and should do within the framework of the Swedish assistance program.

Competence development is essentially a question of individual learning. This learning takes place in schools or at work. It occurs in the individual's interaction with his environment. For SIDA, this means helping to create conditions as favourable as possible for learning. This is partly a question of resources, but the preconditions for learning are also influenced by the way projects and programs are organized. It is important to eliminate any obstacles that may exist for efficient learning, to work out plans for how learning can take place in a systematic fashion,

more attention to the fact that competence development is a key issue to the whole development process.

Hence the development action plan outlined below has been drafted with the aim of improving the management of projects so as to build up and develop the recipient countries' knowledge and competence. Of course the countries differ and the application must be adapted to suit the conditions in each country. The aim of the action plan is that long-range thinking with regard to knowledge development should characterize the whole planning process. However, a certain balance must of course be maintained in relation to short-term production goals and SIDA's own capacity. The action plan is presented in the same order as the various steps in SIDA's planning process.

#### 1. The concept planning stage

Competence development should be discussed already during the pilot study and must there assume a central role. The various components needed, e.g. personnel assistance, are in practice determined at an early stage, when the general scope of the project is defined. The complexity of the organization and the choice of technology in relation to the technical expertise that exists in the country determines the need for competence development and foreign expertise. The following questions should be dealt with in the concept memorandum:

- a) The form of operation selected has to take into account what sort of competence is available in the country. Even minor pilot projects must take this into consideration since the idea of pilot-projects, after all, is that the activity will eventually be expanded. The question of competence should be discussed during the preparation of co-operation programs with each country.
- b) If, after an analysis of the available skilled manpower in-country, a form of activity is chosen for which in-country competence is lacking, this must clearly be pointed out and justified. The reason might be that a decision has been made to give priority to the production objectives (cf the Beira corridor).

- b) A detailed account of how expertise will be built up for the benefit of the project. How are new personnel with the requisite knowledge to be made available to the project? How should those already employed be made more competent? Various possibilities should be discussed and weighed against each other: personnel assistance from Sweden? From other countries? Contracted employees or consultants? Long-term and short-term employment? Training inside or outside the country? Study visits abroad? On-the-job training? The most cost-efficient methods must be chosen.
- c) The form for any input by Swedish personnel. Each case must be considered against possible alternatives and should be part of the long-range plan. The plan should clearly indicate what role each expert/consultant is to play in the development of competencies and for what period of time. If the expert/consultant is only to function as a "gap-filler", this has to be justified.
- d) An evaluation of the most suitable forms for the Swedish participation (KAP\*, consultants, short-term employees, contract employees, institutional co-operation, etc). Bearing in mind SIDAs limited administrative capability, contracting out to consultants and institutions is to be preferred to recruiting contracted employees. Over a five-year period this preference should cause a noticeable decrease in the number of contracted employees.

It is of major importance that the need for skilled foreign personnel be acknowledged and firmly established in the recipient country at different levels including the foreign personnel's place of work.

Conclusions: The principle should be that on the basis of a detailed analysis, the Swedish contribution will take a form that complements the recipient country's own resources in such a way that the project can be successful, cost-effective and have a lasting effect. At the same time the aim should be to maximize the participation of the recipient country while minimizing the need for Swedish personnel assistance.

- c) The divisions within this department should continue to work on methods for competence development. Alternatives to traditional personnel assistance should be examined. Various measures for the development of a resource base of qualified personnel should be introduced. This work too is directed by the Head of Department.