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## MANAGING AID RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CONTEXT OF RESULTS BASED MANAGEMENT

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**A case study of support to civil society within Swedish development  
cooperation**

*By*

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*A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree:  
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***Spring 2013***

## **Declaration Form**

The work I have submitted is my own effort. I certify that all the material in the Dissertation which is not my own work, has been identified and acknowledged. No materials are included for which a degree has been previously conferred upon me.

Signed: *Anna Samuelsson*  
22 May 2013

## **Acknowledgements**

First of all I would like to thank all the dedicated people who took the time to share their experiences and knowledge and thereby made this dissertation possible. On the same note I would like to thank my supervisor Camilla Orjuela for her guidance and valuable input. Finally a special thank you to my mother, who have supported me in all ways possible throughout my many years of studying.

*'Relationships are at the very heart of development practice. They are both the 'means' through which the development practitioner intervenes, as well as the 'end' that need to be changed over time.'* (Taylor, 2002)

## **Abstract**

Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting to donors on progress and results are a fundamental but also controversial part of the relationship between development actors. In this interaction, between the official and civil society, frictions appear and problems arise because of the differences between these actors with different purposes, agendas, structures and organisational logic behind them. This dissertation is devoted to studying aid relationships in the context of results based management, a management approach introduced as part of global reforms directed at making international aid more effective and accountable. However, previous research has showed that results based management risk having the opposite effects if implemented in the wrong way. Through a case study of support to civil society within Swedish development cooperation, it focuses on how civil society organisations have experienced the influences of a context which requires them to devote more and more time to administration and internal control, and thereby also pressuring them to become more professionalised. The study indicates that by doing so, the results based management context is creating further tensions in already unequal aid relationships. The results based management context is placing demands on the frame organisations, which need to be 'managed' in the already complex internal and external environments they operate. The study also illustrate examples of how organisations experience and respond to such influences differently, depending on their individual preconditions. Therefore, this study argues that organisations can benefit from relating to their environments, including the results context, consciously. By that I mean reflect on how such influences might affect attitudes, relationships etc. and in the end also the results themselves. By doing so, they are in a better position to mitigate the risks that have been identified in previous research about the potential negative impact of the results based management context.

***Key words:*** *aid relationships, results, results based management, donor civil society partnerships, aid policy and practice*

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Development and human rights share the same goal of securing freedom, welfare and dignity for all people. Human rights violations can be both a cause and a consequence of poverty and the human rights framework is also used as a tool in the work to achieve a sustainable economic and social development. The intricacy of this has been emphasized in the UN Millennium Declaration and by former Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, when he underscored that the challenges of human rights, development and security are so closely entwined that none can be tackled effectively in isolation (Annan, 2005). According to the UN Declaration on the Right to Development from 1986, development is also a right in itself. The declaration states that *'every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realised'* (Art 1).

Aid, also referred to as *official development assistance* (ODA), is one of the tools for countries in the global north to support countries in the global south in their work for poverty reduction and human development. First pledged in a UN resolution in 1970, and later affirmed in many international agreements over the years, the world's governments have committed to allocate 0.7% of rich-countries' gross national product (GNP) to ODA.<sup>1</sup> In 2012, members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD provided USD 125.6 billion in net ODA to developing countries.<sup>2</sup> At the same time the efficacy of aid to achieve development has been debated on a global level for quite some time, especially during the last decade. The debate has fuelled an increased demand for demonstrating results, which has led many donor governments to introduce so called *results based management* (RBM). RBM grew out of extensive public sector reforms in the 1990s in response to economic, social and political pressures (Politt, 2011). There is no single 'RBM model'; rather it can be seen as an approach that can take many different forms. RBM serves two main objectives; *performance reporting* in order to achieve increased accountability and *management improvement through learning, improved decision making, and planning*, etc. (Vähämäki, Schmidt & Molander, 2011:7).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/press/07.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/aidtopoorcountriesslipsfurtherasgovernmentstightenbudgets.htm>

The discussion concerning results is an important one, especially for the people at the end of the development cooperation chain. Performance information is needed to understand and adapt to development contexts and to make informed choices. Actors involved in any part of the development cooperation process need to be accountable to the people on the ground. Further, showing results is important for the credibility of development cooperation as such. However, reporting on results is not a completely straightforward task when the ambition is to measure changes in social processes and power relations. The results agenda, intended to contribute to increased effectiveness in international development, appears to be counterproductive if implemented in the wrong way (Vähämäki et al, 2011:1). Risks that have been identified are for example that results measuring can become unreasonably time-consuming, produce more information than anyone manages to absorb, create incentive to deliver the wrong type of results, suppress innovation and flexibility and lead to an over-emphasis on short-term results (OIOS, 2008; Holmström, 2011; Bächtold et al., 2013). Several sources point to the importance of building good relationships between the actors involved for the results agenda to succeed and actually lead to increased accountability, management improvement through learning, improved decision making and planning (Bächtold et al., 2013; Eyben, 2008; 2010; Sjöblom, 2009; Sida, 2006). However in evaluations and reports of how it is implemented in practice, this aspect is often weak or completely lacking (Thomas, 2007). What seem to be prioritised are instead technical aspects such as the fulfilment of requirements of reporting, financial systems and auditing.

Civil society organisations working in development have testified how reports become paper exercises, filled in to please donors, rather than honest assessments of progress and lessons learnt (Bakewell & Garbutt, 2004; Smutylo, 2001). Such administration is done to receive funding, parallel and quite distinct from what is regarded as the 'real work'. Experiences from field workers describe how it is difficult, sometimes impossible to fit a complex reality into the results frameworks, creating a 'chain of hypocrisy' in the reporting;

*'We find ourselves caught between the everyday realities of working in the local communities, and the incongruous bureaucracy of annual operating plans along with the dictates of remote donor organizations. The effects of this 'double life' meant some felt like actors adopting a language and a set of tools – technical activity reports, expenditure*

*reports and products – quite distinct from the work they were actually doing*<sup>3</sup> (Bolivian development practitioner, quoted in Eyben, 2013).

Sweden is one of the countries that have adopted a strong 'results agenda'. Studies and evaluations show that the difficulties previously discussed are present here as well (Sida, 2006; Sjöblom, 2009; Statskontoret, 2011; Statskontoret, 2013). The issues are also currently a 'hot topic' because of initiatives taken by the Minister of Foreign Aid, involving a review of the systems in place for supporting civil society and the creation of a new 'platform' of guiding documents for Swedish development cooperation. There are concerns over the potential effects of these initiatives, while at the same time it is seen as an opportunity for improvement and positive change.

## **1.2 AIM, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND LIMITATIONS IN SCOPE**

Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting to donors on progress and results are a fundamental but also controversial part of the relationship between development actors. In this interaction, between the official and civil society, frictions appear and problems arise because of the differences between these actors with different purposes, agendas, structures and organisational logic behind them. Results based management models adopted by donor governments appear to put demands on development organisations, who need to manage these demands in the already complex external and internal environments in which they operate. The previous section highlights the importance of not forgetting about relationships when implementing results based management, but how easy it is to do so because of the technical and bureaucratic nature of results based management models. The aim of this thesis is to more closely study what it is that happens to aid relationships in *the context* of results based management. By focusing on the whole context and not only on the management model as such, a deeper understanding of how it plays out in practice can be sought. Further, the study will explore how organisations experience and respond to such influences differently, depending on their internal and external environments. The frame organisations are a heterogenous group of organisations which makes each case very different. Therefore, the second part of the research primarily aims to illustrate *examples* of how different organisations, but with the same formal requirements put on them, relate to the influences of the results context in accordance with their individual preconditions.

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<sup>3</sup> Published on the website of the international network 'The Big Push Forward'; <http://bigpushforward.net/archives/2010#more-2010>.

This is done in an effort to create a deeper understanding of when and why results based management models become problematic or even counterproductive. Such knowledge could inform donor-recipient relations and help building better relationships in the future. This is important for the sustainability and effectiveness of development assistance efforts and thereby also the realisation of human rights of individuals. The two questions I have centred my research on are;

- *How have civil society organisations experienced that the results based management context has influenced their relationship with donors?*
- *How have civil society organisations responded to the influences from the results based management context?*

Actors at several different levels are involved in the project of international development cooperation, i.e. international agencies, national government institutions, international development organisations, civil society organisations etc. In these 'actor chains', between the donor government and the beneficiary in the developing country, the different actors have varying roles and responsibilities in contributing to the common development goal. My research questions explicitly focuses on the 'civil society perspective' of managing RBM. Depending on which actor will be in focus, the experiences, challenges and possibly also the answer to my question will vary. However, it seems like the tensions in implementation of results based management are the biggest when the model meets civil society. I have chosen to approach the research questions through a case study of aid from Sweden to civil society organisations in developing countries. I will limit my research to one 'level' of the actor chain, namely the Swedish organisation geographically closest to and in direct contact with the donor. The choice to focus only on the Swedish level obviously limits the possibility to see 'the whole picture' of the aid relationship and what the actual end result is. However, what happens in the first level of the aid chain *will* affect the other actors involved and the organisation at the chosen level has an important role to play as the link between the donors 'policies' and the practice of designing and implementing development programmes. Further, the relationship between the donor and the Swedish organisation provides an intersection between *the official* and *civil society* where interesting contrasts might appear.

### 1.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDY

Sweden's policy for support to civil society points out civil society organisations as important actors within development cooperation and approximately one third of Swedish official aid is channelled through Swedish civil society (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009:26). The overall objective for support to - and cooperation with - civil society is *a vibrant and pluralistic civil society in developing countries that contributes effectively, using a rights-based approach, to reducing poverty in all its dimensions* (ibid. p 9). Support to civil society in Swedish development cooperation is managed through a system of long-term cooperation ('the framework system') with a number of selected Swedish organisations ('the frame organisations') with their own implementing partners in developing countries. With an increasing support channelled through Swedish civil society the framework system was introduced in the 1970's as a rationalisation of the cooperation between Sida<sup>4</sup> and Swedish CSO's (Statskontoret, 2013:25). In 2012 around 1,5 billion SEK were channelled through the framework system. The system is intended to contribute to local ownership and sustainability in the development efforts by functioning as a core support to the organisation, allowing for flexibility and incorporating learning as a central aspect. Instead of applying for funding for single projects, organisations could enter into long-term cooperation with Sida and receive a more consistent funding. The framework system's main features can be summarized as follows.<sup>5</sup> Firstly, it is based on perennial cooperation agreements between Sida and Swedish CSO's. Secondly, it is intended to be flexible in the sense that there is little interference in the organisations choice of geographical and thematic focus. The organisations are able to carry out development work under their own initiatives and responsibility, but in accordance with the guidelines set by Sida. Thirdly, there is a requirement that the framework organisations should finance at least 10% of the costs from their own resources. Their own contribution should be seen as an expression of the organisation's priorities and ability to mobilise a commitment to its work. There are currently 16 organisations with framework status, including organisations of varying geographic and thematic focus. Their roles as frameworks organisations also vary. For example, in some cases a framework organisation forwards Sida's contribution directly to local partners in developing countries. But a number of the framework organisations instead forward Sida's contribution to another Swedish organisation, usually a member organisation. They in turn sign contracts and carry out development work

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<sup>4</sup> The agency responsible for managing Swedish international development cooperation.

<sup>5</sup> Sida's webpage; <http://www.sida.se/English/Partners/Civil-society-organisations/About-cooperation-with-civil-society/Support-through-Swedish-organisations-with-framework-agreement/>. Accessed 2013-03-11.

with local partners in developing countries. Other framework organisations are part of an international structure, with regional, national and local offices all over the world. In other words, it is a heterogeneous group of organisations.

#### **1.4 DISPOSITION OF THE THESIS**

The second chapter aims to locate the research in a theoretical framework by giving an overview of the academic literature relating to the topic and outline the concepts and analytical tools used to analyse the empirical material. The third chapter describes the methodology used, the implementation of the research and considers ethical aspects. The fourth chapter will provide the foundation upon which the analysis rests, by locating the case study in the analytical framework. In the fifth and sixth chapter the empirical material collected to answer the two research questions will be presented and analysed. The seventh and final chapter will present some final conclusions and reflections.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter aims to locate the research topic in a theoretical framework. Firstly it will present the central themes 'aid', 'aid relationship' and 'results based management'. It will also present an analytical framework and describe how it will be used to approach the research questions. Thereafter it will provide a review of relevant literature relating to the research topic. The final section will give a summary of the analytical approach chosen for this study.

### **2.2 AID AS HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICE**

Today it is common to understand poverty not as a condition where people only lack economic resources, but are *deprived of their opportunity to decide over their lives and create their own future* (UNDP, Human Development Report 1997). A lack of power, security and opportunities are therefore at the core of poverty. With this perspective it is easy to see the connection between a condition of poverty and human rights violations. For example, in conditions of poverty people might lack sufficient food and a roof over their head, but this is a symptom of their poverty and not the cause itself. The cause is the exclusion that prevents them from changing their own situation and enjoying their basic rights. Also, one human rights violation often brings other violations that worsen the condition of poverty. For example, a person who lacks access to clean water and therefore drinks contaminated water might get sick and be unable to work and therefore lose their job and income.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines 'aid', also referred to as Official Development Assistance (ODA), as *flows of financing administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as the main objective, and which are concessional in character with a grant element of at least 25 percent* (OECD online glossary). Aid is one of the tools to improve the conditions for people in difficult situations around the world and work for a better realisation of their human rights. The 'rights perspective' has been mainstreamed in international and national development policies and implies a way to see the people who aid is intended to reach as individuals and actors with rights and the power, capacity and the will to create development as opposed to passive 'receivers' of help (OHCHR, 2006:16-17). The rights based approach to development is strong in Swedish development cooperation. Sweden's Policy for Global Development is based on the conviction that everybody has a right to life in dignity, and this creates the basis for solidarity with poor, oppressed and vulnerable people (Swedish Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, 2002:18-19). The policy makes explicit reference to the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human rights and establishes that a rights perspective should permeate all aspects of Swedish development cooperation and guarantee that all measures taken should be compatible with respect for human rights.

### **2.3 AID RELATIONSHIPS**

Aid is always a joint undertaking, involving a chain of actors in at least two different countries. It flows from donor government agencies to developing countries and multilateral institutions. Between the donor government deciding upon policies and priorities and the people whom the development intervention aims to reach, there are a number of intermediary actors with different roles to fulfil in the development project. These actors make up the aid chain and the interactions between these actors, who have come together in order to do something jointly agreed upon, forms the *aid relationship*. Relations between organisations in the context of international aid can become a complex web to approach because of the involvement of several different actors at different 'levels'. These actors can come from the state, the market or civil society, and thus have different organisational logics behind them as well as different stakeholder interests behind the common development goal. Further, there is often a geographical distance between the actors. To understand the aid relationship as one single unit from the donor to the rights holder is therefore problematic and will not provide a good structure for analysis. Interface analysis provides a possibility to structure the analysis of aid relationships, by looking at the 'interfaces' between the different actors as social units for analysis (Saasa & Carlsson, 1996:22). In short, the interface can be understood as an arena where two or more organisations meet in order to collaborate. The interface analysis takes an *actor oriented approach*, concentrating on the interplay of different social constructions of reality developed by the various parties to the interface and takes out their social implications (ibid. p 21). A strength of the interface analysis is that it focuses on linkages between parties instead of on the parties themselves. The analysis of an interface involves four elements (ibid. p 25-6). The first element is *the parties to the interface*. Here the organisations and their characteristics are identified. The second element is *the party representatives*. The party representatives are the individuals responsible for the interaction between the parties. The third element is the *mode of regulation* in the interface, meaning the level of organisation and the capacity to constrain or guide events in the relationship. The regulation can for example be detailed and tight or loose and unclear. The fourth and final element is *the context*. This

includes both the immediate social context of the organisations and the larger social, legal, economic and political forces.

The aid relationship is often governed by various formal documents such as donor policies, strategies, guidelines and agreements. However, an interface analysis shows that the functioning of the aid relationship in terms of communication and learning cannot be understood only in terms of *formal* systems and rules regulating them. Aid relationships are a matter of power, organisational system, values, beliefs and attitudes (Sasaa & Carlsson, 1996:18). They are inherently complicated, characterised by a biased distribution of resources and influenced by various stakeholder interest (ibid.). The donor has the power to provide, maintain or cancel funding. Further, aid relationships take place in a highly uncertain environment where decisions are rarely taken under perfect knowledge of all possible alternatives. With this in mind, this dissertation takes a *conflict perspective* on organisational analysis. Such a perspective takes into account that the 'default state' in an organisation is not a machine-like system running smoothly unless something goes wrong. Instead, it understands organisations as *political systems built up by networks of people with divergent interests* (Saasa & Carlsson, 1996:20). With a conflict perspective, conflict is inherent in the dynamics of the interface. The conflict comes from the encounter between differing interests, resources and power (ibid. p 21). On the one hand it can be argued that the aid relationship is particularly conflict prone since the unequal distribution of resources makes issues of power and dependency strong features (ibid. p 22). On the other hand it can be argued that the case is the opposite, because the unequal power relation might suppress conflicts in the relationship. There are also common interests among the parties and *the nature of the interaction may depend on the balance of interests as perceived by the parties* (ibid. p 20).

Aid 'relationship' is in itself a neutral word; it does not say anything about the nature or quality of a relationship or how well the cooperation is working. Therefore, the analysis also needs to be guided by an idea of what a 'desirable' aid relationship should look like. It is today popular to label aid relationships between different development actors as 'partnerships', to emphasise a step away from old ways of Western dominance and exploitation of poor countries toward more equality. Partnership is claimed to rest on creating equivalent conditions, despite unequal qualifications. A partnership can be described as a *particularly deep cooperation* between two parties (Sida, 2006:62). At the other side of the scale is a relationship characterised by dominance, control, one-way communication and dependency. A basic 'cooperation relationship', on the other hand, includes *all relations* between two or

more actors who have chosen to join together for a common cause. Depending on the quality of this relationship, several of the features of a partnership can be present. Features of a partnership are for example the fact that the actors have developed a *shared value-base*, have *well defined* and a *clear division of roles*, show a *mutual trust* and *genuine concern* for each other, have a close and frequent *dialogue*, a long-term perspective to the relationship, a *understanding for each others perspectives*, actively *share their experiences* of the cooperation with each other, *share responsibilities and decision-making* and that all actors contribute with resources and competence (ibid. p 63). The word partnership thus implies a certain attitude toward each other and some kind of parity and equity between two parties. A change of attitude, reciprocal respect, trust and larger flexibility is often said to contribute to such conditions (Dahl, 2001:13-4). A central concept, embedded in the concept of partnership, is 'dialogue' which is a certain type of communication with the purpose of mutual listening and learning (Taylor, 2002:3). A dialogue gives the opportunity for each actor to give their point of view and in a constructive manner discuss sensitive issues. To build partnerships, a relationship needs an *open dialogue* where both parties can share how they feel in a relationship and *recognizes and reflects over the power relations that exist* (Taylor, 2002:5).

## **2.4 RESULTS BASED MANAGEMENT**

As the label indicates, 'results based management' is a management approach oriented toward results. To understand the concept fully it is important to know a little about its history and context. First of all, managing for results is nothing new, the ideas and practices associated with results management as it is understood today has been part of management theory since after the Second World War (Vähämäki et al., 2011:10). Alternative systems or approaches for orienting management towards results has come in and out of fashion in development contexts since then. RBM, as a management approach or strategy, grew out of a renewed emphasis on results that followed extensive public sector reforms in the 1990s in response to economic, social and political pressures (Pollitt, 2011). A combination of declining aid budgets and what has been described as an 'aid fatigue' among the general public (the perception that aid programs are failing to produce significant development results) made these external pressures particularly strong on aid agencies (Binnendjik, 2000:3). The criticism of past aid management centred on the practices of short term financing, a lack of coordination among donors and conflicting practices which lead to duplication and unsustainable results. On top of this was a lack of financial control systems and structures to

document accountability. Reforms in international aid were needed and demanded, and a global reform agenda intended to make aid more effective was initiated and set in motion. Through its inclusion in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) a *results focus* in aid management was made central to the global reform agenda for aid effectiveness.<sup>6</sup>

The Results Based Management (RBM) approach puts *results as central in the whole life-cycle of a project*; from strategic planning to implementation, monitoring and evaluation, reporting and on-going decision making. A key component of the management strategy is therefore *performance measurement*; the process of measuring how well an agency is meeting its stated goals or objectives (Binnendjik, 2000:3). Performance information have two primary aims or uses; *management improvement through learning, improved decision making, and planning, etc.* and *performance reporting* in order to achieve increased external and internal accountability (Vähämäki, Schmidt & Molander, 2011:7). These two aims are sometimes referred to as *managing for results* and *accountability for results* (Binnendjik, 2000:14). Results are often measured at different organisational levels; project level, country level and agency level. Further, there are also different levels of results - immediate outputs, intermediate outcomes and long-term impacts. Efforts to measure and report on performance at these different 'levels' raise the twin challenges of *aggregating* and *attributing* results (Binnendjik, 2000:19). Attributing results refers to convincingly demonstrating that a particular result is the consequence of an agency's interventions and not of other partner's efforts or extraneous factors. Aggregating results refers to how the donor agencies can best add up or summarize their results from lower organisational levels. While some direction and structure from the donor might be necessary there are also dangers in designing performance measurement systems too much from the top down. Top down systems may lack relevance to actual project results, may not sufficiently capture their diversity, and may even lead to program distortions as managers try to do what is measurable instead of what is believed to be most sustainable (Binnendjik, 2000:16). Donors therefore need to find a balance between on the one hand structure and direction and on the other enough flexibility in determining what results are appropriate in a given context, to not take ownership away from local actors.

Several sources point to the fact that there is a big difference between how RBM is meant to work on paper, how it is said to work, and how it actually works. The difficulty in showing a

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<sup>6</sup> See for example paragraph 43-46 in the Declaration, where 'managing for results' is included as one of five partnership commitments.

causality chain that links external aid to final outcomes is a constant reminder when it comes to demonstrating accountability externally in development cooperation. Bourguignon & Sundberg (2007) argue that many of the questions that policymakers and economists would like to squeeze data into answering simply cannot be answered due to the complexity surrounding links in the aid chain. Jones suggests that the challenges of RBM should not be seen purely as a matter of poor implementation, but possibly a sign that it is an inappropriate tool to measure performance in the context of international aid (2010:13). He argues that scientific management approaches, such as RBM, is putting unrealistic expectations on development efforts by deciding what to report on in advance. Therefore they assume that causality is well established, and that the dynamics of the problems being addressed are readily predictable. Despite extensive efforts being put into processes of analysis, assessment and consultation they produce superficial and barely relevant information, while the 'real work' is going unrecorded (ibid.). This means that implementing agencies generate realms of barely relevant information, causing information overload and a potentially serious waste of time and money (ibid. p 14). Further, being based on systems of *compliance* and *control* they *cast the relationship between donors in a bureaucratic and contractual light* and treat actors at lower levels as a means to an end (ibid. p 9).

It appears like one of results based managements biggest practical challenges lies in the tensions and trade offs between the two uses of results information - accountability and management (Flint, 2003; Binnendjik, 2000). The two perspectives are to some extent directed toward different types of data or results, where *the accountability perspective* seems to be easier to reconcile with the attribution and aggregation difficulties described above (Binnendjik, 2000:16). Repeated evaluations show that there is frequently very little use of performance information for decision making and project programme adjustments (Thomas, 2007). The accountability perspective tends to emphasise measuring what is being achieved and comparing to pre-set targets, rather than analysing why or how it is being achieved. Therefore it tends to be backward looking and focused on fault finding. It also becomes output oriented, because such results can be more easily attained, attributed to agency activities and collected on an annual basis. It is with reference to such trends Andrew Natsios sarcastically coined the term 'obsessive measurement disorder', to mean the belief that the more an activity can be quantified, the better the policy choices and management of it will be (Natsios, 2010). *The management improvement perspective* aims to draw lessons and improve practice, which is why it has more of a positive forward-looking approach. Here it is

important to shift focus away from outputs to even higher outcomes and impacts and to understand the cause effect linkages between them. Flint argues that *external accountability* is driving the push for RBM, and this leads to an over-emphasis on the control aspect of measuring and reporting results, and insufficient emphasis on using results information for internal management (2003:50). This might however be counterproductive. Applying results management for control and command purposes seems to lead down the road towards a mechanistic interpretation and use of results management tools, which does not accommodate for the complexity of measuring results and effects of development cooperation (Vähämäki et al, 2011:50). Further an excessive focus on upward accountability testifies to the common power hierarchies in the international aid system, because it makes evaluations seem like disempowering experiences in which development organisations are controlled by funders (Bächtold et al., 2013:10). By creating an environment where failures cannot be openly discussed, evaluations perceived as a top-down exercise of control do not encourage partner organisations to be critical in what they report. Sjöblom (2009) suggests that controlling less actually leads to more control. She calls this 'the control paradox'; if the donor is perceived as controlling and suspicious, the organisation will respond by e.g. withholding or distorting information, leaving the donor with less accurate information and thus also less control (Sjöblom, 2009:5). On the other hand, if the donor is perceived as a partner, the organisation will be more willing to expose shortcomings and failures leaving the donor with more accurate information and more actual control. Therefore, the importance of using RBM as a tool for management improvement and learning has been stressed as a precondition for it to succeed (Binnedjik, 2000; Flint, 2003; Sida, 2006; Sjöblom, 2009; Vähämäki et al., 2011, Bächtold et al., 2013).

## **2.5 MEASURING PERFORMANCE IN AID POLICY AND PRACTICE**

As explained above, a results orientation has been mainstreamed in the management of international aid and become a *policy*<sup>7</sup> priority of many donor governments. Results based management is a management approach introduced to realise the policy priority of a results oriented practice in development cooperation. As such, it prescribes a *method to measure aid practice*. The results orientation has also been integrated into official policies, strategies and guiding documents of donors that feed into the practice of results based management. The practice of *measuring performance* raises questions of *what* is it we want to measure, *how* do

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<sup>7</sup> The word 'policy' is here understood as *a model or method of action to guide and determine present and future decisions* (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary).

we do it and *for whom*. For example, does the RBM approach have implications for what we choose to measure? An additional question that can be asked is *what does the information produced in reports and evaluations actually tell us about practice?* To answer such questions, it becomes relevant to discuss how the relationship between policy and practice is understood. There are several theoretical approaches to take on the relationship between policy and practice. An instrumental view considers policy as rational and problem solving. The relationship between policy and practice is understood in terms of an *unintended gap between theory and practice*, to be reduced by improving policy and implementing it more effectively (Mosse, 2004:641). Several studies have approached results based management models from an instrumental perspective, illustrating its implementation, highlighting difficulties and suggesting how it could be implemented more effectively (Binnendjik, 2000; Flint, 2003; Sida, 2006). Such studies are often commissioned by donor agencies or development institutions and therefore tend to be directed toward recommendations for policy improvement. A critical view works from opposite assumptions and instead views policy as a rationalizing discourse, concealing hidden purposes of bureaucratic power or dominance (Mosse, 2004:641). According to Mosse, both these two views fail to provide insight into what really goes on in practice, because it *'diverts attention away from the complexity of policy as institutional practice, from the social life of projects, organisations and professionals and the diversity of interests behind policy models and the perspectives of actors themselves'* (ibid. p 644).

Mosse (2004) questions the assumption that development practice is driven by policy and asks the question if not the practices of development are in fact concealed rather than produced by policy. He argues that there is a 'black box of unknowing' in between policy and practice, which increases in significance moving 'upstream' in international development (ibid. p 641). Mosse concludes that the ideas that make for good policy - which legitimizes and mobilizes political and practical support - are not the same as the ones that provide good guides to action. Performance reporting, he argues, is not about describing how the project has turned policy into 'reality', rather it is about interpreting events to sustain policy models (2004:664). In this way the gap between policy and practice is constantly negotiated away. The point he wants to raise concern over is that *this system reproduces belief in the efficacy of rational planning, and with it existing hierarchies of knowledge and expertise*, while contextual and historical understanding is limited (2004:665). Eyben (2008, 2010) arrives at similar conclusions about the current approaches for monitoring and evaluation in

international aid. She describes how planning approaches that assume that aid practitioners are in control and that change is predictable are criticised in development literature, but continue to be favoured in practice. These models view change as a linear progression and a process of change is always attributed to an agent. Therefore they sustain an illusion of being in control and ignore context and complexity (2010:391). Thörn (2011) approaches these issues through an analysis of the empirical practice/discourse of the term 'governance'. When a donor-receiver partnership is established, certain prescribed methods for evaluation and audit, with a heavy emphasis on quantitative measures of performance, become a fundamental aspect of the process in an attempt to construct self-regulating actors (2011:443). He calls this process 'responsibilisation', a governance strategy used by donors primarily to make aid to foreign countries legitimate, donor agencies must *appear* to have guarantees that the money is used for the intended purposes. Thörn also mentions the role of 'intermediary' NGOs, which he argues function simply to channel funding from international donors to local NGOs and take responsibility for applications, audit, evaluation and reporting (2011:443-4). Power (1994, 1999, 2000, 2003) has focused on how organisational performance has been increasingly formalized and made auditable during the last decades with a heavy focus on internal control systems. He questions both the manner in which these systems produce assurance and accountability and their unintended and dysfunctional consequences for the audited organisation (2000:115).

Anderson et al. (2012) suggest that the procedures adopted to facilitate more effective and efficient international assistance have turned in on themselves and instead undermine such processes. One of the problems with current management models highlighted in this study is that donors *require reports that are tied directly to the proposals they funded* to justify and account for the provision of funds. This limits flexibility and responsiveness to contextual changes and may mean that *actual results are not included in reports* (2012:79). The study shows that actors on the 'receiving' side of aid, often experience donors to use the aid relationship only as a means to get the resources delivered (ibid. p 98). The study also introduces the concept of 'proceduralisation' in international development (ibid. p 67). The word aims to describe the process where *relationships between aid providers and recipients are subsumed by standardized procedures that close off spontaneous and respectful interaction*. The procedures are intended to accomplish positive outcomes, but when they become rigid and unresponsive to human concerns they do not only fail to achieve their

intent, but actually become counterproductive. Recipients acknowledge that the balance between trust and control is important in effective partnership (ibid. p 97).

With an approach that considers how power is exercised through policy, it becomes naturally connected to *the aid relationship*. Eyben (2010) suggests that development actors should incorporate attention to *context and process* in policies for monitoring and evaluation and *work with rather than against patterns of social and political relations*. Taylor (2009) argues along the same lines when he explains how the nature of our relationships *influences our ability to learn*. Many times opportunities for learning are not utilised and we often fail to translate what we *know* into practice because of the difficulty of addressing issues of power in relationships. The first step to change relationships and addressing power imbalances, he argues, is to *shift the way in which we communicate* (ibid. p 1-2). We should also *relate to each other consciously* to make power more transparent, enabling more accountable and collaborative relationships (ibid. p 3). Going back to the questions of 'what', 'how' and 'why' in the beginning of this section. Seen in the light of the above, the 'how' appears as central when studying asymmetrical aid relations. *How* policy is formulated has implications for what is valued and how value is measured in results reporting. The 'how' also appear to influence what information we get and how representative it is for what is actually going on in practice.

## **2.6 CIVIL SOCIETY RESPONSES TO DONOR POLICIES**

Organisations are not just *influenced* by their policy environments and their relationships but are able to exercise significant agency or influence in shaping their interactions (Saasa & Carlsson, 1996; Ebrahim, 2005; Ramanath & Ebrahim, 2010; Thörn, 2011, Mosse, 2004). As described above, development practitioners face challenges of fitting complex realities into simplistic and inflexible results frameworks and this might tempt them to avoid describing reality. Mosse (2004) describes a practice where development practitioners respond to the challenges of performance reporting by taking control over *the interpretation of events* (Mosse, 2004:646). A condition of policy success, he argues, requires the constant work of *translation of policy goals into practical interests* and back again. This is the task of skilled 'brokers' (Mosse, 2004:647; Stewart, 2012). Mosse defines a broker as a practitioner who *read the meaning of a project into the different institutional languages of its stakeholder supporters*. Eyben also brings up the issue of discrepancy between official discourses and practice (2010:384). She describes how aid practitioners and recipient-country counterparts learn to do what is required to sustain the aid relationship and the benefits flowing from it (ibid. pp 389). She goes on to suggest that it is these 'relational practices' that allow

international aid to be sufficiently successful for top managers and politicians to make a case for its continued existence (ibid. p 383).

Thörn describes various resistance strategies adopted by recipients to counter donors power strategies; counter knowledge production, collectivising ownership and selectivity (2011:445). *Counter knowledge production* is about responding to demands of reporting by framing the issue of evaluation as critical analysis. NGOs might here seek support human rights organisations or research networks to highlight unrealistic expectations and potential negative consequences of donors reporting requirements. *Collectivising ownership* refers to mobilising support among other actors to put collective pressure on donors. Further, in some cases there might be space for NGOs to be selective with whom they work. If other donors are available, or if financial resources can be found somewhere 'less demanding', NGOs are less dependent on the resources of the donor in question and *counter selectivity* can be applied.

## **2.7 SUMMARY OF THE ANALYTICAL APPROACH**

This dissertation has aid relationships as the main focus. Involved in the project of international development there is a chain of actors involving a donor country, a host country and a multitude of different stakeholders with different interests. To provide structure and guidance, interface analysis has been chosen as the analytical tool. By using the concept of 'interface' the aid relationship becomes more than just two organisations collaborating, it becomes an entity in its own with its own rules and regulations. It therefore provides a framework for a dynamic analysis of relationships between organisations, illustrating that organisations influence and are influenced by their external environment and provides a frame to discuss why organisations experience such influences differently. This dissertation operates from the assumption that there are inherent conflicts in the interfaces between aid actors because of the asymmetrical power relations and the encounter between actors operating under different organisational logics. A key quality in the aid relationship therefore becomes the ability to handle the inherent conflicts in a productive way. Based on the understanding of aid relationships in section 2.3, it also rests on the assumption that it is important to pursue aid relationships that build on the values of partnerships and thereby seeks to neutralise the inherent asymmetry that exists between the parties and create more equality. RBM has become a policy priority in international development. This study aims to look deeper into how the whole context of RBM influences the aid relationship, not just the practice of

orienting management toward results. By doing that a deeper understanding of how the approach plays out in practice can be sought. RBM is about *measuring organisational performance*. Section 2.6 illustrates that to understand how policy ideas play out in practice, it is not sufficient to take an instrumental perspective, which assumes policy and practice go hand in hand. This study takes the approach of Mosse (2004) and Eyben (2010) in understanding the relationship between policy and practice, because it accommodates for an investigation of the social life of policy.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

My research can be divided into two parts. The *first part* focuses on understanding aid relationships in a specific context and seeks to answer the question 'How have civil society organisations experienced that the results based management context has influenced their relationship with donors?' The *second part* aims to look into how organisations have responded to this external contextual influence. The answers are to be found by using a case study from Swedish development cooperation through the so called framework agreement held by a number of Swedish development organisations. This chapter will motivate the choices made regarding the research design, such as the theoretical approach taken, the choice of case study, the methods for data collection etc. It will also describe the implementation of the research and highlight challenges and complications, which might have influenced the research. Finally ethical considerations are described.

### **3.2 CHOICE OF METHOD AND SOURCES OF DATA**

The point of departure for the formulation of the research questions and the design of the research has been the previously identified challenges of RBM and the academic literature related both to this management approach and to aid relationships between donors and civil society organisations. Because of the nature of the topic, which requires a deep understanding of the organisations own perspective on the issue, a qualitative method was chosen. Further, it is a complex and sensitive issue, which is why it would have been difficult to measure quantitatively. While the method opens up for detail it also limits generalizability of the conclusions. However, it is still useful as an illustration of practice in a particular case. It should also be noted that this method implies that I will to a larger extent build the analyse on my own interpretation of the data collected which therefore cannot be said to represent any 'truth' or objective account of the issue. However, by using a variety of sources and 'testing' my interpretations in discussions with people involved in the study, other academics and practitioners I have attempted to make an as valid interpretation as possible.

Hart refers to quality in research as being that *the tools used to collect data was the right ones, the actual data collected was the right kind and quantity, the observations made were the right kinds of observations and the interpretations made were clear and transparent* (Hart, 2009:324, 334). I have chosen to approach my research question through a case study from the Swedish RBM context. First of all, it can be noted that RBM is, as previously

mentioned, a *management approach* and different 'models' of this approach exists. This means that Sida's way of managing for results in the case of support to Swedish civil society might look and function differently than other models adopted by other donor countries. The findings can therefore not be expected to provide any results valid outside this specific context. However, all RBM models do share the same foundations and the conclusions drawn here can still be relevant as an approach to the issue in other contexts.

An important element in both of the research questions is what I have called 'the results based management context'. This concept is used to provide a deeper understanding of how RBM plays out in practice. To determine what this context looks like in Sweden I drew on a variety of sources. First of all Internet sources were used to familiarise me with the different positions in the 'results debate'. I used a general search engine as well as a specific Swedish web page ([www.bistandsdebatten.se](http://www.bistandsdebatten.se)) that gathers positions from the Swedish debate on aid and a Swedish monthly magazine called *OmVärlden*. These sources were scanned for discussions about 'results' and 'results based management'. I also had a number of informal exchanges with researchers from an international network researching RBM in development from various perspectives, which gave me insights to it has been experienced, approached and understood previously and provided me with reference to other 'results based management contexts'. I attended a seminar in Stockholm in January about how civil society has experienced the increasing control that has followed the results agenda in Swedish development cooperation. The seminar was opened with a presentation from a researcher followed by a panel discussion where the general secretary of one of the frame organisations, a representative from another organisation and the researcher, who is also a former Sida employee, participated. I have also watched a video recording of a seminar with the title '*Result based management: Can "obsessive measurement disorder" be avoided*' with practitioners and researchers presenting their perspectives on the topic, followed by a panel discussion. A previous master thesis on the topic of Sida's double role as both 'partner' and 'controller' was also of great help in designing my research, giving insight to the frame organisations experiences and perceptions of Sida as a cooperation partner (Sjöblom, 2009). Further, the Swedish Agency for Public Management has conducted two studies that are relevant for my research questions. The first one is an evaluation of the Swedish governments results based management model (Statskontoret, 2011) and the second one is an evaluation of the framework system (Statskontoret, 2013). This provided me with a picture of how the context has changed after the introduction of RBM and what the Swedish 'results based

management context' looks like today. However, results based management is not the *whole* context in which these organisations operate. Even if it can be considered a significant influence in the larger context, it is not the only one and it is difficult to single out observations from the organisations and say for certain which are related to such influence or other. By choosing to use 'interface analysis' to structure and guide the research, I attempted to make this point *visible* and provide a dynamic analysis, while still focusing on how RBM comes into the context.

To answer the first research question about how the frame organisations have experienced that the context of results based management influences their relationship with Sida, I used a combination of first and second hand data. The point of departure was the most recent evaluation conducted by the Swedish Agency for Public Management (2013). Their analysis was based the following sources of data; an initial hearing with the frame organisations, document studies both nationally and internationally, interviews on both operational and strategic level at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at Sida, a questionnaire sent to the frame organisations and in-depth interviews with a selection of frame organisations. The report provided me with insight of how the system functions in practice and how the management and cooperation is perceived by the frame organisations. To get access to more 'raw' data from the organisations I gathered answers from the questionnaires from 8 of the frame organisations. The questionnaires include 32 quantitative questions where the organisations are asked to describe how they experience the framework system and the cooperation with Sida and how this influences their work. A translation of the questionnaire into English can be found in *Appendix I*. The questionnaires provided me with in-depth contextualised answers, first-hand experiences and illustrative examples from the organisations. In addition to this I conducted in-depth interviews with five practitioners from four different framework organisations, which allowed me to follow up on interesting issues from the questionnaires and find out more about the relationship with Sida from first hand sources of information. To analyse the data I systematically gathered observations from the questionnaires and interviews in relation to the research questions. I started to categorize them broadly into recurring themes regarding the descriptions of the nature of the relationship with Sida. These themes were refined as the information was analysed. After that I analysed differences and similarities between the organisations by considering variables relating to the character of each organisation as well as the length of the cooperation.

With the second research question I wanted to understand how organisations have responded to the influences from the described context and the nature of their relationships. This kind of information was not directly addressed in the questionnaires, which meant I could only focus on the four organisations that were also available for interviews. It is possible that the findings would have been different with four different organisations. The findings in this second part of the research should therefore only be seen as an illustration of the dynamic nature of organisational behaviour, providing examples of how organisations are not just passively influenced by their environments, but also actively respond to them. It is however questionable how much general conclusions could be drawn even with a larger sample, considering the fact that the frame organisations are a heterogenous group of organisations which makes each case very different. The practices I picked up on in the interviews were complemented with information from the questionnaires. The information gathered was used to gain insight from various perspectives and reflect upon interesting similarities and differences in between the organisations. The fact that I only had the chance to speak to 1-2 people in each of the organisations also impacts on the reliability of the findings, which might not necessarily represent the position of the organisation.

Finally, something can be said about my own positioning as a researcher. A researchers background, experiences and assumptions can influence the whole research process, from design, to observations and the interpretations. My experiences from working with Sida as part of one of the 15 framework organisations (however not directly with the framework funds) has most certainly influenced my own assumptions about how development should be managed and is currently managed by the Swedish government and Sida. To ensure quality I tried to be aware of this and reflect on my own positioning and how it might influence my questions in the interviews and my interpretations. The risks related to lack of objectivity was also mitigated by discussing my thoughts and conclusions with practitioners and other people who are knowledgeable about the issues at hand, who were not directly involved in the research. An advantage of having this experience is that I was able to understand and relate to their answers more easily and understand the common language used within this field.

### **3.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH**

Initial contact was made by email with key people from all 16 organisations via a personal contact within an existing network of representatives who meet regularly and discuss their experiences. They were asked if they would be willing to participate in the research through

sharing their answers to the questionnaire and/or take part in the interviews. Eight of the organisations sent me their questionnaire but only four were in the end willing to participate in the interviews. While a smaller number of organisations enabled me to go more in depth in each case this selection limited the representativeness of the findings which would have benefited from a larger sample and more interviews in each organisation. The methodological implications of this have been discussed in the previous section.

In the interviews a qualitative interview technique was used to stay open toward findings and be flexible when interviewing. This method provides room for the interviewee's own perspective and allowed me to follow up on replies and issues picked up on in the questionnaire, while at the same time being open to other critical issues that could arise. Interviews were semi-structured to provide ability to address specific issues. An interview guide was prepared as support during the interviews. An interview guide can be described as a brief list of memory prompts (Bryman, 2012:473). As mentioned in section 1.3 the framework organisations are a heterogeneous group of organisations with different purposes, structures, geographic- and thematic focus areas. To prepare relevant questions interviews were contextualised to the organisation in question. With the help of the questionnaires I got an indication of the perceptions of the framework organisations about the results agenda, their relationship with Sida and their experiences with the framework system. Five interviews were conducted at four different frame organisations, to which I will refer to as Organisation 1-4 and FO1-FO4. The other four have been allocated the numbers FO5-FO8. The organisations were left to decide who would participate in the interviews after I explained what issues I wanted to address and what kind of knowledge would be useful. All interview subjects had extensive experience working in the aid sector and positions with good insights into the subject of research within their organisations.

One practical difficulty was to get organisations to participate in interviews. A lack of time and resources and possibly also a tiredness of participating in evaluations, audits etc. could have contributed to this. There were several interviews planned that had to be re-scheduled and later cancelled. Further, it was not possible to interview as many people as would have been good for ensuring reliability. There are a limited number of people working with the framework funds in each organisation, varying depending on the size and structure of the organisation as well as the size of the framework funds. The interviewees in this study had different positions and thereby also different perspectives. In three organisations I interviewed

one person and in one organisation I interviewed two people with different positions. The choice of interview subjects is a variable which can impact on the information I receive, but due to the differences between the organisations and the limited number of people available for participation I could not have organised it differently. All the interviews were recorded with my Iphone and transcribed shortly after. The transcriptions were double checked against the recordings. No technical problems arose during the sessions and the quality of the recordings were good.

### **3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The proposed methods do not include any elements of deception and informed consent can be assured without problems. Also, the interviewees are adults who were interviewed about their professional experiences and opinions so their personal integrity should not be intruded. However, management of international development cooperation is a 'hot topic' in Sweden and currently something that is frequently discussed and debated. Even though Sida encourages dialogue about the collaboration and openness about disagreements and problems, the information I get from the organisation might be sensitive and involve critique of their organisation and the collaboration. To avoid that the study has any negative effects upon the parties relations, the organisations and participants have been kept confidential. This can also assure that the information given will be more reliable, since the participant can talk about their experiences without worrying about how it might affect their relations with Sida.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE CASE STUDY INTERFACE AND THE CONTEXT OF RESULTS BASED MANAGEMENT**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter aims to lay the foundation for the analysis in the following two chapters. To structure the analysis of the relationship between Sida and the frame organisations, 'interface analysis' will be used. The interface can be seen as a social space where the two actors meet. It contains four elements which all have an impact on the relationship; the parties to the interface, the party representatives, the mode of regulation and the context. The first part of this chapter aims to discuss these four elements in relation to the case study. The second part will outline what will be understood as 'the results based management context' in this study and locate it within the described interface.

### **4.2 THE INTERFACE BETWEEN SIDA AND THE FRAME ORGANISATIONS**

#### *The parties to the interface*

The 'parties' to the interface refers to the actors involved in the relationship of study, in this case Sida and the frame organisations. Sida is a government agency working on behalf of the Swedish parliament and government, with the mission to implement Swedish development policy. Entrusted with this mission they are accountable to Swedish taxpayers' for using their money in accordance with their mission. Being entrusted with public finances, government agencies are the classic example of a bureaucratic organisation. In such organisations activities are divided into a systematic division of labour, positions and job descriptions are organised into a hierarchy, where written rules provide guidelines for best practice and job performance, records are kept on administrative decisions, rules guidelines and organisational activities (Anheier, 2005:143). This creates a stable routinized environment intended to create internal efficiency in large organisations. The bureaucratic organisation often operates under the logic of instrumental rationality, where organisations are assumed to function as machines or instruments to an end (ibid. p 145).

The frame organisations on the other hand come from civil society. Their organisational logic is different from a government agency in the sense that their missions drive them and their own values guide them. Apart from this, the frame organisations are a heterogeneous group of organisations, with different organisational cultures, structures, goals and values operating in different contexts. Therefore, each organisation has its *own* interface with Sida. Sida and the frame organisations are brought together by the common development goal and through the

framework system. Sida depends on the organisations to implement development activities and report back providing the necessary information for their own reporting to the government. The organisations depend on Sida to provide funding in a way that allows them to work toward their mission in accordance with their values.

#### *The party representatives*

The party representatives are the individuals responsible for the interaction between the parties. They are relevant because they are the means through which the parties to the interface interact. At Sida, each organisation will have a coordinator responsible for the operations. The frame organisations might have one person appointed to work with the framework funds, or several with different responsibilities or in some cases one person responsible for several funding sources. Since the organisations have different party representatives another variable changes in the interface and this might influence the relationships in different directions.

#### *The mode of regulation*

The mode of regulation in the interface is the level of organisation and the capacity to constrain or guide events in the relationship. The regulation can for example be detailed and tight or loose and unclear. In this case, there are a number of guiding documents establishing the roles and responsibilities of the actors involved prescribing the frames they have to work within. These 'frames' are the same for all of the frame organisations. The framework agreement is governed by two government policies, a policy for global development ('the PGD') and a policy for support to civil society ('the CSO policy') (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003 and 2009). The PGD was developed in order to create a foundation for a coherent and consistent approach applied to *all* policy areas. The CSO policy is intended as a guiding framework for all Swedish direct and indirect support to CSOs in developing countries, and thus includes the support to the Swedish framework organisations. With a point of departure in the CSO policy, the government has also decided upon the strategy '*Support via Swedish civil society organisations 2010-2014*' (the CSO strategy) which specifies instructions to Sida in relation to support via Swedish civil society (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010). The strategy is directed at Sida, who on the basis of the CSO strategy has created more detailed *instructions* to govern the provision of grants to the organisations with which they have entered into an agreement concerning a framework grant (Sida, 2010). The instructions lays out objectives and priorities with the framework agreement, Sida's

assessment criteria and special rules and requirements that apply, including guidelines for applications and reporting by framework organisations. Further, there is a document establishing the criteria for eligibility as framework organisation, which lays out the basis upon which Sida decides possible framework status. Finally, each organisation has entered into an agreement with Sida, which lays out the details of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the funds and each other. In other words, the relationship is guided by an agreement as well as a large number of policies, strategies and instructions in addition to detailed criteria for the selection of frame organisations. It can therefore be described as a highly regulated sphere where responsibilities, procedures and requirements have been explicitly regulated and formalised.

### *The context*

The context includes both the immediate social context of the organisations and the larger social, legal, economic and political forces. The immediate social context varies depending on the frame organisation in question, which might be part of networks and cooperations with other actors. Here it can be noted that both the organisations and Sida are part of more than one interface within the scope of the framework system. Sida has an interface with the government and the frame organisations have interfaces either with their member organisations or their partners. The larger social, economic and political context is to a large extent the same for each frame organisation, since they are all based in the same country and work within the same field. However, the frame organisations partners operate in different countries and contexts and thereby changes the conditions of the interface.

## **4.3 RESULTS BASED MANAGEMENT IN THE INTERFACE**

RBM comes into the interface mainly through two of the four elements described above, *the context* and *the mode of regulation*. The management approach is part of a larger political and economical influence of results focus within development which has been an explicit priority of the Swedish government. Extensive reforms in the management of Swedish development cooperation was introduced after a shift from social democratic to right wing government in 2006. This meant an ideological shift in aid politics, from emphasising solidarity and social movements to a more market oriented politics building on deregulation and privatisation. Strong critique was expressed by the new government of how Swedish aid had been inefficient and poorly managed by the previous government. In an interview the new Minister for Development Cooperation said that it previously had 'been all about courses, conferences,

travels and talk, talk, talk...' instead of 'real action' (Radio Interview with Gunilla Carlsson in Ekot, 2012). She continued to explain that it was her intention to expose this kind of 'talk-aid'. She has also accused the previous government for running a 'passive payout politics', promising to change it to become a 'active development politics' (Gunilla Carlsson, 2010). The reforms have been one of the most intensively debated topics since 2006 and the debate has to a large extent become polarised between aid critics on the one hand and aid defenders on the other, with little intention of constructive dialogue between the two (Odén, 2010). The former general secretary of Sida recently criticised the current governments politics for 'combining aggressive rethoric with intelectual emptiness' (Göransson, 2013). Göransson claims that Gunilla Carlsson has intentionally miscredited the work that is being done within development cooperation. Instead of explaining how it works and what it does she has used a rhetoric based on common prejudices about aid, such as that it produces corruption and that the billions are spread out without anyone knowing where they go or what they lead to, to legitimize and gain political support for the reform agenda. This *political turbulence* has taken place during a financial crisis with demands for cuts in public spending and pressures to implement a more cost-efficient use of resources. The political reforms have had effects both internally within the Ministry of foreign affairs, on the management of Sida and also on the frame organisations. An internal report from 2012 shows serious internal conflicts within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and provides strong critique on the leadership of Gunilla Carlsson (Resare, April 2013, in *Omvärlden*). Staff describe a '*strict, formalistic and detailed*' working climate, which has left them feeling '*discredited, cautious and at times resigned*'. This climate has also affected Sida extensively who have the role of implementing the government's politics. In 2011 the Agency for Public Management was assigned to follow up on the new model for results management and evaluate if it had contributed to its intentions of a more *effective, clear, strategic, long-term and results oriented management of Sida*. The conclusion was that it actually had had the opposite effects (Statskontoret, 2011:7). A more recent report from the same agency confirms that the problem of interference in Sida's operational responsibilities through informal instructions etc., instead of governing on a strategic level remains (Statskontoret, 2013:86). The reporting from Sida and 'upwards' has been dominated by aspects of *internal efficiency and short term results*. To be able to report on this, Sida is required to request this kind of information from the frame organisations.

Secondly, RBM appears to influence *the mode of regulation* in the interface. In the PGD it is established that efforts must be made to make Swedish development cooperation more

effective (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003:70). Such rationalisation includes many aspects, such as making programmes and projects relevant, goal-oriented and cost-effective. It also includes an increased evaluation of results, 'so that the experience gained and best practices can be utilized in the future'. The policy clarifies that Sweden '*wholeheartedly supports the UN and World Bank in the important task they have undertaken of increasing management by results, and monitoring and evaluation in connection with global development cooperation*' (ibid. p 72). The commitment for increased development assistance effectiveness and results achievement is reassured in the specific policy for support to civil society within Swedish development cooperation (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009:22). Here, potential negative impact of the donor's requirements is highlighted; '*Modalities of support are not to be designed so that they may weaken civil society organisations, or contribute to reducing the added value that qualified them for support in the first place.*' The CSO strategy prescribes that Sida should put *high demands* on the CSO's systems for monitoring and evaluation (Sida, 2010:6). Further, it spells out that Sida's control of the funds must be *efficient* and *satisfactory* and that Sida is responsible of *managing for results* (ibid. p 8). Sida should instruct the CSOs on how to report results in relation to the strategy. This is done through detailed guidelines in the Instructions, specifying what elements the application and reporting must contain (Sida, 2010:13). However, the framework organisation may utilize a format that it finds to be suitable. The organisation shall in the application include a presentation and explanation of their *results framework*, which involves an explanatory report on the logic of the activities, i.e. how the stated objectives will be reached including presumed casual connections and presumptions including risks. In general, the reporting *must relate to the application and budget for the period* approved by Sida. An analysis of expected and non-expected, positive and negative outcomes should be included and related to the results framework presented in the application. The instructions declare that the framework organisations are responsible for the grants from Sida being used in accordance with requirements and conditions in all agreements met by any parties involving this grant (ibid. p 9). The fact that there is a *chain of actors* involved at various levels means that management and reporting becomes complex, and that it can take time before control measures are realised (Statskontoret, 2013:31-32).

The frame organisations witness of how the above described demands for internal efficiency has introduced a heavy focus on routines and systems (FO1, FO2, FO3, FO4, FO6, FO8). This is experienced as a push to become more professionalised, where organisations are

expected to have clear routines and systems in place for everything they do. It is recognized by the organisations that this contributes to higher quality to a certain extent, but it also demands a professionalisation and leads to higher administrative costs and costs related to accounting, procurement and risk management. The latest example of increased regulation of routines is the recently introduced 'Contribution Management Process' (Sida, 2012). It is an internal Sida document that describes in detail what assessments Sida staff should make to 'get it right' in terms of improving compliance with legal requirements, government strategies and policies, international commitments and recommended work methods. It aims to create the basis for a uniform assessment of contributions from Swedish development cooperation among Sida staff by prescribing clear routines and a large number of variables to take into account in each assessment. One organisation describes how all these variables break down the assessments into a large number of scattered variables, where the overall picture of the contribution is lost (FO1:i). A consequence of this is that the frame organisations are operating under a very high and resource consuming administrative burden. All 8 organisations express how more and more time need to be put into administration to meet requirements of control and follow up, i.e writing reports and participating in evaluations. At times this administration is not proportional to the extent of the operations being scrutinized (FO1, FO2, FO3). It is not only more administration, but several organisations express a concern over how useful the information is that is being produced in reports etc. One organisation takes as an example a mid-term report, which should describe among other things progress, goal fulfilment, discuss aid effectiveness in the program, describe internal processes, risk management and a number of case studies within the scope of only 30 pages (FO1:i). By summarizing such a wide range of aspects in a relatively short report it becomes very synthesised and the question is if it is a meaningful use of the organisations resources to invest time and effort in procuding it.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY**

As illustrated in section 4.2, several variables influence the relationship between Sida and the frame organisations. Each frame organisation has their own interface and while some variables change, some also stay the same. Therefore, two frame organisations of different size and structure might experience the relationship differently even though they have the same requirements placed on them. When analysing my data, which comes from 8 different organisations, this will be taken into account. Section 4.3 describes what in this dissertation is referred to as 'the context of results based management' and illustrates how it has influenced

the interfaces between Sida and the frame organisations significantly. The same section describes a political agenda behind the increased results focus, a turbulent political environment and a polarised debate on the results agenda. This has strongly reduced the room for manoeuvre at Sida who in turn transfers such influences to the interface with the frame organisations. Characteristic of this particular context is that it has brought a *highly regulated interface* between Sida and the FOs, with a heavy focus on routines and systems for internal efficiency and financial control. It is an *administratively heavy and resource demanding* environment, and it is questioned by some of the organisations if the information produced is at all useful for purposes of management improvement. While the described context stays the same for all frame organisations it might influence the various relationships differently. This is the topic of the following section.

## CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS PART 1

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to present and analyse the empirical material collected to answer the first research question; *How have civil society organisations experienced that the results based management context has influenced their relationship with donors?* The first part presents observations about *the nature and characteristics* of the relationship between Sida and the frame organisations. The second part will provide a discussion of *how these observations relate to the context of results based management* described in the previous chapter.

### 5.2 OBSERVATIONS

#### *The communication*

The nature of the communication between Sida and the frame organisations is experienced as more controlling and commanding than before the results agenda was introduced (FO1, FO4, FO5, FO6, FO8). Sida gives instructions for the organisations to follow. One organisation describes it as 'irregular' and 'one way' (FO1:i). Another organisation describe Sida as less flexible than before and a little bit square in their interaction (FO4:i). Earlier Sida engaged the organisations in discussions of a strategic nature such as method and initiated efforts of mutual learning, but such discussions are almost completely lacking now. Spaces used to be created where the organisations could meet representatives from Sida and the other organisations and lift the discussions to a more strategical level. A majority of the organisations describe how the communication is now very technical and focused mostly on routines and systems for internal efficiency (Statskontoret, 2013:73, FO1-FO8).

#### *The roles of the actors*

In a relationship, each actor has a role which determines what they bring into the cooperation. It seems like the results based management context has shifted the roles of both Sida and the frame organisations. This is closely related to the descriptions of the changes in the communication. An experience shared by many of the organisations is that Sida felt more like a cooperation partner before, a source of knowledge and expertise (FO1, FO4, FO5, FO6, FO8). Today, Sida is perceived more as a controlling counterpart, taking the role of a government agency and giving detailed instructions that the organisations are expected to follow. The other side of the same coin is that the frame organisations experience that their role has become more instrumental; they are there merely as a means to an end, which is to channel funds. One organisation expresses this in an illustrative sentence;

*'Our impression is that we are entrusted with the mission to handle the taxpayers money because we have strict financial control systems, and not because we are an important global actor in the field or that we are good at what we do'* (FO4:Q).

Another organisation explains that it is a *challenge to show an added value* in the current environment when focus is finding effective channels to transfer money to the global south (FO5:Q).

#### *Lack of clarity*

The organisations also perceive a lack of clarity in the relationship with Sida (FO1, FO2, FO3, FO4, FO5, FO6). While there is no lack of guidelines or instructions for the frame organisations to relate to, the application of them is experienced as *unpredictable* and many of the organisations feel an *uncertainty* in what is expected from them. This is not because the documents themselves are not clear or detailed enough or that they do not relate to each other in a logical way, but how they are sometimes imposed retroactively and sometimes interpreted differently by different people at Sida. While the agreement is intended to be the central document regulating the relationship, its status has been overshadowed by the informal contacts between the parties (Statskontoret, 2013:90-2). One organisation describes how the communication has improved during the last couple of years, however despite this it is difficult to get clear and direct answers from Sida. This is interpreted as an insecurity among staff about how to interpret the governments instructions (FO3:Q).

#### *Lack of understanding*

The problem with aggregation and attribution associated with results oriented management is felt by some of the organisations. This is experienced as a pressure to quantify results to make them possible to attribute to the own organisations work and measure and demonstrate within the three-year programme cycle (FO1, FO3, FO5, FO6, FO8). FO1 illustrates the problem with prioritising this kind of results; *'Such a model cannot be applied to efforts with the objective of changing discriminating structures or empowering people to claim their rights'* (FO1:i1). Further, influences from the relationship between Sida and the frame organisations can affect the interface in the next level between the frame organisations and their member organisation or partner. One such influence which the organisations describe is that the increased demands on financial control systems has lead to an increased screening of possible partners (FO1, FO2, FO3, FO5). Not all organisations can live up to current requirements of

financial control and audits and it is often the smaller grassroots organisations that are excluded from the cooperation. More difficult settings also need to be excluded. Many of the frame organisations build their relationships on long term cooperation with partners who share their value base. In this way they can build up a mutual trust which creates a better and more honest dialogue. One organisation describes how the current developments risk damaging such relationships. With a 'control and command' attitude in the intersection between Sida and the frame organisation, it is almost inevitable that parts of the 'obsessive measurement' is transferred to the partner (FO1:Q). This in turn increases the risk of undermining processes of empowerment and participation, if they are not given enough time to be sustainable. Further, in a larger context where other donors bring detailed requirements as well it affects their ability to relate to their partners in a consistent manner, counter to harmonisation efforts (ibid.). These tendencies together with the shifts in the communication have created an increased distance between Sida and the frame organisation and is experienced as a lack of understanding for how the frame organisations work.

#### *Different perceptions*

Finally it can be noted that while all of the organisations included in this study have experienced a change in the relationship with Sida, and share many of the views expressed above, their descriptions and general impression of the relationship differ. Some describe it as a largely dysfunctional relationship and others as a good cooperation. Most organisations are however in between these two descriptions, recognising negative influences to a greater or lesser degree. The dialogue is described above by one organisation as one way and irregular and by others as good. While several organisations highlight how the current management for results has led to an increased focus on the quantifiable, two other organisations do not agree at all with this. One of the organisations highlight a possible reason for how the differences between the organisations can be explained;

*A lot of our systems and routines already lived up to Sida's requirements, so we were already rather tough on partners in that sense. So I believe it has been easier for us to adapt than for smaller organisations, building their work more on genuine partnerships (FO4:i).*

There are also differences in what the organisations expect from the relationship. Many organisations would want an increased strategical dialogue with Sida around context analysis

and content of the programs to create a space for knowledge exchange, increased understanding and a better cooperation (FO1, FO3, FO4). In one of the interviewed organisations however they do not consider this necessary. They would welcome more information and exchange of experience among the frame organisations but emphasise that the relationship with Sida should be kept formal (FO2; i2). For them, a good relationship with Sida is primarily characterised by clear roles and responsibilities, that they know what is expected of them and also know what to expect from Sida (FO2:i2).

### **5.3 DISCUSSION**

The previous section has showed that there has been a change in the relationship between Sida and the frame organisations. It appears like these changes are related to the reduced room for manoeuvre at Sida and the increasing administrative burden which has followed the introduction of results based management. The fact that Sida operates under what has been described as a controlling and commanding Foreign Ministry makes them transfer such influences to the next interface with the frame organisation. Further, all the administration and bureaucracy is creating a situation where there is not enough time left for Sida to have a regular dialogue with the frame organisations. When more resources are put into administration, less resources are left to developing dialogue with partners, method and actual content. The results based management context or environment in general seem to be based on a view of instrumental rationality; the approach is guided toward finding the most efficient or cost-effective means to achieve a specific end, but not in itself reflecting on the value of that end. This also appear to have shifted the roles in the relationship to becoming more instrumental, meaning that the frame organisations are seen as a means to an end which is channeling funds and facilitating the exchange of necessary information, but the system does not encourage critically evaluating actions. As described in section 2.4 such effects of the RBM have been found in other contexts as well (see for example Jones, 2010).

If the relationship previously had dimensions of what in section 2.3 has been outlined as features of a partnership, such dimensions are weaker now. First of all, the nature of the communication has gone from being experienced as a dialogue to having the character of one way communication where Sida gives instructions for the organisations to follow. The frame organisations have had to become self-regulating to a greater extent because of the requirements on internal efficiency, a process which Thörn (2011) refers to as 'responsibilisation'. The content of the communication is therefore also more focused on

systems, routines and internal efficiency than on what is actually being achieved. Further, the parties have less spaces to interact where they can engage in strategical dialogue and build better understanding for each other. A general impression is that this environment has led to a situation where soft values, such as people and the relations they create, are not prioritised in the relationship. The development resembles what Anderson et. al. (2010) refers to as a 'proceduralisation', where relationships between aid providers and recipients are subsumed by standardised procedures that close of spontaneous and respectful interaction.

The conflict perspective on aid relationships assumes inherent tensions in the relationship between Sida and the frame organisations, due to factors such as a biased distribution of resources, different organisational logics and influences by the various stakeholder interests. Such tensions risk being augmented by the described environment and can in turn influence the relationship in a negative direction. For example, most organisations value having both formal and informal contacts to help build understanding and trust between the parties and create a good cooperation. However, when the communication with Sida contributes to a feeling of unclarity they might have the opposite effect and instead lead to an increased distance and lack of understanding between the parties. Further the controlling tendencies might be interpreted as a lack of trust from Sida, as if the frame organisations are constantly questioned. Or if the organisations experience a risk of losing funding if they do not meet high requirements, this leaves less space to be self-critical and open toward the donor. Sjöblom (2009), Eyben (2010) and Bächtold et. al. (2013) illustrate how such factors do not foster open exchange and learning and might impact on how the parties relate to each other.

An important general observation is that *not all relations are influenced in a similar way* by even such a strong external pressure as the results agenda. Even if the formal requirements placed upon the frame organisations and the external environment is very similar between them, they experience the relationship differently. This is an illustration of how aid relationships, as the interface analysis shows, are influenced by a variety of factors. It is in other words important to remember that even if the results focus is a significant influence in the context, it is not the *only* one and it is not possible to single out elements and say for certain which are related to such influence or other. One important factor influencing their experiences of the results context seem to be *the expectations the organisations have* on the role of Sida. If they expect to be treated as a cooperation partner, share a strategic dialogue and have an understanding for each other, they will feel something is lacking in the

relationship if the dialogue is mainly technical. Another aspect seem to be *the length of the cooperation*. Organisations with a long cooperation have experienced a shift in the relationship. From being based on trust and a mutual exchange of knowledge and strategic discussions the relationship has shifted toward becoming more bureaucratic with a strong control and command focus from Sida. This shift has made some people experience that the organisations are questioned and mistrusted by Sida. *Organisational structure* is another influence. One of the interviewed organisations is part of a larger international structure and had since the beginning established routines and systems for risk management etc. Therefore, the adaption to Sida's requirements has been smoother and lead to less tensions in the relationship. Another influence in the interface is *the party representatives*. The organisations highlight how different Sida representatives sometimes interpret requirements differently and are more or less flexible or 'understanding'. Further, during the course of a long-term cooperation such as many in the framework system, it is natural that these representatives might change. However, because of an unusually high turnover in staff at Sida during the last years, several organisations express a concern over a lack of continuity in the relationship which affects its character (FO1, FO2, FO3). A value in the personal relationship might have been built up, but when the representatives change they need to start over again.

## CHAPTER 6: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS PART 2

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is intended to approach the second research question; *How have civil society organisations responded to the context of results based management?* The previous chapter highlights a resource-demanding context, which prioritises the technical and puts a focus on establishing systems and routines for performance measurement, often to the disadvantage of building good relationships. In my discussions with the organisations I have noted a number of different practices to balance these external influences, which will be presented in the first part. The second part of this chapter will provide a discussion around these different practices, i.e. when and why they have appeared.

### 6.2 OBSERVATIONS

#### *Brokerage*

I have observed several practices where the organisations adjust their behaviour in the different spheres of interaction to mediate between the different world-views they need to connect. Such practices have much in common with what Mosse (2003) refers to as *brokerage*. This seem to be a conscious tactic or strategy adopted to downplay the 'squareness' of Sida. In Organisation 1 they see this role as one of their added values in the actor chain (FO1:i). With an understanding for both Sida's and the partner's perspective, they are in a position to know what Sida requires in terms of language and method and can approach their partners in a way that they can relate to. Sometimes they can explain what Sida requires and why. But the interview person also describes how they cannot expect their partners to understand and adapt to Sida's mode of thinking completely. Sida requires a certain way of talking about results which partners are not used to. In such situations their role as 'brokers' will be even stronger, because they need to be more creative in how they can get the right information and thereafter translate it into the appropriate results framework.

In Organisation 2 they also describe how they need to put on two different 'hats' in relation to Sida on the one hand and their member organisations on the other, a way to say that their role changes depending on whom they are interacting with (FO2:i2). They also describe how they always aggregate their partners' results and locate them in their own results framework based on the partners reports (FO2:Q). They believe that it is of great importance that each organisation in the chain of actors takes ownership over their own results formulation and formulate them in accordance with their own organisational logic (FO2:i1). It becomes their

role as a frame organisation to see if the applying organisations goal fits into their results framework and thus also if the partner can get funding from within the framework system. In this way the organisation attempts to avoid imposing their models and way of thinking on partners. For example, in the organisations results framework the goals are divided into three levels; the individual the organisational and the societal level;

*We do not tell our partners to formulate goals on these three levels. If they want we will be transparent and tell them about our theory of change and our goals. But we do not want them to write their operational planning on the basis of our goals. If they are allowed to formulate their own goals, then they will have ownership. (FO1:i1)*

Organisation 4 explains how it is often clear which requirements Sida consider as absolute and which ones can be negotiated or progressively approached. In relation to the partner, they will have a dialogue about what is possible in the context and what is not (FO4:i). The interview person highlights how such mediation or brokerage could be done to an even larger extent. At the 'frame organisation level' they know how to write good narrative reports, and describe what has been done in a language that Sida will approve of. Therefore, it possible to rewrite partners' reports to the format and language Sida is after. However, this is just a way of describing what they do and dressing it up in a different language. So the way the current system is functioning, what Sida will consider 'good results reporting' and 'bad results reporting' has less to do with actual content and change.

### *Ownership*

Other practices have had the character of an *approach* rather than strategy, which helps the organisation to keep focus on what is important. Such an approach was observed in Organisation 2. They describe an over-all well functioning relationship, despite the fact that they identify the same influences and pressures in the environment as the other organisations. In this organisation, what appears as most prominent is that they seem to relate to their context very *consciously*. They emphasise the importance to recognise that each actor has a different role. As a frame organisation their relationship with Sida is and should be different from their relationship with partners. Further, they do not believe it is wise to just push forward requirements in the actor chain. The communication with member organisations must be 'open, planned and conscious' (FO2:Q). By this they mean that each actor needs to take some of the responsibility for the requirements they forward to partners;

*When Sida gives instructions to us we don't just copy them and give to our member organisations, we reflect on them and consciously translate them into our own (FO2:i1).*

In this way they can be said to have a certain reflexivity incorporated in their organisational culture. As a consequence they have taken ownership of the formal requirements imposed on them by Sida and transformed them into their own.

*We are not just a frame organisation, we have been around for a hundred years and we have a mission and a value base. We use the Sida funding in accordance with what is acceptable from our identity as an organisation (FO2:i2).*

In an environment that can be perceived as uncertain they have managed to become clearer in their own positions, values and methods. In this sense they have grown as an organisation and partly neutralised the strong 'control and command' element perceived by so many other organisations. Further, by having a strong learning culture in the organisation they have managed to preserve the *learning dimension* of monitoring and evaluating their work, and not let the external accountability purpose take over, despite such influences in the context. This might also contribute to reducing the tensions in the relationship, if they feel the information they are producing is useful for them.

### *Resistance*

One of the interviewed organisations have kept a high profile in the public debate around results and positioned themselves very clearly against the results agenda. This is *not* a position against the practice of measuring results, but the agenda as such and its practical consequences. Examples of their way of describing the results agenda are; how the results focus has 'gone out of hand', and how it risks resulting in 'collecting meaningless data' and 'seriously damaging the quality and effectiveness of development cooperation' (Seminar 2013-02-07, Stockholm, Sweden; FO1:Q; FO1:i). They are explicit about attributing the existing problems to the political agenda behind the management model. At a seminar the general secretary of the organisation described the push to have political-ideological motives and come from a 'blue club of likeminded governments' (Seminar 2013-02-07, Stockholm,

Sweden).<sup>8</sup> Since the majority party in the government does not have its roots in the popular movements, they have imported management logic from business models best suitable for market actors. Further, the driving force behind the results agenda is considered to be able to demonstrate results toward taxpayers and show that Swedish development cooperation has created them. The organisation describes how the door has been closed in terms of having a dialogue with the government about these issues, which probably have contributed to increasing existing tensions (FO1:Q).

*A sound competition makes us better, but today's developments does not only risk damaging long term and trustful relations with partners, but also seriously damaging the quality and effectiveness of development cooperation - contrary to its intentions. The exposure to competition, in combination with increasing demands for quick and quantifiable results tend to create a short term perspective where focus is on results which are easy to achieve, at the expense of sustainable results, including structural changes. (FO1:Q)*

Even if this organisation is to a large extent critical of the results agenda, they also recognize positive effects of the results context. For example the pressure in the environment and tensions in the relationship have made them better at describing and communicating what they do. They have in other words also responded by increasing their capacity to articulate and report on what results they are achieving and showing 'value for money' (FO1:i). They have also responded by producing *counter-knowledge* (Thörn, 2011) and commissioned research with a critical perspective on the effectiveness of results based approaches to aid are.

### **6.3 DISCUSSION**

This chapter illustrates that the frame organisations are not passively influenced by their environments, but consciously relate and actively respond to them. In the previous section I described three practices that I identified during my study. The first one is what Mosse (2004) refers to as *brokerage*, which is basically a way to accommodate reality into the frames and 'world views' of donors, and the other way around. This seems to be an explicit strategy or tactic, where the organisations are aware of a certain influence from the donor's direction and

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<sup>8</sup> Referring to a number of liberal governments in countries such as Sweden, The UK and the Netherlands, who have been particularly forward in reforming aid management toward becoming more results-oriented.

consciously acts to counter this influence. Such practices were identified in three out of four of the interviewed organisations.

The two other approaches, ownership and resistance, are to a large extent contrasting with each other. These practices were observed in two of the organisations and provide examples of how organisations respond to their environments differently, depending on their individual preconditions. The response referred to as ownership was particularly strong in one of the organisations. This practice had the character of an approach to how they relate to other actors in the chain. By consciously reflecting on and transforming the donor's requirements into their own, they appear to have managed to keep focus on what was important and not lose their identity as an organisation. The final observation I chose to call *resistance*. The organisation in question has kept a high profile and positioned itself against the current results environment. This is a practice of resistance to what they experience as a negative development. The final example also illustrates that one organisation can respond in several different ways, and experience the environment negatively, while still recognizing its positive influences. Finally it should be noted that even if these three practices stood out, there are certainly other ways in which the organisations relate to the results context, both consciously and unconsciously.

## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 CONCLUSIONS**

This dissertation set out to study how Swedish civil society organisations have experienced that the results based management context has influenced their relationship with Sida. This was done in an effort to understand more about how RBM models influence aid relationships and when and why such models become problematic. Section 4.3 described a Swedish results based management context which is administratively heavy and resource demanding and how a politically turbulent environment has created confusion and frustration among the actors. The findings in chapter 5 indicate that this context has made relationships increasingly proceduralised and shifted the nature of the relationships to become more instrumental. Such developments run contrary to what research in the field suggest is important for results based management models to succeed; namely building good relationships that seeks to neutralise the inherent assymetry in aid relationships and create more equality. However, while the organisations included in this study share many concerns over the current situation it is clear that they have their individual experiences of the relationship with Sida, despite having the same formal requirements placed upon them. Chapter 5 describes how factors such organisational structure and expectations on the relationship influence how the relationship is experienced. Such factors also appear to affect how the organisations respond to and manage the influences form the context, which was the focus of the second part of my research. The practice referred to as brokerage appear to be necessary to translate between the contrasting worldviews and different languages of donors and partners and can be considered an added value of intermediary organisations, such as the frame organisations. Where the tensions have been smaller between donor demands and organisational structure and systems, there has naturally been less influence on the relationship. Chapter 6 illustrates this through the two practices of ownership and resistance, which are used as examples of how organisations are influenced differently by their environments and accordingly respond to such differences in different ways. It is important to highlight here what has been discussed in chapter 3.3 about the reliability of my observations in this part of the research, which are not based on a sufficient base of data to claim any representativeness. However, the findings can be said to provide indications in a certain direction. To get more scientifically reliable results more research is needed. The observations therefore open up for more thorough studies of how organisational structure and culture influence how the results based management context is received in civil society organisations. A final conclusion is that it appears to be important

that the organisations relate to their environments, including the results context, *consciously*. By that I mean reflect on how the influences from the context might affect attitudes, relationships etc. and in the end also the results themselves. By doing so, they are in a better position to mitigate the risks that have been identified in previous research about the potential negative impact of the results based management context.

## 7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Sharing the ultimate goal of facilitating effective development efforts and realising human rights, this dissertation concludes by giving the following recommendations to Sida and the frame organisations respectively;

### *To the frame organisations*

- To *facilitate internal strategy discussions* where they reflect on how their work is influenced by the results based management context and discuss how they can relate to it in the best way possible in accordance with their organisational identity and preconditions
- Consider how they can *make the most out of their positions as 'brokers'* or translators between the world views of donors and partners in the south/member organisations

### *To the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/ Sida*

- To work for *increased clarity and consistency in their communication* with the frame organisations to improve predictability in the relationship
- To initiate a dialogue with the frame organisations about *how results reporting can be made as simple and meaningful* as possible
- To *re-establish spaces for strategic dialogue* with the frame organisations where the discussions can be 'lifted' from details of requirements to exchange knowledge and *build better understanding between the parties*
- To look into what can be done to *reduce the high turnover in staff* at Sida, considering the importance of continuity in the relations with the frame organisations
- To adopt an *attitude* which signals less suspicion and control, and instead more trust and intentions of cooperation to reach common goals

[Word count: 16 972]

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### **Seminars**

Seminar "*Civilsamhället och den ökade kontrollen - erfarenheter från biståndsområdet*", 2013-02-07, Dieselverkstaden, Stockholm, Sweden

Seminar "*Result based management: Can "obsessive measurement disorder" be avoided?*", 2011-05-10, Myntkabinettet, Stockholm, Sweden. [file://localhost/Videorecording available at/ http://www.nai.uu.se/events/multimedia/seminar\\_110510/](file://localhost/Videorecording%20available%20at/http://www.nai.uu.se/events/multimedia/seminar_110510/)

### **Questionnaires**

Questionnaire 1; Organisation 1 (Q1)

Questionnaire 2; Organisation 2 (Q2)

Questionnaire 3; Organisation 3 (Q3)

Questionnaire 4; Organisation 4 (Q4)

Questionnaire 5; Organisation 5 (Q5)

Questionnaire 6; Organisation 6 (Q6)

Questionnaire 7; Organisation 7 (Q7)

Questionnaire 8; Organisation 8 (Q8)

### **Interviews**

Interview 1; Anonymous, Organisation 1 (O1:i), Stockholm, Sweden, 2013-03-14

Interview 2; Anonymous, Organisation 2 (O2:i1), Stockholm, Sweden, 2013-03-20

Interview 3; Anonymous, Organisation 2 (O2:i2), Stockholm, Sweden, 2013-03-20

Interview 4; Anonymous, Organisation 3 (O3:i), Stockholm, Sweden, 2013-04-12

Interview 5; Anonymous, Organisation 4 (O4:i), Stockholm, Sweden, 2013-04-12

## APPENDIX 1

### ENKÄTFRÅGOR TILL RAMORGANISATIONER *QUESTIONNAIRE TO FRAME ORGANISATIONS*

#### Allmänna frågor *General questions*

1. Hur skulle Ni beskriva det mervärde som utvecklingssamarbete genom svenska civilsamhällesorganisationer skapar?  
*1. How would you describe the added value created by development cooperation through Swedish civil society organisations?*
2. Vilka utmaningar anser Ni att stödet till det civila samhället genom svenska organisationer kommer att stå inför i framtiden?  
*2. What challenges do you think support to civil society through Swedish CSOs will be facing in the future?*
3. Har ramavtalssystemet påverkat organisationernas självständiga roll? Hur upplever Ni att Er roll har förändrats över tid?  
*3. Has the system with the framework agreement affected the independence of the framework organizations? How do you think your role has changed over time?*
4. Anser Ni att det finns något samband mellan graden av egenfinansiering och verksamhetens kvalitet? Beskriv i så fall på vilket sätt och i vilken grad.  
*4. Is there, to your opinion, any connection between the degree of self-funding and the quality of the work of an organization? If so, describe how and to what extent.*

#### Frågor om styrning och effektivitet *Questions regarding management and effectiveness*

5. Enligt strategin för stöd till det civila samhället ska ramorganisationerna ha tillfredställande system för styrning, uppföljning och kontroll av den egna verksamheten. Redogör kortfattat hur Er organisation arbetar i detta avseende.  
*5. According to the strategy for support to civil society, the framework organisations are expected to have a system for sufficient management, follow-up and control of their work. Describe in short how your organisation work in this respect.*
6. Kännetecknande för stöd till det civila samhället genom enskilda organisationer är att det innebär en styrning i flera led. Beskriv översiktligt:  
*6. Characteristic for support to civil society through individual organisations is that the funds are channeled through various different "levels" in a chain of management. Describe in short:*
  - a. Hur många led Er verksamhet styrs genom?  
*a. How many levels are involved in the work of your organisation?*

b. Hur styrningen sker i dessa led?

*b. How is the management between these levels handled?*

c. Vilka problem (eller fördelar) kan identifieras i varje efterföljande led i styrningen?

*c. What problems (or benefits) can be identified in each following level in the management?*

7. Vika för- respektive nackdelar anser Ni kan vara förknippade med att en ramorganisation både vidareförmedlar medel och bedriver egen verksamhet?

*7. What advantages and disadvantages do you consider to be associated with a framework organisation both transfers funds to other organizations and runs own programmes/projects?*

8. I vilken utsträckning är styrsystemet konsistent, dvs. relaterar olika styrdokument till varandra på ett logiskt sätt?

*8. To what degree is the framework system consistent, that is do the different documents relate to each other in a logical way?*

9. Anser Ni att de mål som uttrycks i strategin är tillräckligt tydliga för att kunna operationaliseras och följas upp?

*9. Do you consider the goals expressed in the strategy to be sufficiently clear to be operationalized and followed-up?*

10. Anser Ni att balansen mellan ettårig respektive mer långsiktig resultatstyrning och resultatrapportering är god?

*10. Do you consider the balance between 1-year and more long-term results management to be good?*

11. Vilka resultat anser Ni rimliga eller möjliga att redovisa på kort- respektive lång sikt?

*11. What results do you consider to be reasonable or possible to report on in the short- and in the long run?*

12. Regeringen har på senare år haft en ambition att stärka resultatstyrningen av svenskt utvecklingsamarbete; hur har detta påverkat Er verksamhet?

*12. Lately the government have had an ambition to strengthen the results based management of Swedish development cooperation; how has this affected the work of your organization?*

a. Har arbetet blivit mer resultatinkriktat?

*a. Has it become more results oriented?*

b. Har det bidragit till kapacitetsutveckling hos Er organisation respektive Era samarbetspartners?

*b. Has it contributed to capacity development within your organisation and your partners?*

c. Innebär det att mer resurser måste avsättas för att kunna leva upp till regeringens krav?

*c. Does it require more resources to be able to live up to the governments requirements?*

13. Har Ni en definition av kostnadseffektivitet?

*13. Does your organization have a definition of cost efficiency?*

a. Om ja, hur lyder den?

*a. If yes, what is it?*

b. Vilka faktorer kan identifieras som påverkar kostnadseffektiviteten i verksamheten?  
*b. What factors can be identified that affects the cost efficiency in the work of the organization?*

c. Hur kan kostnadseffektiviteten förbättras?  
*c. How can cost efficiency be improved?*

d. Hur mäter Ni hur mycket resurser som når fram till partnerorganisationerna?  
*d. How do you measure how much resources that reach the partner organisations?*

14. Erhåller Er organisation finansiering vid sidan av CSO-anslaget, t.ex. från andra Sida-anslag (om ja; ange vilka), direkt från utlandsmyndigheter, från UD eller från EU?  
*14. Does your organization receive funding from outside the framework agreement, e.g. from other Sida grants (if yes; which), directly from embassies or consulates, from the Foreign Ministry or from the EU?*

15. Om Ni erhåller finansiering vid sidan av CSO-anslaget; upplever Ni att verksamhet som bedrivs med dessa medel styrs utifrån andra styrdokument? Vilka konsekvenser får detta i så fall för Er?  
*15. If you receive funding from outside the framework agreement; do you experience that these funds are controlled differently? If so, what consequences does this have for you?*

16. Vilka möjligheter anser Ni finns att effektivisera verksamheten i enlighet med Parisagendans mål? Hur arbetar Ni för att uppnå dessa mål?  
*16. What opportunities do you consider there is to rationalize and make the work more effective in relation to the Paris Agenda?*

17. Vilken beredskap har Ni att, utifrån anslagsförändringar eller andra särskilda beslut av regeringen eller Sida, på kort sikt minska eller öka Er verksamhet?  
*17. How prepared are you to, in case of changes in the grant or other decisions made by the government or Sida, on short term reduce or increase the scope of your work?*

18. Upplever Ni att Ni har bra dialog med Sida (och UD)?  
*18. Does your organization consider to have a good dialogue with Sida (and the MFA)?*

19. Vilka synpunkter/vilken kritik har Sida framfört över tid (i dialog, i bedömnings-PM etc.) på Er verksamhet/system för styrning, uppföljning och kontroll?  
*19. What aspects/critique has Sida lifted in the dialogue about the work of your organisation/systems for management, follow-up and control?*

20. Upplever Ni att de synpunkter/den kritik som framförts av Sida har varit relevant/har legat på en rimlig nivå? Motivera!  
*20. Do you consider the aspects raised by Sida to be relevant and on a reasonable level? Motivate!*

21. Vad anser Ni kan/bör göras för att förbättra dialogen med Sida (frekvens/innehåll/framåt respektive bakåtblickande/annat)?  
*21. What do you think can/should be done to improve the dialogue with Sida (frequency/content/a more forward or retrospective view/other)?*

## **Frågor kring urval och mångfald**

### ***Questions regarding selection and pluralism***

22. Hur ser Ni på de nuvarande kriterierna för urval av ramorganisationer? Har de rätt fokus? Ligger de på en rimlig nivå?

*22. How do you see the current criteria for selection of framework organisations? Do they have the right focus? Are they on a reasonable level?*

23. Anser Ni att kriterierna i tillräcklig utsträckning möjliggör inträde av nya aktörer i ramavtalssystemet?

*23. Do you consider the criteria to allow for entrance of new actors in the framework system to a sufficient extent?*

24. Givet formuleringarna i strategin; anser Ni att det saknas någon typ av aktör i ramavtalssystemet? Om ja; utveckla!

*Given the wording in the strategy; do you think there is any important actor missing in the framework system? If yes; motivate!*

## **Frågor kring samarbetspartners**

### ***Questions regarding partners***

25. Hur arbetar Ni för att säkerställa att den uppsättning av partnerorganisationer som Ni samarbetar med i respektive land innebär ett relevant och aktuellt stöd till det civila samhället utifrån regeringens strategi?

*25. How do you work to ensure that the selected partners in each country is a relevant and up-to-date with the governments strategy?*

26. Hur ser Ni på balansen i Er samverkan mellan å ena sidan långsiktiga samarbeten med samma partnerorganisationer och å andra sidan flexibilitet för att stödja nya partnerorganisationer?

*26. What are your opinions on the balance in your work regarding on the one hand long term partnerships and on the other flexibility to support new partners?*

## **Frågor kring transparens och insyn**

### ***Questions regarding transparency***

27. Hur arbetar Ni för att säkerställa att det ges möjlighet till insyn i Er verksamhet samt att verksamheten bedrivs på ett transparent sätt?

*27. How do you work to ensure that there is possibility of insight into the work of your organization and that the work is performed in a transparent way?*

28. Anser Ni att det finns behov av att öka insynen i verksamheten (ur skattebetalarens respektive mottagarens perspektiv)? Hur kan detta i så fall åstadkommas?

*28. Do you consider there is a need to increase such insight (from tax payers and beneficiaries perspectives)? If so, how can this be achieved?*

**Övriga frågor**  
*Other questions*

29. I ett internationellt perspektiv; anser Ni att Sverige har något att lära av hur andra länder har valt att organisera/styra bistånd genom det civila samhället? Ge gärna exempel!

*29. From an international perspective; do you think Sweden has anything to learn from how other countries have chosen to organize and manage development cooperation through civil society? Give examples!*

30. Har Ni några övriga synpunkter på ramavtalssystemet ändamålsenlighet?

*30. Do you have any other views on the adequacy and effectivity of the framework system?*