Sweden’s education ODA

Focus is on education systems strengthening and gender equality

Sweden spent US$195 million on global education in 2016 (latest year for which complete data is available), making it the 12th-largest donor country to the sector according to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data. Education is not a top priority of Sweden’s development portfolio: In 2016, it represented 4% of Sweden’s total official development assistance (ODA), less than half of the average of 8% spent by countries in the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) on education.

Under its 2016 ‘Aid Policy Framework’, Sweden highlights ‘Education and Research’ as one of eight priorities. The education portfolio is governed by the broader ‘Sustainable Social Development Strategy’ of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, renewed in July 2018. Under the overarching goal of ‘Improved, equitable, inclusive and gender-equality education and quality lifelong learning’, Sweden’s activities focus on:

1. Enhanced and sustainable quality systems for education and learning;
2. Improved opportunities for learning and knowledge acquisition, especially for girls and women;
3. Increase knowledge about sex and relationships, including sexual rights, and enhanced work in and out of schools to combat gender-based violence;
4. Improved access to clean water and safe and sustainable sanitation and hygiene in schools;
5. Increased knowledge and integration of sustainable development in education and learning.

These priorities highlight synergies between the different social sectors, and more particularly with health and water and sanitation (WASH). They also reflect Sweden’s strong engagement in gender equality and women’s empowerment.

In 2016, Sweden channeled US$72 million (37% of its overall education ODA) as core contributions to multilateral organizations. This was below a peak in 2015 which was due to advanced payments to the UN’s Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the near East (UNRWA): In January 2015, Sweden pledged SEK715 million (US$84 million) to the organization for 2015 and 2016, US$45 million of which was disbursed in 2015. In 2016, UNWRA contributions went down to US$4 million.

Further information: ‘basic’ and ‘general’ education

In this profile, ‘basic education’ refers to the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) sector code ‘basic education’ (112), which includes primary education, basic skills for youths and adults, and early childhood education. ‘General education’ refers to the OECD CRS sector code ‘education, level unspecified’, which includes education policy and administrative management, education facilities and training, teacher training, and educational research.

Other large recipients include the World Bank’s International Development Association (IDA; US$31 million in 2016) and the European Union (US$18 million). On top of this, Sweden provides significant amounts of funding to multilateral organizations through funding earmarked for specific topics or countries, which is reported as bilateral ODA. In 2016, this represented US$61 million, bringing education ODA channeled through multilateral organizations to US$134 million, or 68% of Sweden’s total education ODA.

Sweden has supported the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) since 2005. It has contributed US$381 million (as of December 2018) to the organization, making it GPE’s sixth largest donor. Sweden has committed SEK1.1 billion (US$142 million) to GPE for the pledging period 2018 to 2020.

Sweden provides over half of its education ODA as bilateral funding: 63% in 2016, which is lower than the DAC average of 70%. Between 2016 and 2017, bilateral funding for education slightly declined, going from US$123 million to US$114 million. In line with Sweden’s previous education policy priorities, the largest share went to basic education in 2017 (38%, or US$42 million), driven by high funding for primary education. The second largest funded area was post-secondary education. Out of this, 72% (US$25 million) consisted of scholarships for students from developing countries studying in Sweden. This is in line with the strong emphasis on research cooperation driven by the Swedish government. Research cooperation programs are governed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)’s “Strategy for Research Cooperation and Research in Development Cooperation” (covering the period 2015 to 2021). Under these programs, parts of the
funding for scholarships for students from developing countries studying in Sweden is provided. Programs for research cooperation carried out by the Swedish government follow a so-called ‘sandwich model’: Master and PhD students come to Swedish universities, while Sida provides support to build the capacity of the students’ home universities in developing countries.

The remaining bilateral education ODA largely went to ‘general education’ (US$29 million, 26%), which comprises programs aimed at strengthening partner countries educational systems and capacities. This funding was entirely allocated to supporting partner countries’ education policy and administrative management.

**MFA guides overall strategy for global education ODA, Sida manages implementation**

The Minister for International Development Cooperation and Climate at the MFA oversees development policy and financing and decides core funding allocations to multilateral organizations. Sida manages bilateral funding and disbursements to specific multilateral organizations for education, including GPE, under the ‘socially sustainable development’ thematic funding line. Within Sida, the unit for Global Social Development in the Department for International Organizations and Policy Support (INTEM) holds primary responsibility for Sida’s overall global education policy. For country-specific programming, the respective regional departments take the lead.
SWEDEN'S ODA TO EDUCATION

US$ millions

SWEDEN'S BILATERAL ODA TO EDUCATION ACROSS SUB-SECTORS, 2017

Total: US$114 million

- Basic education: 37.9% ($US43.1m.)
- General education: 25.7% ($US29.3m.)
- Post-secondary education: 30.9% ($US34.7m.)
- Vocational training: 5.3% ($US60m.)
- Secondary education: 0.6% ($US0.7m.)

OECR CRS. In 2017 prices.